The Spotlight *An Employee Focus*

By: Det Paul Dudley

Certain things make obvious sense about Lt. Dave DeVore. People call him "Bubba" because he's put together like an NFL lineman. He's six-feet-tall and weighs 270 lbs. He has a shaved head and a handlebar mustache. He got his nickname in high school, and everyone still uses it, including his wife.

Bubba steps in to deliver the hurt in the Philippines.

Other things are not so obvious, like the fact that DeVore holds a second-degree black belt in a traditional Filipino martial art called Arnis, a system historically practiced by fighters who perfected the science of speed, precision and fleet footwork. The match seems unlikely for a man who looks like he'd be happier crushing quarterbacks. That's fine with him. The truth is, DeVore moves with alarming quickness and skill, especially when swinging one of Arnis's signature weapons, the rattan stick. In stick-fighting tournaments in the United States and the Philippines, his record stands at 18 wins with only one narrow loss. "It always surprises people," DeVore said in December after returning from a trip to fight and train in the Philippines. "They don't think the big fat guy can move." He can poke fun at himself if he wants, but not many others would.

There are more surprises. He recently got a call from El Paso, Texas informing him he's been nominated for induction into the Filipino Martial Arts Hall of Fame as 2005's Student of the Year.
Not bad for a guy called Bubba. DeVore has trained in Arnis eight years under instructor Punong Guro Myrlino Hufana at the Bellevue Martial Arts Academy. Before that, he served 10 years as a department Defensive Tactics instructor. He credits fellow cops such as Lt. David Sellers and Officers Mike Fry and Joe Engman with much of his early experience and training.

To say DeVore is a dedicated student of Arnis is a classic understatement. He built the bottom floor of his house for training. An Arnis Grandmaster blessed it personally. DeVore has his school's emblem tattooed on his arm. He's in it for good.

Sparring in the Phillippines Islands with Grandmaster Nene Tortal.

On his recent trip to the Philippines with his instructor and several fellow students, he fought in a tournament hosted by the Philippine National Police and paid respect to dozens of masters, called "Guros." He ate, drank, trained and fought with seminal practitioners of the art. He also met Senators and high-ranking police officials in a country often in turmoil. At one function, he looked up and spotted military snipers positioned above the crowd, there to keep the peace. "It was a very enlightening trip," DeVore said.

With Arnis practitioners routinely training and improving well into their 60's, 70's and beyond, DeVore sees endless potential in the art. Plus, he says the Filipino martial arts are perfect for cops, who have to negotiate many kinds of force. "Anything you can do with a stick, you can do with a knife, and you can do with an empty hand."

Some think he's nuts to face armed opponents and injuries in the ring. He's come to work with broken fingers, cracked knuckles, and plenty of "bukols," the raised knots that muscles form when hit by rattan sticks. But his theory is: conflict comes to all police officers. Preparation can make all the difference. DeVore thinks it's far crazier not to train. "Let's face it. We're cops. We're going to get in fights. It's a nasty part of the job, but it happens," he said. "We don't have time to screw around with stuff out here."

Hard training earns DeVore the tools necessary to win the fights he can't avoid. "It's a mindset that you can take a shot and keep going," DeVore said. "This stuff can get me home at night. That's the way I look at it."