

The media & the survivors had a field day, with the inevitable questions 'Why do such bad things happen to good people' and the like. I have my own theories as to the why. How he ended up in the building and was able to move around as easily as he did is more easily answered.

When I started working for Pettit in August of '90, they were occupying floors 33 through 36 of 101. In the foyer areas next to the elevators, they used to have receptionists on every floor, so as to make sure no one who looked 'out of place' got too far. In the spring of '91, the first of what was to be yearly layoffs started; they ended up letting go some secretaries & other lesser people & they were getting rid of all of the temps in office support, which meant that the receptionists on 33 & 34 were to be cut. They retained the 35 & 36 floor receptionists, since those floors were the ones where most clients would enter. At the time, there was some talk as to what this would do for security. At first, they tried keeping the doors leading to the floors shut, but that was inconvenient to the traffic flow, so it was discarded & basically forgotten. Eventually, the 36 receptionist was moved to 35 & the spot on 36 turned into a fax station. So, at the time of the shooting, there were three floors where basically anybody could come onto and wander around freely.

So what? One can only go so far without running into someone who wouldn't get suspicious. **This was the** other factor in P&M's security. There was a growing paranoia in the upper ranks that something like this would eventually happen. The wild card in the mixture was Ferri; he did have dealings with the firm over 10 years ago, in 1981 & '82. If something like this was going to happen, even money would have been on an ex-employee of the firm with a grudge. In fact, that was a major fear.

## S.F. law firm among the most successful

The law firm where a gunman rampaged Thursday afternoon is one of San Francisco's 10 largest, and among its most successful.

Pettit and Martin has more than 180 lawyers, who occupy the 32nd through 34th floors of 101 California St. and five other offices from Washington, D.C., to Hong Kong.

The firms' members could easily fit in with the glitzy characters on the television show, "LA Law." But they hardly expected to host a killing spree resembling a melodramatic television episode.

"You're not kidding me, are you?" said attorney Simon Luk, from the firm's Hong Kong office, when told of the Thursday tragedy.

Even large firms with thou-

sands of clients are not used to direct threats of violence, said Jack Dittoe, a partner in the Oakland firm of Crosby, Healy, Koehn and May.

Dittoe said attorneys are used to occasional violence in the courtroom, where metal detectors have become commonplace. But no one at Crosby has ever worried about security in the office.

"No one has focused on that to date, although I saw in an old 'LA Law' segment where someone went berserk," Dittoe said.

Attorneys reached at Pettit's California offices hung up phones when asked about the incident.

Pettit's name was common in the plethora of lawsuits coming out of the savings and loan industry collapse.

## Scramble to Escape At 101 California

Pettit & Martin, one of the largest law firms in San Francisco, has struggled financially in recent years, a casualty of a nationwide decline in business for lawyers.

A distinguished but unremarkable law firm, Pettit & Martin was just one of many in San Francisco's Financial District — until yesterday afternoon, when its offices at 101 California Street were the scene of a gunman's rampage.

Founded in the 1950s, Pettit & Martin enjoyed for many years a solid reputation as a high-powered "full-service" civil law firm. In 1990, the law firm was the ninth

largest in the Bay Area, employing 225 lawyers spread out in seven offices. This year, Pettit & Martin dropped to No. 15 in size, having fired or lost a quarter of its attorneys in the past three years.

Like many other big firms across the country, Pettit & Martin was hit hard by the drop in corporate law work, which was the centerpiece of the law firm's practice. Between 1990 and 1992, the firm lost several of its top rain-makers — lawyers who bring in business. The drop in clients forced the partners to close their Dallas office.

In past months, however, the firm has gone through some changes in partnership rules and

has claimed it is stabilizing.

It resumes the firm submits to law schools in hopes of luring top attorneys, it boasts a wide variety of clients, including Fortune 500 companies, foreign governments and high-technology firms.

Pettit & Martin now employs about 188 lawyers, roughly half at its principal office at 101 California Street in San Francisco. The firm has satellite offices in San Jose, Los Angeles, Newport Beach, Washington, D.C., and Hong Kong.

Pettit & Martin lists its specialties as corporate work, government contracts, employment issues, real estate, tax law and business litigation. The starting annual salary for new associates is \$65,000.

Pettit & Martin was one of the largest firms in the Bay Area, living it up during the boom in the 80's, when they moved into the 101 Building. When the 80's faded and the bill came due in the 90's, things got a bit hairy. There were layoffs, every spring as it turned out. There were also rumors going around as to what was really going on in the firm: what was kept out of the papers was the fact that Pettit had several lawsuits pending, most of which involved wrongful termination. One that was big news in the firm involved a secretary who had been employed with the firm for many years; they had attempted to get rid of her so as to avoid paying benefits & such. She got a lawyer & they backed off. There were all sorts of nasty little worms in the P&M apple: unfavorable press articles in the legal papers which drove the management nuts, employee infighting, rumors that the Washington office was bailing out of the partnership, not to mention the low morale of staff and the exodus of people leaving the firm. In 1992, about 35-40 people left the SF Office, looking for better things. Due to the low morale and the way some layoffs were handled, they were extremely paranoid about ex-employees being on the floors, to the point where after terminating people, they would assign someone to monitor them.

Ironic, especially since "Security" is one of the buzzwords being thrown around nowadays... I expect things have drastically changed now, but beforehand, it was absurdly easy for anyone to gain access into the building. It also makes it easy if you have a rough idea of the layout of the floors.