



Service Thursday for Orcutt's Officer May

Santa Maria Times

By Quintin Cushner/Senior Staff Writer

The decorated police officer and Orcutt resident shot to death Saturday while on patrol for the East Palo Alto Police Department will be honored Thursday during a noon memorial service at the H.P. Pavilion in San Jose.

Throngs of police officers, public officials, friends and family are expected at the event honoring Officer Richard May, the 38-year-old married father of three daughters who commuted to his job in the Bay Area city. Details of a Central Coast memorial service reportedly will be finalized today.

May's friends and family were reeling Monday from his death.

The officer's father, Richard May Sr., said his son had aspirations to be a police chief and wished to cut his teeth in gritty East Palo Alto when he took the job there 18 months ago. May stayed with his mother and stepfather while on-duty, then led a happy domestic life in Orcutt when off, his father said.

After graduating in 1985 from San Luis Obispo High School, May spent a transformative seven years in the U.S. Marine Corps Reserves. He served overseas in 1991 during Operation Desert Storm.

"In high school, he was a nice kid like everybody else," Richard May Sr. said of his son. "When he came out of the Marine Corps he was a proud, upstanding person."

May also thrived as an officer in the Lompoc Police Department. During his 15-year career in Lompoc, he distinguished himself for his work with juveniles, working as a D.A.R.E. officer and founding a police activities league, said Lompoc Police Sgt. Mike Collins. Officers at that department wore black bands across their badges Monday to recognize May.

"He was hardworking and liked to help the community," Collins said.

May in 1994 received the prestigious H. Thomas Guerry Award from the Santa Barbara Citizens Council on Crime for his role in saving the life of a victim suffering from cardiac arrest. In 1997 he was honored with the Distinguished Service Award from the Santa Barbara County Probation Department for his work with juveniles.

But the officer was at his best when spending time with his three daughters, ages 9, 13 and 17, Richard May Sr. said.

"That's how I remember him," the man said. "Smiling with his kids."

That sentiment was echoed by neighbor and friend Marcy Simms, who remembers May playing soccer or throwing catch with his daughters. He also helped coach his youngest daughter's soccer and softball teams.

"He was just a great family guy who loved his kids so much," Simms said. "He loved being a police officer and he died doing what he loved. He's a hero in anyone's book."

May was shot about 5 p.m. Saturday after responding to a disturbance at the Villa Taqueria off University Avenue in Palo Alto, police said.

The officer approached 23-year-old known gang member Alberto Alvarez, who was walking away from the business. Alvarez turned around and opened fire on May, then tried to scale a fence and escape, police said. When he could not climb the fence, Alvarez returned to May and fatally shot him, according to police.

Alvarez was arrested Sunday on suspicion of killing May. He is being held without bail in San Mateo County Jail in Redwood City.

May leaves behind his wife Diana May and daughters Lauren, 9; Deanna, 13; and stepdaughter Brittany, 17. Other survivors include his father, Richard May Sr. and stepmother Lynn May of San Luis Obispo; mother Clarice Merrill and stepfather Frank Merrill of Atherton; sister Tami McMillan and four half-siblings.

Friends of the family are hosting a benefit barbecue from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Sunday in the parking lot of Long's drug store, at 4852 South Bradley Road in Orcutt.

Separate memorial services in Santa Maria are set for this week and may be finalized today, Collins said.

Quintin Cushner can be reached at 739-2217 or qcushner@santamariatimes.com.

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