



■ **Seventeen LAPD officers were awarded the Medal of Valor for 2003. Here are their stories:**

Officer Mark Aguilar

On Dec. 17, 2000, Officer Aguilar and three other officers attended to an apartment building on Hollywood Boulevard that was on fire.

The officers cleared the area of spectators and entered the burning. In the smoke-filled hallway, Officer Aguilar and his partner assisted four people down a smoky stairway and out of the building.

Both officers re-entered the building, clearing four more apartments. They escorted a woman to safety.

They assisted the Fire Department in handling crowd control. The officers noticed a young boy hanging out of a second story window, and assisted Fire Department personnel in the boy's rescue. The officers, suffering from the smoke inhalation, were placed on oxygen and were taken to a local hospital.

Officer Thomas Baker

On July 4, 2000, Officer Baker received a call of three males fleeing a robbery. He and his partner saw a vehicle matching the description drive past them and initiated pursuit.

The suspects approached the "Toonerville" gang territory. A suspect pushed a bicycle into the path of the police vehicle. Several suspects fired upon the police vehicle, striking the driver's door.

Both officers received gunfire. Officer Baker and his partner fired at the suspects as they ran for cover, continuing to engage the suspects with their service weapons.

Officer Baker and his partner continued to communicate with each other and reloaded their weapons. Additional units arrived and took all suspects into custody. Officer Baker and his partner were not injured.

Officer Jude Bella

On May 24, 2002, an explosion ripped through an apartment complex in Encino. Officer Bella and the four other officers entered the still-shaking structure, gathered the victims and escorted them out. Officer Bella and three other officers then organized the search to locate trapped victims.

Officer Bella and his partner discovered an elderly woman unable to exit her apartment. The officers placed the woman in the wheelchair and carried her out of the building.

Officer Bella and his partner continued searching, pushing themselves to exhaustion. Due to flames and smoke, the officers couldn't see or breathe. Both officers were treated for smoke inhalation.

Officer Roy Ceja

On Oct. 24, 2000, Officer Ceja and his partner attempted a traffic stop. The driver drove off.

The suspect hit a vehicle and stopped. The suspect, with a handgun, exited his vehicle and ran towards a sergeant, also in pursuit. The suspect fired at a captain, who had also responded and could not defend himself.

Officer Ceja pursued the suspect on foot down the street; the suspect fired his handgun

A Tribute to Real Heroes: LAPD Honors Medal of Valor Awardees


Over the past few years, 17 LAPD officers demonstrated their dedication to the City of Los Angeles with a number of heroic acts. Monday, Oct. 27, the City demonstrated its deep appreciation.

Those 17 officers received the Medal of Valor, the highest award presented by the LAPD.

Proceeds from the event, held at the Hyatt Regency in downtown L.A., benefited the L.A. Police Foundation and the L.A. Chamber of Commerce.

The medal has been presented every year since 1925.

"Today we will meet the real heroes," said David Cunningham III, president of the Board of Police Commissioners. "They live by the Golden Rule—putting others ahead of themselves. That gets to the heart of policing.

"They leave their loved ones, they kiss them goodbye, not knowing if they are going to return. They show extreme courage, and we should be grateful. They are indeed our heroes, and today we thank them." 

One of the certificates given in recognition of a job well done.



dling crowd control. The officers noticed a young boy hanging out of a second story window, and assisted Fire Department personnel in the boy's rescue. The officers, suffering from the smoke inhalation, were placed on oxygen and were taken to a local hospital.

Officer Robert Ferrer

On May 24, 2002, an explosion ripped through an apartment complex in Encino. Officer Ferrer and his partner ran up a ramp and found most of the north side of the building had collapsed. Officer Ferrer and his partner discovered a surviving victim lying dazed and badly burned. The officers began to talk him down. Burning debris rained down on both the officers and the man, as the officers convinced him to walk under his own power. One large piece of burning debris struck Officer Ferrer's partner on the head.

