

F.A.C.S. REPORT

FOUNDATION for the ADVANCEMENT of CHRISTIAN STUDIES
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"Bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ" (2 Cor. 10:5)

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FREEZE! POLICE!"

"The suspect was surprised. He switched his attention — and his AK-47 — from my partner to me. All I could think to do was to put him down. I fired, twice.

"BAM! BAM!"

"I saw the flash from the AK-47's muzzle before I heard the discharge.

"KABOOM!"

"The _____ was trying to kill me! I fired again, four times in rapid succession. 'BAM! BAM! BAM! BAM!' Then: 'CLICK! CLICK!' The hammer of my gun hit on an empty cylinder. I was puzzled and scared. I knew I had hit the suspect with multiple rounds. But he still stood. There was no time to ponder why. I reached for my speedy loader. My eyes were focused on the suspect. He looked puzzled, too. I opened the chamber of my revolver and dumped the spent shell casings, then reloaded quickly, in a second or two.

"The suspect looked at his weapon as though it were a curious object he'd never seen before. He began to stagger. He dropped the AK-47 and fell to his knees, then keeled over. He faced away from me when he fell. I yelled:

"LET ME SEE YOUR _____ HANDS!"

"The suspect slowly began to raise his hands. I was scared. I was angry. I was frightened and mad because the suspect had tried to kill me. Now, for any reason, any reason at all, I would not hesitate to empty six rounds into the suspect's back and blow him away."

Thus ended a particular event in August 1989 for field sergeant Stacey C. Koon of the 77th Street Police Division, Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD). This is what it is like living as a cop in the roughest police division in Los Angeles.

And it's not just the guns that are dangerous.

ChokeHold

by Ian Hodge

Try a little PCP, for instance. PCP, phencyclidine, or "angel dust," as it is known on the streets of Los Angeles, is a powerful hallucinogenic anesthetic developed for use with animals. It has extraordinary results on human beings.

Again in the 77 Street Division. The year, 1987. The suspect: "A small man, only about five-feet, six-inches tall, and weighing only about 140 pounds. What harm could he do with six officers on the scene?" Sgt. Koon was about to learn the hard way.

First, an officer fired a TASER at the man. Now a TASER sounds like a futurist space gun of some sort. In fact, it is a device that delivers 50,000 volts to the person on the end of the gun.¹ In training, LAPD officers learn that a TASER will bring down a buffalo. On this night, Sgt. Koon had a new lesson: an electric charge of fifty thousand volts has little effect on someone high on PCP.

The man ran. Sgt. Koon let him have it with another round of the TASER. This time the TASER didn't work. Sparks began flying out of the wires of the TASER and the hands of the suspect as he grabbed the wires connected to the TASER. He charged Sgt. Koon whose only defence, apart from his gun, was a well-aimed kick to the suspect's scrotum. The suspect crumpled to the ground, was handcuffed and booked.

These are the kind of events that occur in the life of a LA cop. They are also the events that will colour a policeman's judgment next time he faces someone with a gun, or someone with PCP. A man like Sgt. Koon, after almost 15 years in the police force, most of it on the streets in some

of the toughest parts of Los Angeles, begins to become wiser and smarter. He takes no risks. He knows what people can do when on drugs or armed. After 15 years on the streets, Sgt. Koon takes no chances.

Nor was Sgt. Koon a fool. He held at the time two masters degrees, one in criminal justice. Yet despite his academic learning, he loved the streets of the city. He loved putting away criminals. He loved to make sure that the 95% of decent, law-abiding citizens of the city were kept as free as possible from the troubles caused by the minority 5%.

This backdrop, however, coloured Sgt. Koon's judgement on March 3, 1991. That night, one of the most important in the decade for the police of Los Angeles, was the night that George Holliday set his video camera going after a disturbance outside his home. It was after midnight, the darkest hour, and his camera captured an eerie scene. Five police vehicles and nine police officers, four from the California Highway Patrol (CHP)² and five from the LAPD, were illuminated by the spotlight from a police helicopter hovering overhead. Sirens were wailing, lights flashing. A crowd was gathering. All the officers were crouched behind the doors of their vehicles, guns drawn. Two passengers in the vehicle submitted themselves to the police. The driver of the vehicle refused to obey orders. Instead, he got out of the car and danced in the streets. After making rude signs and gestures to the officer in the CHP pursuit vehicle, Officer Melanie Singer who, with husband Officer Tim Singer, had first sighted the speeding vehicle, approached the man with gun drawn.

