

LAPD

Stories and photos courtesy LAPD

LA's Bravest

Above and Beyond



Police Dept.'s annual event recognizes 25 heroes with Purple Heart and Medal of Valor honors.

On Sept. 4, the LAPD hosted its important annual "Above and Beyond" ceremony, which this year honored 25 officers who have demonstrated the highest level of courage and bravery in protecting the City.

The event was held at the Hollywood and Highland complex in Hollywood.

This year's event was titled "Above and Beyond" because it contained the awarding of not just Medals of Valor, but also Purple Heart medals. Purple Hearts have been distributed only four times in the history of the event. This year, 12 LAPD Officers were honored with the Purple Heart, and 14 with the Medal of Honor. One officer, Sean Schneider, received both.

The Purple Heart recognizes officers who have sustained grievous physical injury during a tactical situation, and posthumously awarded to the next of kin of those officers who did not survive their injuries.

The Medal of Valor is awarded to officers who distinguish themselves by conspicuous bravery or heroism above and beyond the normal demands of police service. To be awarded the Medal of Valor, an officer shall have performed an act displaying extreme courage while consciously facing imminent peril.

The medals are awarded by the Board of Police Commissioners and presented by the Chief of Police in the name of the Department at the annual ceremony. The award consists of a medal, ribbon, and citation. The Medal of Valor was first presented in 1925, and the Purple Heart was first awarded in 2009.

The awards ceremony is made possible thanks to the generosity of the Los Angeles Police Foundation.

The stories of their bravery follow.

Purple Heart Honors

Dark Hallway



Policeman Norbert Huseman

With many officers fighting overseas during World War II, the LAPD's force was drastically reduced. Norbert John Huseman completed the Police Academy and joined LAPD as a wartime emergency policeman in September 1944.

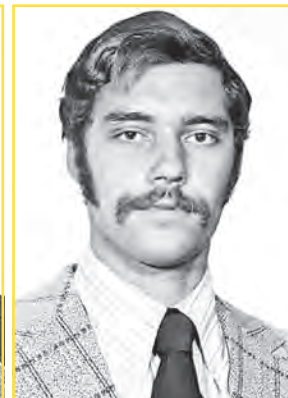
On Dec. 22, 1945, Policeman Huseman was working Newton Division patrol when he and his partner responded to a disturbance call involving two men arguing over the ownership of a baby carriage. As Huseman walked to the location to make contact, he shined his flashlight inside a darkened hallway and ordered anyone inside to come out.

A suspect began shooting from inside the darkened hallway. Huseman was critically wounded during this violent encounter with the suspect. Additional officers responded, and they, too, were wounded by the suspect. The suspect was eventually shot and taken into custody.

Unfortunately, Policeman Huseman succumbed to his gunshot wounds nine days after the incident. He was survived by his wife and four children.



Officer Richard Beardslee



Officer Jack Rand

front plate and no current tabs on the rear plate. The officers ordered the three males out of the vehicle, and as they attempted to order the female out of the vehicle, one of the males lunged toward Beardslee, and a fight ensued with both officers.

During the struggle, the male yelled out to the female suspect to shoot the officers. The female removed a gun from under her shirt and shot Beardslee in his chest. As the female attempted to shoot him again, Beardslee pointed his firearm toward her but was unable to fire because one of the male suspects was

holding onto the barrel of his gun. The female shot Beardslee again in the abdomen, enabling the male suspect to take away Beardslee's gun. Beardslee used his baton to distract the suspect and move behind the car.

Meanwhile, Rand tried to request backup while fighting one of the other males. The suspect that was previously fighting with Beardslee then shot Rand in the abdomen. With both officers down, the suspects fled in their vehicle.

Since the officers had collected the suspect's address from the driver's license at the start of the traffic stop, other LAPD officers went to the female's apartment. The investigation ended with all four suspects being arrested.

Officer Beardslee recovered from his injuries, returned to work, and retired from the Department. Officer Rand also recovered from his injuries, returned to the Department, and was later hired by the Huntington Beach Police Dept.