Running up a stairwell filled with smoke, Officer Ferrer helped a woman and her relatives escape. Officer Ferrer pushed the woman in the wheelchair while shepherding her relatives. The four officers carried the disabled woman down the last two flights of stairs and out of the building.

Officer Thomas Kimrey

On Oct. 24, 2000, Officer Kimrey and his partner attempted a traffic stop. The driver drove off.

The suspect hit a vehicle and stopped. The suspect, with a handgun, exited his vehicle and ran towards a sergeant, also in pursuit. The suspect fired at a captain, who had also responded and could not defend himself.

Officer Kimrey's partner chased the suspect down the street. Just seconds behind, Officer Kimrey observed his partner and the suspect engaged in a gunfight at close range. Officer Kimrey fired his service weapon at the suspect. As the suspect responded to Officer Kimrey's gunfire, his partner regained his footing, and fired at the suspect. The suspect sustained multiple gunshot wounds and was taken into custody.

Officer Carlos Langarica

On July 4, 2000, Officer Langarica and his partner received a call of three males fleeing a robbery. He and his partner saw a vehicle matching the description drive past them and initiated pursuit.

The suspects approached the "Toonerville" gang territory. A suspect pushed a bicycle into the path of the police vehicle. Several suspects fired upon the police vehicle, striking the driver's door.

Both officers received gunfire. Officer Langarica and his partner fired at the suspects as they ran for cover, continuing to engage the suspects with their service weapons.

Officer Langarica and his partner continued to communicate with each other and reloaded their weapons. Additional units arrived and took all suspects into custody. Officer Langarica and his partner were not injured.

Officer Jose Maldonado

On May 24, 2002, an explosion ripped through an apartment complex in Encino. When Officer Jose Maldonado and four other officers gathered the victims and escorted them out.



The entrance to the Medal of Valor ceremony.

at Officer Ceja, who fired back. Officer Ceja then knocked the suspect's handgun out his hand and fell to the ground.

Officer Ceja heard the suspect fire at what he assumed was his partner. Officer Ceja fired at the suspect, who fell to the ground, where he was handcuffed and taken into custody.

Officer Alan Cieto

On May 24, 2002, an explosion ripped through an apartment complex in Encino. Officer Cieto and four others entered the still-shaking structure, gathered the victims and escorted them out. Officer Cieto and three other officers organized a search.

Officer Cieto and his partner discovered an elderly woman unable to exit her apartment. They placed her in a wheelchair and carried her out.

They came upon a woman on a medical oxygen system and her husband, unable to move her. Officer Cieto assisted in leading the husband and wife to safety.

Officer Cieto and his partner continued the search. At times the smoke and heat were so intense that they retreated from the fumes before continuing.

Officer Steven Conner

On May 24, 2002, an explosion ripped through an apartment complex in Encino. Officer Conner and four others entered the still-shaking structure, gathered the victims

and escorted them out. Officer Conner and three other officers organized a search.

Officer Conner pushed himself to exhaustion. He and his partner would be treated for smoke inhalation.

Officer Raymond Diaz

On May 24, 2002, an explosion ripped through an apartment complex in Encino. When Officer Diaz and four others gathered the victims by the armload and escorted them out. Officer Conner and three other officers established themselves in the lobby area to organize the systematic search to locate trapped victims.

Officer Diaz and his partner pushed themselves to exhaustion. Both officers would later be treated for smoke inhalation.

Officer Guy Dobine

On Dec. 17, 2000, Officer Dobine and three others attended to an apartment building on Hollywood Boulevard that was on fire.

Officer Dobine and the others cleared the area of spectators. Officer Dobine and a partner determined which units were still occupied. In one apartment, they assisted four people to safety.

Officer Dobine's partner kicked into a unit and escorted a woman to safety. Both officers continued clearing apartments until a large rafter collapsed ten feet from where Officer Dobine stood. They exited the building.

They assisted the Fire Department in han-



They came upon a woman on a medical oxygen system and her husband, unable to move her. Officer Maldonado assisted in leading the husband and wife to safety.

