At the Time of This Writing

By Mark Spencer

At the time of this writing, two young and energetic police officers and PLEA members lost their lives. Their deaths were tragic and sorrowful. Our comrades George Cortes and Jonathan Stuart will be missed.

At the time of this writing, September 11 is still a week away. Even though the start date of a new term has yet to come, PLEA work still continues. The investment of all votes by officers and detectives in the recent Association election is greatly appreciated. Any member involvement is worthy of commendation.

Your opinion and input provide the direction for your Association.

I am hopeful that all PLEA members received their membership survey in the mail. Please take the time fill in this important roadmap and to give vital direction to your negotiation team in upcoming negotiations. No single individual knows everything. It's through the combined thoughts and ideas of the members that produces the rights and benefits we currently enjoy. Your voice is needed once again.

At the time of this writing, meetings of introduction have taken place and are still in progress. The Mayor, Council members, the City Manager, the Assistant City Manager, the Public Safety Manager, the City Attorney, Fire and Police union leadership, as well as City Council candidates have all communicated, face-to-face, the importance of a partnership with PLEA.

PLEA's commitment to the partnership was reciprocally expressed. The partnership from PLEA was seen in actions that went beyond kind words. The Association's outlay for Prop 1, 2, and 3 demonstrated this.

PLEA's request to the County Attorney to protect the rights and assets of reserve officers through an immunity agreement and that the officer's trust to positively engage PLEA's support of a fair, lawful, and consistent labor policy for all public safety employees is a practical example of partnering. PLEA's one-on-one contact with the Sheriff's office to address the jail problem is a direct and positive benefit for the citizens whom we serve.

I get to do police work again. Here's what this meant to me. I waited 2 hours at the jail to book a $35 shoplifter who had sworn. While waiting at the jail, I wondered why our wargame process wasn't successfully done by civilians (like other Valley police departments) and why 8 juvenile officers were taken off the street to do the work non-sworn personnel could easily accomplish. I was unable to find a slot in a readily available in the passenger compartment of the patrol vehicle. I saw members with an enthusiastic work ethic and a desire to book bad-guys and help citizens. I heard them using "advice" on backups while responding to priority 2 calls because of a lack of bodies and lack of two-man cars. I heard the wish to carry personal firearms. While preaching preferably, I experienced the desire to wear a more comfortable, affordable, and tactically sound utility uniform already available to specialty details. Please be patient with PLEA board members when they hop into cars to work with you in the upcoming month.

At the time of this writing, two police jobs were saved from an overzealous motor lieutenant. Exonerating facts and evidence were pointed out by PLEA to Commander George Richards. He took back his PSAP investigation and thus demonstrated once again that an admission of error is not a sign of weakness but of strength. Sustained allegations of misconduct that included possible terminations and suspensions were won. Thanks George.
Another payment of Lee

By Richard Beppe
President, Association of Retired Phoenix Officers

As I attended the visitation for Officer George Cortez, I was struck by the sense of irony and history. A large turnout, not only officers and family, but grieving members of the public and a huge press presence gave the scene an almost carnival atmosphere. But there was nothing funny or comical about it. This tragedy was simply another payment of death for the benefits that we all enjoy today.

To understand what I mean, you have to go back in time, to 1976 in fact, and remember what life was like on the Phoenix Police Department. Phoenix was still a "small" big town that was rapidly growing, and along with that rapid growth, the Department was expanding just as fast. I was a Lieutenant in the Patroll Bureau (forerunner of the Employment Services Bureau) and my main responsibility was to recruit, test and hire applicants as rapidly as the Academy could absorb them. This was never easy, because the pay was meager and the benefits were just adequate. The retirement system was actually a two-tiered system. The "old timers" were part of the old system that granted eligibility to retire after 20 years of service, or age 55 whichever was greater. In order to be eligible to retire. If you came on the Department at the age of 21, as I did, you were looking at a minimum of 34 years of service, before becoming eligible for retirement.

But in late 1976, all that was about to change. On December 28, 1976, tragedy struck the Phoenix Police Department twice when motorcycle officer Al Bluth #547 and Detective Dave Henley #1697 were both killed in separate incidents. Al was gunned down during a routine traffic stop near 15th Avenue and Grand Avenue, behind the Ball Hi Motel. Dave was killed in a accident at 7th Avenue and Washington. Both men were gunned down in full uniform, in full uniform, in uniform. It seemed so long ago, yet parts of it seem like yesterday. The Department had only two prior on-duty fatalities in its history: Harry Burch who was killed in 1952 and Walter Stewar who was a traffic accident in 1952. These seemed like ancient history, at the time. These fresh fatalities was an event that stunned everyone. As every member of enforcement community searched for a package truck that was a target of the robbers, replays of Al Bluth's last radio transmission were transmitted by the media over and over..."344...999...344...999". And he died trying to give his children a life in the future. He died trying to give his children a better life.

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In recognition of our family

Our brothers and sisters from Fire were there for us. They worked with the hospital staff in getting a wing at the hospital dedicated for our use. They brought water, soda, and snacks for those in attendance to provide basic needs. They remained there throughout our time of need. Thank you.