Deadly Forgery Incident



Det. Sgt. Charles Monaghan



Det. Robert Endler

On Feb. 1, 1964, Det. Charles Monaghan and his partner, Det. Robert Endler, were assigned to Wilshire Division. They received information that a fellow Police Officer was going to walk to a Sears store next to the police station to pick up a forgery suspect. Both Endler and Monaghan decided to join him on this "routine" call.

The three walked into the store and were directed to the security office. As they headed to the office, they saw the suspect, who was seated without handcuffs.

While Endler walked into the room and stood the suspect up to pat him down, the suspect turned toward the officers and asked, "Are you the police?" When advised that they were the police, the suspect pulled out a revolver from his waistband and began shooting. Endler was struck in the face, and Monaghan was also hit. The suspect jumped up and escaped from the security office. Just then, a Sears employee came to investigate the sounds of gunfire coming from the office. Monaghan shouted out, "He's got a gun!" and pushed the Sears employee to the floor and out of the line of fire.

Although gravely wounded, Monaghan managed to raise his gun at the fleeing suspect, who fired back. Monaghan's rounds went high, and one of the suspect's rounds hit Monaghan directly in his forehead.

Det. Robert Endler and Det. Sgt. Charles Monaghan both died that day from the injuries received in the line of duty.

Drug Bust



Det. Gerald Sawyer

On Nov. 6, 1973, Det. Gerald "Blackie" Sawyer was assigned to the Narcotics Division as part of a special task force with the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA). Working undercover, Sawyer went to a Santa Monica hotel to purchase 20 kilos of cocaine from a known drug dealer who had been introduced to Sawyer by a police informant.

Sawyer, the drug dealer and the police informant met in the hotel room to complete the narcotics transaction. Once Sawyer handed over a briefcase containing \$140,000 in cash to the drug dealer, the dealer brandished a handgun and shot Sawyer multiple times. Officers in the adjoining room who were monitoring the transaction rushed into the room and took the drug dealer and the police informant into custody.

Det. Sawyer died as a result of his injuries and was the Department's first undercover drug officer killed in the line of duty.

In 1974, Det. Sawyer was posthumously awarded the LAPD's Medal of Valor, and, in 1992, a video was made by the LAPD's Training Division to reenact the tragic events of his death.

Attempted Burglary

In the predawn hours of Sept. 28, 1982, Officers Bill Skiles and Tom Chevolek were on patrol in the Hollenbeck Division when they came upon a suspect attempting to break into a vehicle. The officers approached the suspect and tried to communicate with him in both English and Spanish.

The suspect refused to obey the commands and fled on foot. The officers caught up with the suspect, and a physical altercation ensued. Despite the officers' application of physical force and mace, the suspect escaped.

The officers again caught up to the suspect, and another struggle ensued, prompting Skiles to

Traffic Stop

On Jan. 30, 1973, Officers Richard Beardslee and Jack Rand were assigned to Wilshire Area, where Beardslee was a training officer and Rand had just graduated from the Police Academy and had worked only a couple of shifts with Beardslee.

In the early morning hours, the officers conducted a traffic stop on a vehicle for having no



Officer William Skiles

strike the suspect over the head with his baton. Skiles moved forward to handcuff him, but the suspect quickly produced a handgun, firing two rounds at Skiles at point blank range.

The suspect turned away and fled again. Skiles went to reload his weapon and, for the first time, noted he had been shot twice – once in his right hand and the other in his left leg. Skiles then transitioned the weapon and reloaded the handgun, utilizing only his left hand.

Despite his serious wounds, Skiles rose to his feet and joined his partner in the foot chase of the suspect. The suspect continued his flight, eventually taking cover behind a parked vehicle.

The officers also took cover, and another gun battle ensued. Having chased the suspect several blocks and engaged in a lengthy gun battle, Skiles eventually lost consciousness. The suspect was ultimately taken into custody after suffering multiple gunshot wounds.

As a result of this incident, Officer Skiles lost the use of his wrist and hand for one year. He never regained full use of the appendage and two years later, he was forced to accept a medical retirement due to his injuries.

