

The Meaning of Dedication, *By Captain Paul Cappitelli*

Below is a partial reprint of the speech made by Captain Paul Cappitelli during the November 1, 2003, NACOP national conference regarding the efforts of two particular Citizen Patrol Volunteers during the California fires.

"When I was asked to come up here today, it was difficult to try and come up with the best words of support and encouragement to a group of you who have already demonstrated through your actions that you are definitely a part of what we do by choice. The words that came to my mind that I thought would really capture the essence of why we are here today were 'Commitment and Dedication'. My plan was to go to Webster's and look at the definition of commitment and dedication and come up with some thoughts that would emphasize why you are here today.

"There is one particular event that occurred last week during the devastating Southern California wild fires that I'd like to share with you as they relate to what I have to say this morning.

"During the fires, I was working at the Sheriff's Command Post assisting with Fire Operations. About 1:30 in the morning, after being up for about 27 hours myself, I headed home to get a few hours sleep. Upon my return to the Incident Command post at about 8:30 the same morning, I was informed that we just determined two of our Citizen Patrol volunteers, Mr. Gerry Armstrong and Mr. Brady Summers, were still on post directing traffic away from the

fire at one of the most critical junctures in the area. As an Incident Commander, that is your worst fear. When the resources start coming and you start deploying people your worst fear is that someone will get deployed somewhere and they will spend time beyond what is expected of them. The average time we were all putting in was 12 to 14 hours and that is about as much time as you can expect for an individual to put in. These two gentleman were at that critical post for over 18 hours!

"When I learned of this, I drove up to their location and I tried the best I could to apologize because it really was a very difficult thing to know they were up there all that time. I got to tell you, here they are, while I'm talking to them and apologizing, both still directing traffic. Their white COP shirts were black with soot, their faces looked like raccoons from where they had their masks and goggles on (to protect from the smoke and ashes). They were just a sight, but still both bright and alert. It was interesting what they said when I told them how sorry we were for leaving them at this post so long - they told me 'we just figured this was our duty, this was our job.'

"Afterwards, we took them both back

to the Command Post to make sure they were fed and had enough to eat while I sent my Sheriff's Service Specialist down to WalMart to get some new clothes for them and put them up in a hotel to make sure they received the rest they needed.

"But at that moment when I shook both of their hands, I realized I didn't need to go to the Webster's dictionary to look up the definition of Commitment and Dedication, it was standing right in front of me. (in both Gerry and Brady)"



Captain Paul Cappitelli served as the Commander of the San Bernardino County, California, Sheriff's Chino Hills Station from October 2001 to December 2003. Captain Cappitelli is a 25-year veteran of the Sheriff's Department. During his tenure he has completed numerous assignments at various ranks including patrol officer, traffic enforcement officer, field training officer, homicide investigator, custody supervisor, patrol supervisor, media relations supervisor and administrative executive officer. Captain Cappitelli is a member, past and present, of various professional network groups with his most active involvement in the California Peace Officers' Association (CPOA) where he currently serves as 4th Vice President on the Executive Committee.



Pictured above are Mr. Gerry Armstrong and Mr. Brady Summers, Citizen Patrol Volunteers with the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Spring Valley Lakes unit. Both gentlemen were the topic of Captain Cappitelli's speech on the "Meaning of Dedication" for their tireless duty during the October 2003 Southern California Wildfires after spending 18 hours non-stop directing traffic away from the fire danger.