Storekeeper Pete Garcia
PHOTO BY JOHN GILLEN

Division 10's Pete Garcia Saves Woman from Drowning

(Jan. 9) When he took a Red Cross CPR class several years ago, it never occurred to Division 10 Storekeeper Pete Garcia that he'd actually have to use the skill. But, today, a Hacienda Heights woman owes her life to his quick response.

Last Friday, as he was on his way to the Post Office, Garcia, 62, was flagged down by a frantic woman. She told him someone was drowning in a backyard swimming pool.

When he reached the pool's edge, Garcia saw a woman's body at the bottom of the 10-foot-deep pool. Throwing aside his wallet and cell phone, he jumped fully clothed into the water.

Diving to the bottom, Garcia grabbed the woman's arm and struggled to the surface. He pulled himself over the edge and dragged her onto the deck.

'I thought she was dead'
"When I got her up and saw how purple she was, I thought she was dead," Garcia recalls. Without hesitation, however, he cleared the woman's mouth and began CPR just as he had learned it in class. "But, I felt no result. No pulse. No reaction."

Within minutes Sheriff's deputies arrived and took over from Garcia. The LA County Fire Dept. also responded. Garcia, now "in sort of a state of shock," went home and told his wife what had happened.

Firefighter Joe Ingram told the *San Gabriel Valley Tribune* that the woman was in full arrest when Garcia pulled her from the pool. Paramedics cleared her lungs of water, medicated her and she began to breathe.

"If the gentleman wasn't there to pull her out," Ingram told the paper, "she definitely wouldn't have survived."

Garcia later returned to the house and learned from Sheriff's deputies that the woman, apparently a babysitter who may have been cleaning the pool when she fell in, had survived. "They said to me, 'So, you're the guardian angel.'"

Reflecting on the event, Garcia, a 15-year MTA veteran, is grateful he attended the CPR class. "I think everyone should be able to perform CPR. It could save a life."

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