In September 1984, Officers Skiles and Chevolek were awarded the LAPD's Medal of Valor for their actions in this incident.

Kidnapping



Officer Rick Webb

On Aug. 27, 1985, Officer Rick Webb and his partner were assigned to Van Nuys patrol when they received a radio call of a kidnap investigation at an apartment complex.

Immediately upon entering the complex, the officers were confronted with escaping hostages and an armed suspect who was firing his weapon in an attempt to regain control of his captives. Both officers instinctively drew the attention of the suspect away from the hostages and came under fire.

The officers took cover as they exchanged gunfire with the assailant. During the gun battle, Webb glanced around the corner of a wall to engage the suspect and was shot in the head. The force of the gunshot pushed Webb back into his concealed position.

After being momentarily stunned, Webb reengaged the suspect and continued to exchange fire. Although the suspect had sustained numerous gunshot wounds throughout the encounter, he refused to surrender and continued to fire his weapon at the officers. As the gun battle continued, Webb (who was now bleeding) and his partner maneuvered themselves into a position that enabled them to place the suspect in custody.

A number of officers responded to the "Help" call. Instead of waiting for an ambulance, fellow officers took Webb to the hospital in a police vehicle. Miraculously, Officer Webb recovered from his injury and returned to full duty less than six months after the shooting.

Stolen Car



Officer Christopher Walter

On the evening of Oct. 23, 1993, a suspect stole a vehicle from a used car lot in South Los Angeles, crashing it through a gate in order to flee.

Later that evening, a Sergeant observed the vehicle speeding down a busy street and initiated a pursuit. Two additional units had joined the pursuit when the suspect collided into a fire hydrant, exited the vehicle and, fled on foot.

Officer Christopher Walter and his partner, who had joined the vehicle pursuit, exited their police vehicle and started to chase the suspect. Walter tried to cut off the suspect and eventually ended up near an alley.

Suddenly, Walter observed the suspect climb over a gate into the alley. Walter saw that he was not holding a weapon in his hands, grabbed onto the suspect's shirt, and pulled him to the ground. The suspect fell onto his back, and Walter positioned himself on top of him for an arrest.

The suspect then reached into his waistband, where he had a concealed handgun. Walter used his left hand to grab onto the weapon, but the suspect was able to fire a round, striking Walter in his left hand. Knowing that he had been hit, Walter continued the struggle to gain possession of the suspect's weapon.

Walter, fearing for his own safety, drew his service pistol and shot the suspect who continued fighting for a short time before collapsing. Officer Walter suffered a shattered bone, severed tendon, and severe nerve damage as a result of the gunshot wound to his left hand.

Traffic Stop



Officer Alejandro Valencia

On the evening of July 10, 2010, Officer Alejandro Valencia and his partner were on patrol in Foothill Division.

The officers pulled up to an intersection where they saw a driver throw what appeared to be a beer can out of the car's window. Believing the driver was under the influence, Valencia and his partner initiated a traffic stop. However, the driver failed to stop and sped away from the officers who immediately requested backup and air support. The officers continued their pursuit until the suspect suddenly stopped.

Without warning and before the officers could even come to a stop, the suspect exited his vehicle and fired a semi-automatic handgun at them. The bullets ripped through the police car, pierced the front windshield and struck Valencia in his right forearm. Valencia flung open his door and returned fire.

With a barrage of bullets flying everywhere and shards of glass exploding from the passenger window, Valencia's partner exited the black and white and took a few steps back to return fire. He lost his footing on the shards of broken glass and fell to the ground, breaking his wrist in the process.

Valencia saw his partner fall to the ground and thought he had been shot. Putting his partner's wellbeing before his own, Valencia engaged the suspect with his wounded arm and broadcasted "officer down" calls on the radio with his left hand.

Valencia continued engaging the suspect until he felt he was no longer a threat and made his way to the back of the police car in an attempt to aid his partner.

His partner saw the suspect making movements and, believing he was still a threat, he re-engaged the suspect until he was rendered immobile. Other officers arrived and took the suspect into custody.

