

INTRADEPARTMENTAL CORRESPONDENCE

BPC #11-0131

March 15, 2011

7.6

TO: The Honorable Board of Police Commissioners

FROM: Chief of Police

SUBJECT: RECOMMENDATION FOR THE POLICE COMMISSION CITATION

RECOMMENDED ACTION

1. That the Board of Police Commissioners award the Police Commission Citation to:

Mr. Steve Sotello, Private Citizen

Mr. Chris Oxley, Private Citizen

Mr. David Taylor, Private Citizen

DISCUSSION

POLICE COMMISSION CITATION

MR. STEVE SOTELLO, PRIVATE CITIZEN

MR. CHRIS OXLEY, PRIVATE CITIZEN

MR. DAVID TAYLOR, PRIVATE CITIZEN

On August 15, 2010, at approximately 0935 hours, Mr. Robert Edlefsen, 69 years old, was stopped for a solid red tri-light on Burbank Boulevard at Vesper Avenue, Van Nuys, in his classic 1932 Ford Coupe. Without warning, Edlefsen was rear-ended by a 2010 Hyundai Sonata. The violent collision caused the Hyundai to continue out of control in a southeasterly direction and collide with a tri-light pole, resulting in minor to moderate injuries to its four occupants. Due to the impact, Edlefsen's Ford Coupe immediately caught fire as the vehicle continued in a northeasterly direction, leaving a trail of fuel and fire across the intersection and ultimately coming to rest on the westbound lanes of Burbank Boulevard.

A video taken by an amateur videographer memorialized the rescue of Edlefsen from his burning Ford Coupe by the four private citizens.

Steve Sotello, 49 years old was traveling eastbound on Burbank Boulevard and slowing for the red tri-light at Vesper Avenue when he noticed the Ford Coupe stopped facing Eastbound on Burbank Boulevard in the number 2 lane. As Sotello was stopping, he noticed a silver Hyundai collide with the rear of the Ford Coupe at approximately 35 to 40 MPH. Immediately upon

impact, the rear of the Ford Coupe burst into flames and the vehicle was launched out of control, stopping on the westbound lanes of Burbank Boulevard. Sotello stopped his vehicle and noticed that the occupants of the Hyundai were moving and alive. Sotello ran toward the burning Ford Coupe. He did not immediately see the driver. The right side of the Ford was now fully engulfed in flames. Upon arriving to the driver's side door, Sotello noticed that the driver's seat had collapsed rearward and the victim was laid back, unconscious. Sotello attempted to open the door but was unable and yelled for help.

Christopher Oxley, 50 years old, was with his 12-year-old son and both were traveling eastbound on Burbank Boulevard approaching Vesper Avenue. He observed the aftermath of the collision and the Ford Coupe engulfed in flames. Despite requests for his son to not get involved because of the obvious danger, Oxley stopped his car at the intersection and ran toward the burning vehicle to help Sotello.

David Taylor, 49 years old, was driving a six-ton recycling truck westbound Burbank Boulevard approaching Vesper Avenue when he observed the Hyundai coming to a stop at the southeast corner of the intersection. Taylor also noticed a trail of fire on the ground across the intersection, and the Ford Coupe engulfed in flames. As he parked his truck, he noticed two men at the driver's side door of the burning car attempting to open it, but they were having difficulty. Taylor grabbed his crowbar and ran to assist the men. When Taylor arrived, he immediately felt the intense heat of the flames and could not see inside due to the thick smoke. Taylor broke the left rear window of the classic car with his crowbar. He was able to feel a body laying on the driver's seat and attempted to lift and remove him from the car, but the man (Edlefsen) was unconscious and would not move. An unidentified man used a fire extinguisher to temporarily reduce the flames while the three other men worked on rescuing Edlefsen.

Oxley and Taylor felt for the interior of the driver's door handle and located two handles. They moved the handles and pulled on the door repeatedly, eventually opening the door. A combined effort between the three men located a lap belt on Edlefsen. In the thick smoke they felt along the lap belt to locate the latch which was located around the middle of Edlefsen's lap. The latch was released and the three men were able to successfully move Edlefsen to a place of safety, toward the middle of Burbank Boulevard.

The men checked to see if Edlefsen was breathing or needed cardio pulmonary resuscitation. Edlefsen was breathing and within moments the paramedics arrived. One paramedic requested the assistance of Oxley to affix a neck brace on Edlefsen, place him on a backboard, and ultimately load him onto a gurney. The three men were uninjured during the rescue. The fourth man was not identified.

These private citizens are commended for their unflinching courage and reverence for human life. Mr. Sotello, Mr. Oxley, and Mr. Taylor's heroic actions, at great personal risk, were instrumental in rescuing Mr. Edlefsen from his burning vehicle.

The Honorable Board of Police Commissioners

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If you have any additional questions please feel free to contact Captain William Sutton,
Commanding Officer, Air Support Division, at (213) 473-8180.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'C' followed by a series of loops and a final upward stroke.