1. The acronym stands for "Thomas A. Swift Electric Rifle". Small darts are fired at a person, and as long as they lodge in the clothing or skin, 50,000 volts of electricity are delivered to the person on the end of the gun.

2. The TV series "CHIPS" made the CHP famous.

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Editor: Ian Hodge

It was a dangerous situation. Sgt. Koon was concerned. In the LAPD officers are not encouraged to approach suspects with guns drawn unless absolutely essential. If the suspect, a huge man weighing about 250 pounds had decided to grab the gun from Officer Singer, there was little she could do to prevent him — short of shooting him on the spot. Sgt. Koon decided to take charge. As senior officer on the scene, he instructed all officers to holster their guns, and for Officer Singer to step away from the suspect. It was his intention to defuse the situation so this suspect could be apprehended without serious injury either to the suspect or to police officers.

The Suspect

Sgt. Koon's description of the suspect on this particular night is vivid. "First of all, he was big. Very big. Then, shortly after getting out of the car, he had assaulted an officer. It quickly became evident that he was on something, alcohol or drugs. At the time, I believed it to be PCP. . . . [M]y initial suspicions were that this guy was an ex-con and either drunk or on drugs. As it turned out, both hunches were correct."

With the experiences such as those described above in his past, Sgt. Koon was not about to take chances with a suspect who weighed in at around 250 pounds and was thought to be on PCP. In addition, the man's broad, muscular shoulders made him look like an ex-convict, a man who had built up his muscle-tone while in prison, as many prisoners do. This man, thought Koon, was dangerous. He treated him as such.

Anyway, the man's immediate activities already raised alarm bells. He was spotted speeding by Officers Melanie and Tom Singer on a Los Angeles highway. Melanie Singer was

driving, and despite reaching speeds of 115 m.p.h. couldn't catch the Hyundai Excel being driven by the suspect. Once he knew the CHP cruiser was on his tail, he became reckless in attempts to evade the police. At one time he turned across three lanes of traffic at over 80 m.p.h. without warning. He failed to halt at traffic lights and stop signs, and now, almost eight miles later, he had stopped and was confronted by armed police. He refused to obey orders: "GET OUT OF THE VEHICLE; HANDS UP. GET ON YOUR STOMACH. PUT YOUR HANDS BEHIND YOUR BACK. NOW! MOVE IT!"

Now that the officers had holstered their guns as commanded, Sgt. Koon set in motion the steps to apprehend the suspect. The first steps in LAPD procedures provided the physical presence of the police as a means to induce compliance from a suspect. The second required verbal commands. Both had failed. Sgt. Koon tried step three, a police "swarm." Four LAPD officers grabbed the suspect, one on each arm and leg. Normally a swarm is conducted with six or more officers, but Sgt. Koon only had four LAPD-trained officers to use. He took what was available, and tried his best. The suspect, however, threw the four officers off as if he were brushing off flies. This man was abnormally strong!

Next came the TASER. "GET DOWN. LIE (sic) ON THE GROUND; GET YOUR HANDS BEHIND YOUR BACK! DO IT NOW OR I'LL TASE YOU." The suspect ignored the warning. ZAP! Fifty thousand volts of electricity hit the suspect. The suspect "is on his knees. He's kind of grimacing and making a bear-like groan. He sags, briefly, then he starts coming up again. He has overcome the first TASER." Sgt. Koon fired the TASER a second time. The suspect's on the ground. He "let out a loud groan. Then, incredibly, he leaned to his right, braced himself on his right elbow, and began rising. The TASER hadn't stopped him." Energy sufficient to halt two buffaloes had not stopped this suspect.

The suspect rose. He charged one of the officers. The police were scared. The suspect was not trying to run away, but charging at the officers. What should they do?

By now Sgt. Koon had only one course of action left. He could order that the suspect be shot. Or, before such drastic measures, he could increase the use of physical force in an effort to subdue the suspect. He decided to increase physical force before

Taxgatherers

by Ian Hodge

Then came also publicans to be baptized, and said unto him, Master, what shall we do?