Our Mayor, Phil Cordova, was at the hospital visibly shaken from a horrific day. When not standing quietly aside he was going to individual officers putting his arm around them and sharing his heartfelt sorrow. He shared our loss, he was hurt with us, and we were truly his first concern. I watched as Phil stood away from the others, paying his quiet respect. At one point, he filled four plastic cups with ice and water and walked them over to our officers sitting in the make shift waiting room at the hospital. He handed them each a cup of water. placed his hands on their shoulders and quietly whispered his condolences to them. Thank you, Phil, for sharing in our loss and for your example of truly humble service.

Thinking About the Reserves?

By Levi Bolton

PLEA and PLEA General Counsel Mike Nipher have identified areas of concern regarding the status of Reserve Officers that may warrant some serious consideration before deciding to enter into the program. As a Reserve Officer, you are not an employee of the City of Phoenix and there lies the issue. Do you remember the Notice of Investigation and the Garity statement that an employee reads prior to the onset of an interview? You see, Garity and its doctrine protect you against the use of compelled testimony without pay. In the Reserve Officer you are not an employee, you are a volunteer, and therefore not afforded Garity protections. Do not confuse the simple compensations offered to Reserves as employment.

Reserves are not employees of the City of Phoenix, Arizona law provides limited statutory employment protections and does provide for representation during administrative interviews for the Reserve Officers. Unfortunately, as a provider of protections for Reserves, the PLEA Board of Trustees, in consultation with its counsel, have decided to disclose our concerns and prospective challenges that may present themselves to you as a Reserve.

The intent of this article is not to discourage participation in this extremely valuable and important program, but questions regarding Reserve Officers. That representation is confined to matters that would result in dismissal, suspension, or demotion and that the representation cannot result in any cost to the employee. Reserves are not covered by the Memorandum of Understanding and are not recognized as members of any of the five sanctioned collective bargaining groups within the City. Frankly speaking, a Reserve may have real exposure to their personal assets without full benefit of Industrial Due Process afforded career officers. Reserve Officers may suffer reputation damage that could follow the interview of an officer. It is for that reason for the same reasons that we have provided protections for Reserves, the PLEA Board of Trustees, in consultation with its counsel, have decided to disclose our concerns and prospective challenges that may present themselves to you as a Reserve.

The 2007-2009 PLEA Board wishes to thank every member for their vote in the recent election. We are honored and consider it a privilege to serve you.

Levi Bolton - Chairman of the Board
Mark Spencer - President
Danny Boyd - Vice President
Joe Clure - Treasurer/Negotiator
Billy Coleman - Secretary/Membership
David Dager - Trustee/Representation
Mark Enegren - Trustee/Representation
Jerry Gannon - Trustee/Representation
Dave Koth - Trustee/Representation
Karen Lewsader - Trustee/Representation
Bobby Palma - Trustee
To advise or not to advise

Jerry Gunson
Truer, Square Peak

The Best Buy in Insurance

Have you ever considered the purchase of a personal umbrella liability policy? The cost per million of coverage can be as low as $200, or (even a little less) per $1,000,000 of coverage. This coverage usually requires a minimum unattached auto & personal liability limits (Homeowners)

$250,000/$500,000/$100,000 and $500,000 respectively.

The umbrella coverage is the top of the underlying coverage's. So let's take a look at how it works...

Say you have an auto accident in your personal vehicle and you are sued by the family of the person you ran over. They go to court and get a judgment against you for $1,100,000. Your auto policy would defend you and pay first, the umbrella would pay second.

Auto policy liability limits

$250,000 - bodily injury per person
$500,000 - bodily injury per accident
$1,000,000 - property damage

Umbrella Limits

$1,000,000

In the case of the example; the auto policy would pay $250,000 and the umbrella would pay $850,000 for the total settlement of $1,100,000.

The valuable catastrophe personal protection is available from most insurance companies. It is recommended that the insurance company covering the automobile liability & personal liability be the company that writes the umbrella. This will eliminate potential conflicts in the settlement of claims.

Some insurance companies will write excess or umbrella liability including coverage over the top of uninsured & underinsured motorist coverage. This is an important coverage to your ability to recover damages from your insurance company for bodily injury you may suffer from or underinsured vehicle hitting you and causing you or another family member injury.

Two New Precincts!

Jerry Gunson
Truer, Square Peak

Two new precincts are coming in a theater near you. No really! Two new precincts! One is scheduled to break ground in 2006 the other 2009. I recently sat on the precinct planning committee, one of my new jobs thanks to your vote. This is a big task with an incredible amount of planning involved. I have met most of the people on the committee and cannot say enough of the skills they bring to the task. The design of new precincts is a daunting task. I heard that one design had the prisoner's area away from the officer's area. Officers would have to walk a round the corner before entering the facility. I usually watch the council meetings from the committee in charge of the plans caught that. It's not just planning the building though, there is so much more. Computer networking, CAD/dispatch, precinct realignments (beat areas), support staff from desk aides to mechanics, to name just a few. As this develops I will keep you advised.

400 SMP's First Annual Fund Raiser

On Thursday, July 26, 2007 members of PLEA joined with officers at the South Mountain Precinct Fund Raiser to benefit Sean Connelly's son Riley. Good food, camaraderie and friendship were all evident as everyone joined together for a great cause. In spite of the heat, the volunteer chefs kept cooking and served everyone with a smile. Visitors and guests from many other bureaus and precincts like Phoenix PD were happy to return their support. Our public safety family pulled together for a great cause. Our prayers and thoughts are with the entire Connelly family.