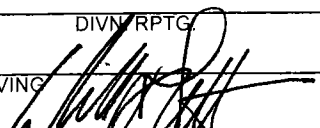
CHARLIE BECK
Chief of Police

Attachments

LOS ANGELES POLICE DEPARTMENT
EMPLOYEE'S REPORT

15.07.00 (04/62)

DR 10-09-16640

SUBJECT Police Commission Citation For Private Citizens			
DATE & TIME OCCURRED 08-15-10 0935		LOCATION OF OCCURRENCE Burbank Boulevard / Vesper Avenue	
TO: (Rank, Name, Assignment, Division) Captain Bill Sutton, Valley Traffic Division		DIVISION OF OCCURRENCE Van Nuys Division	
		DATE & TIME REPORTED 09-09-10 0900	
DETAILS: (IF MORE SPACE IS NEEDED GO TO NEXT PAGE)			
<p>It is recommended that the private citizens who heroically risked their lives to save the life of an unconscious motorist from a burning car be recognized by receiving the Police Commission Citation. Attached is the proposed text for the citation.</p> <p>On August 15, 2010, at approximately 0935 hours, Robert Edlefsen, 69 years old, was stopped for a solid red tri-light eastbound on Burbank Boulevard at Vesper Avenue, Van Nuys, in his classic 1932 Ford Coupe. Without warning, Edlefsen was rear ended by a 2010 Hyundai Sonata. The violent collision caused the Hyundai to continue out of control in a southeasterly direction and collide with a tri-light pole, resulting in minor to moderate injuries to its four occupants. Due to the impact, Edlefsen's Ford Coupe immediately caught fire as the vehicle continued in a northeasterly direction, leaving a trail of fuel and fire across the intersection and ultimately coming to rest on the westbound lanes of Burbank Boulevard.</p> <p>A video taken by an amateur videographer memorialized the rescue of Edlefsen from his burning Ford Coupe by the four private citizens.</p> <p>Steve Sotello, 49 years old, was traveling eastbound on Burbank Boulevard and slowing for the red tri-light at Vesper Avenue when he noticed the Ford Coupe stopped facing eastbound on Burbank Boulevard in the number 2 lane. As Sotello was stopping, he noticed a silver Hyundai collide with the rear of the Ford Coupe at approximately 35 to 40 MPH. Immediately upon impact, the rear of the Ford Coupe burst into flames and the vehicle was launched out of control, stopping on the westbound lanes of Burbank Boulevard. Sotello stopped his vehicle and noticed that the occupants of the Hyundai were moving and alive. Sotello ran toward the burning Ford Coupe. He did not immediately see the driver. The right side of the Ford was now fully engulfed in flames. Upon arriving to the driver's side door, Sotello noticed that the driver's seat had collapsed rearward and the victim was laid back, unconscious. Sotello attempted to open the door but was unable and yelled for help.</p> <p>Christopher Oxley, 50 years old, was with his 12-year-old son and both were traveling eastbound on Burbank Boulevard approaching Vesper Avenue. He observed the aftermath of the collision and the Ford Coupe engulfed in flames. Despite requests from his son to not get involved because of the obvious danger, Oxley stopped his car at the intersection and ran toward the burning vehicle to help Sotello.</p> <p>David Taylor, 49 years old, was driving a six-ton recycling truck westbound Burbank Boulevard approaching Vesper Avenue when he observed the Hyundai coming to a stop at the southeast corner of the intersection. Taylor also noticed a trail of fire on the ground across the intersection, and the Ford Coupe engulfed in flames. As he parked his truck, he noticed two men at the driver's side door of the burning car attempting to open it, but they were having difficulty. Taylor grabbed his crowbar and ran</p>			
DATE & TIME TYPED	DIVN/RPTG	CLERK	EMPLOYEE(S) REPORTING
			D-III William Bustos
SUPERVISOR APPROVING	SERIAL NO.	SERIAL NO.	SERIAL NO. DIVN.
	22626		25029 V.T.D.

EMPLOYEE'S REPORT

CONTINUATION SHEET

to assist the men. When Taylor arrived, he immediately felt the intense heat of the flames and could not see inside due to the thick smoke. Taylor broke the left rear window of the classic car with his crowbar. He was able to feel a body laying on the driver's seat and attempted to lift and remove him from the car, but the man (Edlefsen) was unconscious and would not move. An unidentified man used a fire extinguisher to temporarily reduce the flames while the three other men worked on rescuing Edlefsen.

Oxley and Taylor felt for the interior driver's door handle and located two handles. They moved the handles and pulled on the door repeatedly, eventually opening the door. A combined effort between the three men located a lap belt on Edlefsen. In the thick smoke they felt along the lap belt to locate the latch which was located around the middle of Edlefsen's lap. The latch was released and the three men were able to successfully remove Edlefsen to a place of safety, toward the middle of Burbank Boulevard.