And he said unto them, Exact no more than that which is appointed you. (Luke 3:12-13).

In the New Testament one group of citizens is continually associated with sinners and harlots. This is the group known as the "publicans," or *publicani*. Clearly they were a despised group. Whenever Jesus associated Himself with them He was criticised for fraternising with "publicans and sinners." Zacchaeus, a rich man, was "chief among the publicans" (Luke 19:2). It is often suggested that Zacchaeus was a tax gatherer, and he may have been. But the description in Luke's gospel is of Zacchaeus the publican.

By the time of the second century B.C. the *publicani* had become quite a powerful class of people. Because of their business status, they soon became quite wealthy, and although it seems they did not share formal power with the Roman Senators, they certainly wielded a powerful influence on the affairs of the nation.

The *publicani* were not publicans as we understand the word, hotel-keepers, but people who supplied many services to the government of Rome. Some businessmen today in Australia would probably qualify for the designation *publicani*. In the Roman Empire they had contracts supplying food and clothing to the army or they supplied provisions for the Roman religious festivals, for example. The "privatisation" programs of various governments, commenced by Lady Margaret Thatcher in England in the late 1970s, is a return to an older idea of allowing many public services to be supplied by private contract.

The *publicani* were not government servants in the sense that we know them today, yet they came to acquire enormous influence over the Roman government and the people. Since one of the tasks they contracted for was tax farming, it is no wonder they were hated. And Jesus mixed freely with these "publicans and sinners."

Tax farming, that is, selling the right to collect taxes is an ancient practice that survived in parts of the world until very late in the nineteenth century. Throughout the ages, tax collectors have thus been hated, primarily because people instinctively realise something is wrong with the confiscation of their property — even the *legal* (as

resorting to the gun in the hope that the suspect could be brought in alive.

The LAPD officers carry a metal PR 24 baton. This was to be the next effort to apprehend the suspect. Sgt. Koon ordered the use of batons, and the three LAPD officers complied. They plied the suspect with power strokes in an effort to get him to remain still, face down, hands behind, so they could handcuff him. But despite the severe increase in physical force by the officers, the suspect continually tried to rise from the ground ready to charge the officers. In one last remaining effort, Sgt. Koon ordered they strike the suspect's joints — wrists, knees, ankles. Painful? You can be certain. The alternative? Use a revolver. The result? The suspect capitulated, allowing himself to be handcuffed.

The suspect could have been dead. He might be injured from the power strokes of the batons, but at least he would be alive. Subsequent medical examination, however, found no serious injury with the suspect. Not surprising for someone high on drugs, especially PCP.

The officers could have used another weapon, the chokehold. Here a suspect is held around the neck from behind and choked into submission. But due to political backlash the chokehold had been barred from use by the LAPD. Police on this night could not even use a net, or a blanket which acts like a straight-jacket. It is run around the suspect and "zipped" together to bind a suspects hands by his side and prevent him from escaping. But neither of these options were available because the LAPD, supposedly one of the great police forces in the country, does not provide these kind of apprehension devices to its officers. The LAPD is behind the times, it seems.

So Sgt. Koon used the tools at his disposal as dictated by LAPD policy. "Our use of force was unusually powerful," said Sgt. Koon. "But [the suspect] had come through it without serious injury. He hurt, but he was alive and in custody. Neither were any officers injured. And that's what a cop's use of force is supposed to accomplish."

The last five minutes or so of the events on that night were captured on George Holliday's video camera. The film did not show the high speed car chase, nor did it show the suspect's refusal to comply with verbal orders from the police officers. It did, vividly,

capture the beating that the suspect received by the police batons when he refused to comply with orders. It also showed, for the astute viewer, the suspect continually rising, refusing to obey orders. It showed the police hitting the suspect, then standing back waiting for him to obey. It was only when the suspect disobeyed that the police resumed the use of the baton — until the suspect obeyed the orders given to him.

Out of the total of five minutes of video, the world was to see only an 82-second clip, the most-watched piece of film apart from the assassination of John F. Kennedy and the explosion of the Challenger space launch. Those fortunate enough to view the video in totality, in slow motion, with adequate explanation of the events as they transpired came to conclusions unlike those whose emotions ran away with them when they saw the police beating the suspect.

