



# GOLF COURSE GUNFIGHT

In September of 1972 the California Robbery Investigators Association (CRIA) was formed to promote a closer coordinated relationship among robbery investigations throughout the state with a view towards a more extensive and rapid dissemination and exchange of information concerning robbery suspects and investigations. The CRIA would support legislation that would have positive impact on reducing robbery crimes. There would also be encouragement of developing new methods and techniques that would assist in the apprehension of robbery suspects.

Two law enforcement legends from the world of Los Angeles Robbery Investigations were key players in the success of the California Robbery Investigators Association. Los Angeles Police Department Detective Sergeant Jack "Mr. Robbery" Giroud (EOW 01-05-19) and Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department Detective Sergeant Frank "Mr. Curmudgeon" O'Farrell (EOW 02-02-16). Before the End of Watch, Jack and Frank were the the primary champions and ambassadors of CRIA. Their loyalty, dedication, and hard work made CRIA one of the best law enforcement organizations in the state.

**In the history of the prestigious CRIA "Officer of the Year" award only three San Diego County Deputy Sheriff's have been recipients; Noah Zarnow (2018), Anthony Radicia (2005) and Terry Lawson (2001).**

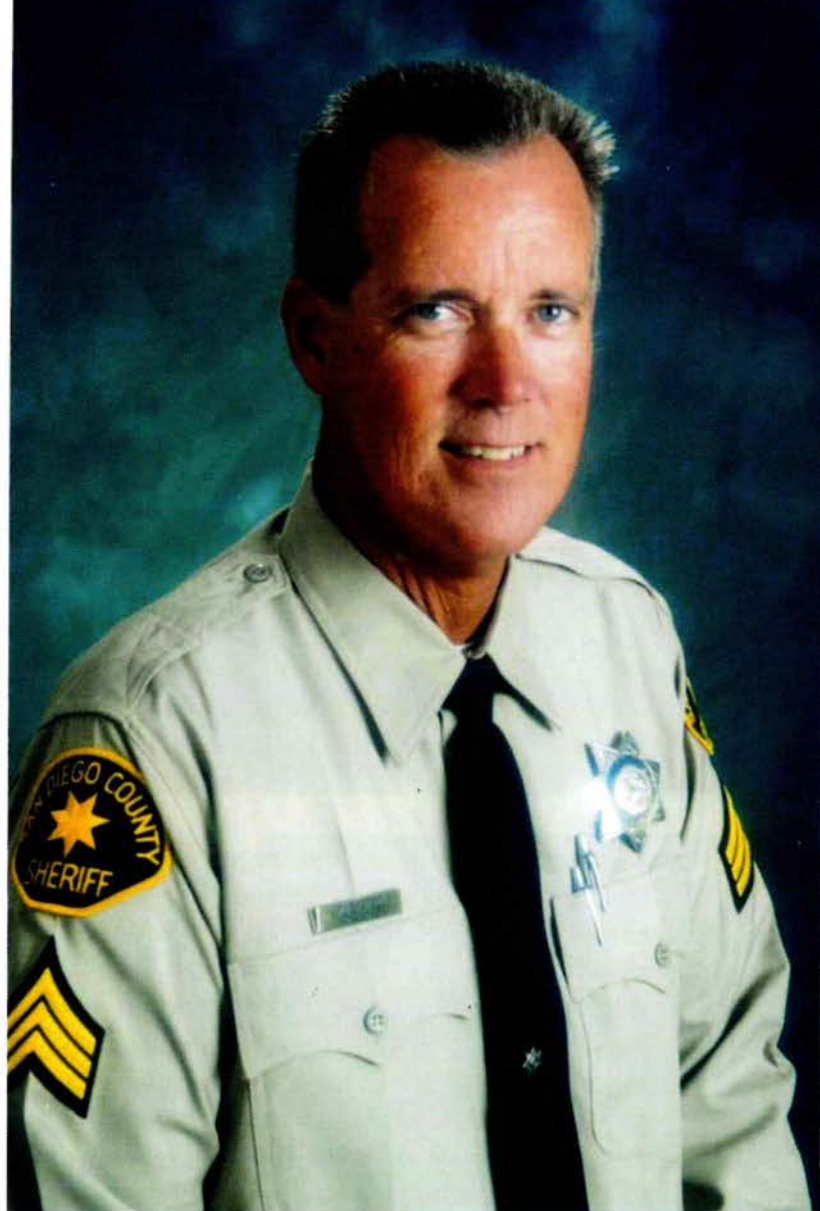
The California Robbery Investigators Association is unique because at the training conference there is no "Investigator of the Year" award. What I like the most about CRIA is the "Officer of the Year" award. The award is presented annually to a California Law Enforcement Officer who, while working in a uniformed non-investigative capacity, distinguishes him or herself for outstanding police work in a robbery related investigation.