Surveillance



Officer Phillip Scallon



Officer Sean Schneider

On the evening of Oct. 1, 2011, Officers Phillip Scallon and Sean Schneider were working undercover narcotics surveillance inside an unmarked van when they saw three people exit a nearby apartment building and walk past their van.

As the three men passed their van, another vehicle abruptly drove up and came to a stop at the back of their van. Scallon and Schneider watched as three people jumped from the vehicle and ran toward the three individuals on the sidewalk. Within seconds, an argument ensued between the two

groups of men.

Out of the corner of his eye, Scallon saw a fourth person hiding next to a tree holding a shotgun. Scallon notified Schneider, and they both drew their weapons and scanned the area for additional threats.

The officers looked back at the vehicle parked behind their van and saw a person pull up his shirt, exposing a handgun in his waistband. Then, almost simultaneously, Schneider and Scallon heard two rapid gunshots and saw muzzle flashes where the suspects were standing. Believing that the suspects were firing at him and his partner, Scallon fired at them with the suspects returning fire shattering the window of their van. In addition to glass flying, pellet(s) from the shotgun blasts struck both officers, with Scallon taking the brunt of the weapon's firepower.

Glass particles and smoke filled the passenger compartment of the van, obscuring the officers' vision. Scallon's left eye immediately swelled shut from being struck by shotgun pellets, and although both officers were wounded from gunshots, they remained focused and stayed in the fight. Scallon knocked glass out of the window to give himself a better view of the suspects attacking them. The officers realized they were in a vulnerable and confined position, so they exited the van as Schneider called for backup.

The suspects fled on foot, but because of the detailed information Scallon and Schneider were able to provide about them, responding officers apprehended two of the suspects after a massive manhunt through Koreatown. Thanks to the relentless followup of detectives on the case, all suspects were arrested and brought to justice.

LA's Bravest
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The living honorees.

Medal of Valor Honors

Hostage Situation

During the early morning hours of Nov. 23, 2011, Operations-West Bureau homicide detectives attempted to arrest a suspect wanted for murder during a robbery, but he escaped. Subsequent intelligence led detectives to believe the suspect was hiding at a residence in the Southeast Area. Detectives also learned that the suspect had said he was "going to go out G-style," referencing a "shootout" with police. Based on the severity of the suspect's crime and his propensity for violence, SWAT's assistance was requested.

As the SWAT team traveled to the location, a surveillance team thought they saw the suspect exit the residence and drive away. A pre-staged air unit directed resources on the ground.

A contingent of SWAT resources, including a K-9 team, was directed to a house where the suspect was last seen entering. The SWAT officers staged an Emergency Rescue Team (ERT) because they received information that there was a man with small children inside. As the LAPD pieced together intelligence, it became apparent that the suspect was holding the family hostage inside of the house.

Initial attempts to negotiate with the suspect failed, and officers were directed to breach the house to confirm the location of the hostages.



Officer James Brown Officer Canaan Bodell Officer Michael Messenger

As the officers tried to breach the front door, the suspect began to shoot at them through the door. Officers were able to partially open the door, entered, and returned fire at the suspect. Officer James Brown deployed a Noise Flash Distraction Device as the suspect continued to fire at the officers. Without hesitation, the team rapidly moved through the partially opened front door and the smoky interior of the house. They could hear the children screaming from the rear of the residence.

Without regard for their personal safety, each officer who had entered the house went to look for the hostages. As Officers Canaan Bodell and Michael Messenger moved toward a rear bedroom, they saw the suspect leaning into a closet with a gun in his hand. Inside the closet was the father with his two children. The suspect grabbed hold of one of the children in an attempt to take the child from the father. The officers realized the imminent danger of the hostages and quickly went into the room. The armed suspect charged at the officers, and a gun battle ensued. Messenger was shot in a lower extremity, but the officers were able to shoot and mortally wound the suspect, putting an end to the hostage nightmare for the frightened family members.