The men checked to see if Edlefsen was breathing or needed cardio pulmonary resuscitation. Edlefsen was breathing and within moments the paramedics arrived. One paramedic requested the assistance of Oxley to affix a neck brace on Edlefsen, place him on a backboard, and ultimately load him onto a gurney.

The three men were uninjured during the rescue. The fourth man was not identified.

If you require additional information, please contact Detective III William Bustos, Officer-in-Charge, Valley Traffic Detectives, at (818) 644-8021.

Police Commission Certificate is hereby presented to:

Steve Sotello
Chris Oxley
David Taylor

TEXT:

In recognition of your unflinching courage and reverence for human life upon risking harm to yourself to save another from a burning vehicle on August 15, 2010, the City of Los Angeles along with the Los Angeles Police Department honors you for your selfless efforts. Your courage and bravery will not be forgotten.

dailynews.com

DRAMA IN SHERMAN OAKS

Weekend Samaritans hailed as heroes

By Susan Abram, Staff Writer

Posted: 08/18/2010 06:54:52 PM PDT

Updated: 08/18/2010 08:25:16 PM PDT



Steve Sotello and Chris Oxley helped rescue Robert Edlefsen from a burning car on Sunday at Burbank Boulevard and Vesper Avenue in Sherman Oaks. (Hans Gutknecht/Staff Photographer)

Four of the five men seen in dramatic amateur video pulling an unconscious driver from a burning classic car in Sherman Oaks on Sunday were identified publicly Wednesday and hailed as heroes.

The men stopped to help after they saw a classic 1932 Ford Victoria sedan engulfed in thick smoke on Burbank Boulevard Sunday morning.

Steve Sotello, a chauffeur who was passing by, was the first to run toward the burning vehicle.

"Nobody was helping me and that's when I called for help," said Sotello, a Van Nuys resident.

Another man, Chris Oxley of Sherman Oaks, heard Sotello shouting and leaped out of his car.

"The guy (Sotello) was screaming, 'Help me! Help me! Help me! He's burning!'"

They were soon joined by Fernando Martinez, David Taylor and another still unidentified man, all frantically working to free the unconscious driver.

The Ford had been rear-ended on Burbank Boulevard at Vesper Avenue. The force of the crash forced the classic sedan into oncoming traffic where it erupted in flames. Robert Edlefsen, a 69-year-old retired accountant, was unconscious inside.

Oxley said he saw an explosion that reminded him of a giant light bulb that popped. He saw black smoke rise at least two stories high.

"There was no way I could just drive away," said Oxley, who is seen in the video in a maroon shirt, helping Sotello.

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"What if that was me in the car and I was expecting someone to help me and no

one did?" Oxley said.

Oxley said he came up on the scene Sunday morning while he was taking his 12-year-old son to a baseball game.

As he prepared to run out of the car, Oxley's son begged him not to go.

"My son was like 'Dad no, it looks dangerous don't go'," and I said 'You know what Bill, I have to go look'."

Several men had joined in to help break windows and to free Edlefsen, who had on an old-fashioned lap belt.

Oxley and the other men freed

Edlefsen and dragged him away from the car. The older man was out cold, but slowly began breathing normally and opened his eyes.



Fernando Martinez and other good samaritans pulled Robert Edlefsen from a burn car on Sunday, Aug.15, 2010, in Sherman Oaks, Calif. (Courtesy of CBS 2 and KCAL 9)

"I saw him start breathing and I actually thought, 'Thank God, no CPR!'"

"I would do it again in a heartbeat" Sotello said. "I wasn't going to leave that guy in the car to burn. I think I would have gone down with him."

Edlefsen, who suffered some cracked vertebrae, bruises and burns, told television reporters Wednesday that he owed the men who saved him.

"I'm so thankful that I'm still here," the 69-year-old retired accountant said. "How thankful I am that there are still people like that. I owe these

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guys my life."

Police did not charge the driver who rear-ended the Ford, calling it an accident.

Police initially did not have the names of the Good Samaritans and issued a call on Monday for the public to help identifying them. Three of them, Oxley, Martinez and Taylor, came forward to police, while Sotello was interviewed by the Daily News Wednesday near the scene of the crash, where he lives nearby.

Meanwhile, police continue to search for more heroes.

"We'd like to recognize them with some kind of commendations," said Deputy Chief Kirk Albanese, head of LAPD's Valley Division.

"They got involved, they risked their safety, and I'm really proud of what they did," Albanese said. "It's so heartwarming to see when people step up because you always hear stories of people who ignore the call for help."

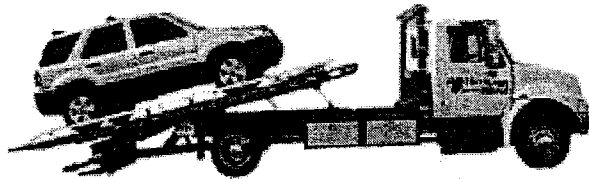
Albanese is encouraging all those involved to contact police at the LAPD's Valley Traffic Division at 818-644-8000.

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