Rodney King was alive, thanks to Sgt. Koon's tactics, and about to become a famous figure in America.³ The jury, who heard Sgt. Koon's version of events and story of the other LAPD officers involved, returned the only verdict possible in the circumstances: not guilty. The black community responded. Within forty-eight hours 38 people would be dead, another 1,419 were injured; four thousand had been arrested. The Los Angeles Fire Department responded to 3,767 calls. The city burned.

The great caricature of justice was expressed by LA mayor Tom Bradley, when he commented upon the outcome of the trial of the four LAPD officers. "I was stunned. I was shocked. I was outraged. I was speechless when I heard the verdict. Today this jury told the world that what we all saw with our own eyes was not a crime. The jury's verdict will never blind the world to what we saw on the videotape."⁴ Apparently a jury of twelve, who had access to the whole George Holliday video, unlike those who saw only an edited 82-second clip of the events — the most dramatic parts, naturally — could not come to a correct decision on the events of the night of March 3, 1991.

Not even the President at the time, George Bush, could keep out of the case. He said: "Viewed from the outside, it was hard to understand how the verdict could possibly square with the video."⁵ This was to be trial by video. Or trial by the media. The facts of the

opposed to moral) confiscation of property.

Mind you, tax farming had some benefits. First, it was the easy way for kings and emperors to gain their revenue. In effect, they sold the right to collect taxes. The tax collector guaranteed payment to the ruler, and then it was his task to collect this, plus profit, from the tax payers.

A second advantage of tax farming was again to favour the ruler. If he wished to get rid of an opponent or merely someone he disliked, he made them a tax collector then sent them out to collect delinquent farm taxes. Apparently in the later Roman period, not many of those survived. (I was told by someone who should know that in some parts of Tennessee the tax collectors can still face a loaded gun if they try to collect.)

Sentiments concerning tax collectors are nothing new. But for readers' interest (and not necessarily repetition!), we include comments by a second century A.D. scholar, Pollux, from his *Onomasticon*:

"Should you wish to abuse a tax farmer, you might try saying: burden, pack-animal, garotter, sneak-thief, shark, hurricane, oppressor of the down-trodden, inhuman, nail in my coffin, insatiable, immoderate, Shylock, violator, strangler, crusher, highwayman, strip-Jack-naked, snatcher, thief, overcharger, reckless, shameless, unblushing, pain in the neck, savage, wild, inhospitable, brute, dead weight, obstacle, heart of stone, flotsam, pariah, and all the other vile terms you can find to apply to someone's character."

* * * *

Deacon and Elder

A farmer had advertised his cow for sale.

"How much?" inquired the prospective buyer.

"Seven hundred dollars . . . a bargain actually, the farmer replied.

"How much milk does she give?"

"Seven gallons a day," he replied.

"How do I know that this cow is really that good?" asked the buyer.

"Oh, you can trust me," assured the farmer. "I'm a church deacon, you know."

"I trust you. I'll take the cow home, and bring you back the money later. You can trust me . . . I'm a church elder."

When the deacon arrived home, he asked his wife, "What is an elder?"

3. The version of events, and the quotations cited above are from the book by Sgt. Stacey C. Koon, *Presumed Guilty: The Tragedy of the Rodney King Affair* (Washington, DC: Regnery Gateway, 1992).

4. *Los Angeles Times*, pp. A-1, A-23, A-24, April 30, 1992, quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 205.

case, plus an understanding of Sgt. Koon's reasons for his orders on that night were to be kept out of the debate. The guilt of four persons — in this case all LAPD police officers — was presumed! Facts were not about to change people's minds. Someone said, "Never let the facts get in the way of a good story." (If someone never said it, it doesn't matter. It sounds good, anyway.)

Tragedy

There were a number of tragedies to come out of the Rodney King affair, according to Sgt. Koon. *First*, there was the complete ruin of the careers of four police officers. Despite their clearance of charges of brutality in the Rodney King arrest — the events of that night were strictly within department guidelines — the subsequent Federal indictment of civil rights abuse was to finish the careers of these four men, at least within the LAPD.

