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## Wanted: Dead or Alive

*A reward was offered: now all that's left is to pay*

By *Julius (Jay) Wachtel*. In February the bodies of a 28-year old woman and her fiancée were discovered in a car in Irvine, a tony suburb of Orange County, California. They had been shot dead. Police soon identified their killer as Christopher Dorner, 28, a troubled ex-LAPD cop who was fired in 2007 for erratic behavior. It turned out that the female victim was the daughter of the retired LAPD captain who represented Dorner at his termination hearing.

A highly publicized manhunt ensued. During his escape Dorner, who was armed with an assault-type rifle, engaged in several shootouts with police officers and sheriff's deputies, killing two and wounding three. He also stole two vehicles from private citizens at gunpoint. Police finally cornered Dorner at a mountain cabin. He committed suicide when tear gas canisters fired by SWAT officers set the structure on fire.

During the manhunt the City of Los Angeles assembled \$1 million in pledges as a reward for information leading to Dorner's "capture and conviction." Like conditions were attached to other reward offers, including \$100,000 each from the Los Angeles City Council, the L.A. County Board of Supervisors and the City of Riverside, and \$50,000 from the Peace Officers Research Association (PORAC), a California police organization.

Once Dorner's death was confirmed three citizens stepped forward to claim the loot. They include a retired couple whom Dorner surprised and tied up, and a man whom Dorner carjacked at gunpoint after crashing the car he stole from the couple. All feel that they deserve the million-plus for promptly notifying police.

Whether they'll collect, and how much, is up to question. For his part, LAPD Chief Charlie Beck seems eager to distribute the cash. According to news reports the deputy chief coordinating the reward said it would be "disingenuous" to welsh because the fugitive never made it to the courthouse. PORAC, though, has withdrawn its offer. "We made a pledge based on very specific information and criteria," said a representative. "Now everything has changed. It is not what our board of directors voted on." Like sentiments have been voiced by the City of Riverside.

You see, while Dorner was arguably "captured," his death prevented an arrest and conviction. What's more, no citizen did anything beyond calling the cops. Officers spotted the second stolen vehicle and engaged Dorner in a gunfight in which a San Bernardino County deputy lost his life.

At last word Chief Beck decided to dump the mess on three retired judges and let them decide. So here's some fodder for them to consider.

First, there's the propriety of offering a reward in the first place. While the tagline "Dead or Alive" is found only in the movies, if a reward is paid we might as well go back to the Wild West. Enough "usual suspects" have been wrongfully imprisoned in past years without