Christmas Day Rescue



Officer Don Thompson

On Christmas Day 2013, Officer Don Thompson was driving southbound on the 405 freeway in a bomb squad utility truck to start his shift at the Bomb Squad's LAX office. Traffic was light that day, and Thompson had a clear view of traffic traveling in both directions when he saw a vehicle on the northbound 405 collide with the concrete center divider and burst into flames. With the inferno building at the rear of the car, the vehicle continued northbound for another 350 feet before finally coming to a stop.

Without a moment's hesitation, Thompson pulled over to the center divider a short distance from the burning vehicle and jumped two concrete freeway dividers to reach the vehicle. When he reached the car, Thompson noticed that the driver was unconscious and that the fire, which had already engulfed the entire rear portion of the vehicle, was quickly travelling forward into the driver's compartment.

Thompson, without regard for his own safety, rushed forward to pull the unconscious driver out of the car. However, the vehicle's front door and fender were badly damaged in the collision and were blocked by the concrete, making it even harder to pull open.

Thompson leaned into the vehicle, reached over the victim, and attempted to find the seat-belt release button. The smoke and intense heat of the flames caused Thompson to pause for an instant to get oxygen. Realizing that his life and the victim's life were in danger, Thompson made one last attempt to release the seatbelt. Through the thick smoke and searing heat, he was able to finally unbuckle the seatbelt and then, bearing the full weight of the 200 pound unconscious driver, pull him out of the car.

Two bystanders who had pulled over to help reached over the concrete barrier to grab the unconscious driver from Thompson and pulled him to safety. The car became completely engulfed in flames seconds later.

Thompson was treated at a local urgent care facility for first-degree burns to his arms and face, as well as second-degree burns to his right hand and deep abrasions to his left knee sustained when he jumped over the concrete median. In a testament to Officer Thompson's work ethic and commitment to duty, he continued his shift for that day after he was released from urgent care.

Downtown Shootout



Officer Mark Austin Officer David Blake

On Sept. 11, 2012, a victim was carjacked at gunpoint by a suspect carrying a black guitar case. Within 30 minutes, Rampart officers located the suspect driving the vehicle and called for a police pursuit.

During the pursuit, officers identified the person as a known homicide suspect notorious for carrying an AK-47 rifle concealed in a guitar case. He had vowed to shoot it out with officers if ever confronted by them, just as his brother did in a 2010 shootout with LAPD officers.

After traveling more than 28 miles in one hour, the pursuit came to a sudden end at a busy intersection in downtown Los Angeles with the suspect running a red light and colliding with another vehicle. Immediately after the collision, LAPD officers saw him, armed with an AK-47, emerge from the car and move to conceal himself behind the crashed vehicles.

Officers Mark Austin, David Blake, Ryan Nguyen, Clinton Perez, Joseph Arevalo, Brad Gorby and Juan Garcia took cover and engaged the suspect in a fierce gun battle. The initial volley of gunfire wounded the suspect and knocked him to the ground, but he recovered and continued shooting.

Because the suspect was sitting so low to the ground, the officers could not see him as he indiscriminately shot toward them and at innocent bystanders. As Officers Joseph Broussard and Sean Schneider arrived on scene, Schneider assumed that the brunt of the gunfire was directed toward Officer Hans Almaraz and his K-9 partner, Pecco. Without regard for their own safety, Schneider moved across open ground to provide assistance to Almaraz while Broussard attempted to save a bystander stuck inside his vehicle in the middle of the intersection.

The suspect fired at Broussard, who responded by firing two rounds back and saw him collapse. Schneider ran from cover to aid his partner and, together, they were able to move the citizen from his car to safety.

As the suspect lay on the ground firing, Austin and Nguyen fired back and stopped when they saw him slump over. Meanwhile, Almaraz also engaged the suspect. Unsure if he was still able to use his weapon, officers directed him to give up. He defiantly answered with a derogatory refusal.

Almaraz released K-9 Pecco onto the suspect, leaving him distracted and trying to defend himself, which allowed officers to move in, disarm and safely secure the suspect.



Officer Ryan Nguyen Officer Clinton Perez



Officer Joseph Arevalo Officer Brad Gorby



Officer Juan Garcia Officer Joseph Broussard



Officer Sean Schneider Officer Hans Almaraz



LA's Bravest