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Retired Sergeant Terry Lawson's End of Watch came on November 7, 2023. Terry became the 2001 CRIA Officer of the Year because of his actions while arresting bank robbery suspects. It should be noted Terry also received the San Diego County Sheriff's Department Medal of Honor and the Memorial Wake Americanism Award for this case.

On June 1, 1999 at 1735 hours an armed robbery occurred at the Wells Fargo Bank, 245 Santa Helena, Solana Beach. Just before the lone bank robber entered a get away vehicle, driven by a second suspect, a concealed dye pack in the money exploded. A citizen saw this and called the Sheriff's Department. The citizen also flagged down a Sheriff's patrol car. Deputy Terry Lawson stopped to personally receive the suspect description, vehicle information, and direction of travel. With no time to waste, pedal to the metal, Deputy Lawson was on the hunt. Five minutes later he spotted the vehicle, notified the Communications Center, and began to follow at a distance. He made the appropriate decision to wait for a cover unit to assist with a felony stop. He was advised no cover was near by. All cover units were responding from a distance, trying to negotiate rush hour traffic.

The loose tail continued, but Deputy Lawson could tell the suspects were aware of his presence by their movements in the vehicle. Suddenly, the driver slammed on the brakes coming to an abrupt stop in the roadway. Terry stopped behind the vehicle, got out, and began a felony stop. The driver got out and laid prone in the roadway. The passenger slid over to the driver seat and drove off. The prone person said he was forced to drive the car against his will. He complied with all of Deputy Lawson's commands. He did not match the description of the suspect who ran out of the bank. Deputy Lawson made the appropriate split second



decision. Using his intimidating 6 foot 8 inch physical stature and no nonsense tone of voice, he ordered the person to stand by. As Deputy Lawson took off after the suspect vehicle, he radioed another unit to pick up the person. Deputy Lawson's powerful command presence worked - the person waited. When contacted he pretended to be a victim. He was detained. It was subsequently determined he was involved in the bank robbery as a wheel man. It was no surprise that he had prior robbery convictions.

Deputy Lawson went in Code 3 pursuit of the vehicle as a light rain was coming down. The driver failed to yield, doing his best to evade his pursuer. The suspect was on Puerto Del Sol when he lost control south of Las Palomas. The vehicle crashed through a wood fence, and into a tree on the Morgan Run Golf Course.



The suspect reached into the car, produced an A.A. Arms, AP9, semi-automatic pistol, and started shooting at his pursuer.

The suspect had taken a prone position utilizing good concealment from a small rise in the earth. The suspect would pop up, fire and duck out of sight. Terry could not get a clear aim. He had a tranquil moment. He needed a new tactic to stop the attempts on his life. He decided to make a controlled, calculated skip-shot. With extraordinary nerve-steeling, calmed breathing, and proper trigger control, Deputy Lawson made an amazing 34 yard precision skip-shot which entered the would-be killers forehead.

Deputy Lawson stopped and began a felony stop. The suspect got out of his vehicle, walked around to the front and side of it. He refused to follow Deputy Lawson's commands. The suspect reached into the car, produced an A.A. Arms, AP9, semi-automatic pistol, and started shooting at his pursuer. Deputy Lawson was very much aware of the golf course 7th green behind the shooter and golfers running for cover. Deputy Lawson used the patrol car for cover. He returned fire with his Glock 22, .40 caliber pistol constantly aware of the golf course background. The suspect used his crashed car as cover. When one of his rounds hit the patrol car radiator there was a hot steam eruption that momentarily blinded Deputy Lawson. The would-be killer took advantage of the moment, found a new position away from his car, and fired more rounds trying to kill Deputy Lawson. The rounds were hitting the patrol car windshield. Deputy Lawson returned fire, gun fighting for his life. There were reloading stages for both Deputy Lawson and the suspect who had the advantage of 20 round magazines. The suspect used the nine millimeter semi-automatic pistol to fire 22 rounds at Deputy Lawson. Eight rounds struck the patrol car. Deputy Lawson used strategic movement and sound cover to stay out of harms way.

It was over. Because of his incredible performance under extreme stress, Deputy Lawson was alive. The bank robber, a career criminal and suspect in ten San Diego County bank robberies, was dead. Under the intense pressure of potential death, Deputy Lawson used justifiable deadly force to protect himself. Because of his incredible calm, laser focus, use of superior tactics, and powerful will to survive, Deputy Lawson was able to prevail in the golf course gun fight. The actions of Deputy Terry Lawson were in keeping with the finest traditions of the law enforcement profession and the San Diego County Sheriff's Department.



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