

DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE



I hope you all have enjoyed restful and peaceful holidays. The season and the end of yet another year provide us with a great opportunity to be thankful and to reflect on what is truly important in our lives. Perspective takes on renewed importance. I hope we all have benefited from this time and have a renewed energy to continue to serve others.

The NTOA had another successful year in 2023, marked by new records in the number of classes and students, and new courses, special events and webinars. The demand for the training continues to be very high and we are thankful for the opportunity to meet it.

Our profession also experienced tremendous personal loss in recent years. In May 2022 we lost Sid Heal, a true warrior philosopher. Sid left empty shoes unlikely to be filled anytime soon. His contributions to the tactical community are numerous and will be everlasting. Equally devastating, we lost a true icon in the SWAT world with the passing of Ron McCarthy in November. Without question, Ron was a legend. Like Sid, his contributions were numerous and everlasting. I had the honor and privilege to have a front-row seat as I watched Ron personally impact so many people individually, and throughout our profession.

It was Ron McCarthy who brought me into the NTOA many years ago, and he continued to serve as a mentor. While I have many great memories of Ron, and learned so much from him, the one trait I always will admire most was his passion for the policing profession and those who served. That will live on.

Ron McCarthy was to the SWAT industry what John Wayne was to the movie industry. Everyone I know in the SWAT world rightfully respected Ron as the standard bearer for excellence, and we all wanted to model ourselves after him. Ron was a man of enormous, uncompromising character and competence — a rare and precious commodity, especially in today's world. He will be missed but never forgotten. I take solace in knowing that his legacy will live on in those he touched. Please keep an eye out for a future issue of *The Tactical Edge* featuring memorials to Ron.

Thanks to the giants who have led the way — namely, John Kolman, Ron McCarthy, Sid Heal and Mike Hillman — the NTOA is well-positioned to continue to serve this noble profession. As I stated earlier, 2023 was a good year and we are excited for 2024. We will be growing and adding key personnel to ensure we meet the increasing demands in the ever-changing law enforcement environment. Our goal continues to be to provide the best training possible to improve professionalism and save lives. This internal growth will allow us to develop new courses, improve upon existing classes and explore innovative ways to deliver training.

As I have said before, we welcome your ideas and input. We truly value your feedback and consider all content that is shared with us. I am excited to see what 2024 will hold for us. As we move forward, I wish you all the best in this new year. Be safe and God Speed.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Thor Eells".

Thor Eells
Executive Director