Second, the media stand indicted for their refusal to portray events as they actually happened. The selective 82-second clip was a more vivid story than the additional 3-1/2 minutes conveniently left out of the media display. The subsequent LA riots are probably more a product of distorted media reporting than they are of the not guilty verdict of the Simi Valley court jury. When they could have shown the world that four officers did their job as they were trained, instead the media highlighted an apparent abuse of civil rights, and made a criminal issue one of race rather than justice.

A *third* tragedy is the LAPD itself. Officers no longer trust the senior officers who did not support Sgt. Koon and officers Powell, Wind, and Briseno. Despite the fact that no internal departmental investigation found any breach of regulations on the part of Sgt. Koon in handling Rodney King, the officers received no support from the LAPD itself in their trials. They were all suspended without pay, and had to immediately find other sources of income or starve. It was over a year later before they came to trial, and when they were found innocent by the jury which heard arguments from both sides, they sided with the officers — not because they were racists, but because they knew that Rodney King was an ex-con who was endangering the life of police officers on that night.

Fourth, Rodney King is possibly the most serious tragedy. He has been

kept locked away by those seeking damages from the Los Angeles city. Apparently he's seeking one million dollars for every blow he received, and they claim 56 blows in total.⁶ (The video was to show that 23 strokes never hit their target.) An ex-con, alleged wife-beater whose sexual preferences appear to be for transvestite prostitutes, Rodney King — the real Rodney King — is not to make an appearance. It appears he is kept drugged and out of circulation, at least until his attempt for compensation is over. If his lawsuit is successful he will show to his peers that a person who is drunk, drives dangerously, endangering the lives of innocent people, and who resists arrest can get off free of charges.

Fifth, justice, in this case, will be the real loser. The chokehold that strangles the legal system — the courts, the lawyers, the judges, and the public — is going to kill the system. Unless principles of justice are restored to the courts of America (and elsewhere), gross injustices of the kind in the Rodney King affair will continue. And, when injustice abounds, so too does tyranny of the government over the people it is supposed to serve.

Conclusion

I found this book of particular interest, since it has been difficult to get a first-hand account of the events that have become known as the Rodney King affair. While Sgt. Koon's book is his personal defence, written in the heat of disappointment, frustration, and anger at a justice system that has let him and his three colleagues down, it nevertheless provides us with a picture of the events as they transpired.

Given the racial situation in Australia, it is not too hard to imagine a similar case occurring in Australia. We should hope and pray that such does not occur, for the result can only be the end of justice, and an introduction of the idea that the innocent are to be presumed guilty, despite the facts. This would be a sad, sad day for the criminal justice system in Australia.

It would mean, of course, that lies and injustice had established a chokehold on the Australian media and courts. Such an event should be avoided at all costs. After all, it is our children who may well suffer more than we do ourselves, not to mention our testimony to everything that is right and true.

"An elder," she explained, "is about the same as a deacon."

"Oh, my gosh," groaned the deacon. "I've just lost my cow!"

* * * *

Congratulations

Readers may recall an article we published last April by Angus McGilivray, "A Letter to Susan." At the time, there was some suspicion that the pages of this newsletter were being used for surreptitious purposes.

For those of you who were concerned at the time, and for those who have been missing those excellent essays by Angus, we are pleased (and proud, because of the part we apparently played in the events), that Angus and "Susan" have announced their engagement and are to be married in 1994. I know all our subscribers will join in wishing Angus and the bride-to-be (real name: Heather) all the best for the future and God's richest blessing on their forthcoming marriage.

* * * *

David Chilton

We are saddened to report that David Chilton suffered a very severe heart attack early in January this year. David was unconscious for more than 18 days. All the doctors attending him, from the neurologist down to the general practitioner, were agreed that David would not recover.

God, however, often has other plans. At the time of going to print, David has regained consciousness, is intermittently recognising people, trying to communicate, and making every effort to get out of bed. Family and friends, naturally, are giving God all the praise for the remarkable recovery thus far, since it defies the best medical opinions. From a human perspective, David has a long recovery process, since he must recover his speech and movement abilities.

Your prayers for David, his wife Darlene, and children, will be appreciated. David and his family were due to visit Australia in March this year under the sponsorship of Light Educational Ministries in Canberra, a visit that, under the circumstances, has been cancelled.

5. Transcript of the televised speech by President Bush, May 1, 1992, quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 193.

6. A demand since modified to \$US13.5 million. The LA City Council has decided not to contest the action.