Officer Maldonado and his partner continued the search. At times the smoke and heat were so intense that they retreated from the fumes before continuing.

Officer Ivan Ramos

On Dec. 17, 2000, Officer Ramos and three others attended to an apartment building on Hollywood Boulevard that was on fire.

Officer Ramos and the others cleared the area of spectators. Then, Officer Ramos and a partner assisted four people to safety.

Officer Ramos encountered a woman too afraid to open her door. Officer Ramos gained her trust and assisted her out of the burning structure. Then, Officer Ramos crawled on the floor looking for additional trapped residents.

As the fire spread and Officer Ramos was forced to leave the building, he discovered a trapped woman leaning out of her apartment. Officer Ramos moved a large trash-filled Dumpster beneath the woman's window. The woman jumped, landing on the Dumpster. Officer Ramos then assisted her out of the Dumpster and took her to safety.

Officer Ramos and the others were put on oxygen and taken to the hospital.

Officer Raul Soto

On Dec. 17, 2000, Officer Raul Soto, responded to a call of an apartment building on fire on Hollywood Boulevard. He was the first patrol unit to arrive at the scene.

Officer Soto was joined by four others. Officer Soto and the others directed residents out of the building. Officer Soto escorted several of the building's residents to safety.

When the toxic smoke and flames became unbearable, Officer Soto exited the building and ran toward the back of the structure. Officer Soto observed several people screaming for help out of their windows. He obtained a ladder and placed it under a second floor



The 17 Medal of Valor awardees get ready to meet the press.

LAPD Medal of Valor Awardees

window, allowing several trapped residents to climb down to safety.

Officer Soto and the other officers were put on oxygen and were taken to the hospital.

Officer Calixto Valdivia

On May 24, 2002, an explosion ripped through an apartment complex in Encino.

Officer Valdivia, his partner and two other officers gathered panicked victims from the upper and lower parking garage areas and escorted them to safety. The officers also stopped residents and others from entering the building. In doing so, these officers undoubtedly saved the lives of dozens of people.

Officer Valdivia and the two officers rushed back into the burning building even as secondary explosions hammered the structure. Together, the four officers carried a woman in a wheelchair down the stairs to safety.

Officer Jesus Zaragoza

On May 24, 2002, an explosion ripped through an apartment complex in Encino.

Officer Zaragoza, his partner and two officers began gathering panicked victims from the

upper and lower parking garage areas and escorting them to safety.

Officer Zaragoza and his partner discovered a surviving victim, lying dazed and badly burned in the parking lot. The officers talked him away from the building. Burning debris rained down on both the officers and the man. One large piece of burning debris struck Officer Zaragoza on the head, but undaunted, he continued to talk the burn victim down the ramp to safety.

As Officer Zaragoza was aiding other victims, his partner was rescuing a wheelchair bound woman trapped in a third-floor apartment. Managing to get her down to the second floor, he called down to Officer Zaragoza and two other officers who rushed into the building as secondary explosions hammered the structure. The four officers carried the disabled woman down the last

two flights of stairs and out of the building to safety.

Officer Fernando Zuniga

Dec. 17, 2000, Officer Zuniga responded to a call of an apartment building on fire on Hollywood Boulevard.

Officer Zuniga and the others cleared the area of spectators. Officer Zuniga and the others directed residents out of the building. As the smoke thickened, Officer Zuniga crawled down a hallway, where he directed trapped residents to safety.

When the toxic smoke and flames became unbearable, Officer Zuniga, the squad leader, accounted for all the other officers and exited the structure.

Officer Zuniga and others observed a boy hanging out of a window. Officer Zuniga ran underneath the window. Although he was showered with glass and debris, Officer Zuniga calmed the boy. Officer Zuniga and another officer then secured a ladder from the other side of the building.

Officer Zuniga and the other officers were put on oxygen and taken to a hospital for symptoms of smoke inhalation.



Police Chief William Bratton chats with Board of Police Commissioners President David Cunningham III.

Mayor James Hahn shares his congratulations to the Medal of Valor awardees.

