

ETHICS ROLL CALL

L I S T E N I N G T O T H E I N N E R V O I C E



Graduating class of the Ethics Train-the-Trainer class held September 15-17, 2010.

Register Now for the Upcoming Contemporary Issues and Ethics Conference

It's that time of year again to register for the annual Contemporary Issues and Ethics Conference to be held at ILEA headquarters from March 23-25. This year's theme is **Community Policing and Community Trust: The Role of Culture, Integrity and Leadership**. The term "community policing" - in all its forms - defines the way in which thoughtful law enforcement agencies go about doing what they do. To make community policing programs as effective and efficient as possible, training abounds for police officers and supervisors on the front lines... the ones actually charged with delivering the service.

But what influence does the internal culture of a police organization have on the success or failure of a community policing effort? Does it matter if citizens do not look upon a police agency and its employees as trustworthy?

This conference will examine the relationship between law enforcement culture and community policing, and discuss ways in which leaders can measure and manage this complex - and often unseen - dynamic.

The ILEA has assembled a distinguished faculty of law enforcement leaders and academicians to address the following topics:

- ◆ **Changing Organizational Culture for the Better**
Dr. Ellen Scrivner, IV
National Institute of Justice, Washington, DC
- ◆ **Community Trust Through Relationships of Integrity: The Lexington Experience**
Chief Ronnie Bastin
Lexington Police Department, KY
- ◆ **Police Integrity and Culture**
Chief Timothy J. Longo, Sr.
Charlottesville Police Department, VA
- ◆ **Police Culture and Community Trust**
Dr. John P. Crank
Professor, Department of Criminal Justice
University of Nebraska, Omaha
- ◆ **Values-based Leadership and the Trustworthy Police Department**
Chief Thomas E. Meloni
Wheaton Police Department, IL

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CONTEMPORARY ISSUES CONFERENCE

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◆ **Racial Profiling and Community Trust**

Dr. Alex del Carmen
Chair, Department of Criminology and
Criminal Justice
University of Texas at Arlington, TX

◆ **Beyond Community Policing: New Models and Trends**

Chief G. M. Cox
Murphy Police Department, TX

◆ **Ethics Trainers Roundtable**

For graduates of the Ethics Train-the-Trainer course, this annual roundtable provides an opportunity to share and learn techniques and strategies for teaching ethics in the law enforcement community.

The keynote speaker for the conference will be Dr. Richard A. Smith, Interim Director of the Caruth Police Institute. Dr. Smith's address will focus on **Leadership and Community Policing**. Dr. Smith has over 35 years of experience working in local government.

In addition, Mr. William A. Geller, Director of Geller & Associates will address the topic of **Building Community Trust by Building Our Way Out of Crime**. Mr. Geller reports on and provides consulting services to support effective and legitimate policing and community action that fosters a free society and safer, stronger communities.

As a reminder, agencies holding organizational membership in the Center for Law Enforcement Ethics may send one person to the conference at

no cost. Also, persons holding individual memberships in the Ethics Center may attend at a reduced rate.

This conference provides 14 hours of TCLEOSE credit for law enforcement officers from the state of Texas.

For additional information and/or to register, visit our website at www.theILEA.org.

We hope to see you at the conference!

2011 PROGRAMS

| LEADER DEVELOPMENT SERIES: | |
|--|--------------|
| <i>Perception and the Media</i> | Mar 7 |
| <i>Guide to the FLSA</i> | Mar 10-11 |
| <i>Leading in a Values-based Organization</i> | Mar 14 |
| <i>Practical Guide to Litigation-Free Management</i> | Mar 16-17 |
| Contemporary Issues and Ethics Conference | Mar 23-25 |
| Internal Affairs, Professional Standards and Ethics | Apr 4-8 |
| Basic Police Supervision | Apr 11-15 |
| Leading in the New Workplace | Apr 26-27 |
| Best Practices | May 5-6 |
| Ethics Train-the-Trainer | May 11-13 |
| Leadership Symposium | May 23-25 |
| School of Police Supervision | June 1-28 |
| Crime Analysis in the Information Age | June 14-15 |
| Police and Family Conference | July 9-10 |
| Crime Analysis in the Information Age (Fort Collins, CO) | Aug 4-5 |
| Ethics Train-the-Trainer | Sept 14-16 |
| Teaching Diversity | Sept 19-22 |
| Leading in the New Workplace | Sept 21-22 |
| School of Police Supervision Administration & Management of Training | Oct 3-28 |
| Internal Affairs, Professional Standards and Ethics | Oct 10-14 |
| Police Resource Allocation and Deployment | Oct 31-Nov 4 |
| Police-Media Relations | Nov 7-10 |
| Basic Police Supervision | Nov 15-17 |
| | Dec 5-9 |

ALL PROGRAMS WILL BE HELD AT ILEA HEADQUARTERS UNLESS SHOWN OTHERWISE

**FRUGALITY:
MAKE NO
EXPENSE BUT TO
DO GOOD TO
OTHERS OR YOUR-
SELF: I.E. WASTE
NOTHING.**

**BENJAMIN
FRANKLIN**

The High Lonesome: Looking at Yourself From the Ground Up

By Dan Primozic

In a conversation with a colleague the other day, I heard him say that he was sitting around his house relaxing (from work – which for him involved quite a bit of time spent on the electronic “gizmos” of our contemporary culture and their virtual trails: email, Microsoft Word, Facebook, LinkedIn, spreadsheets, data bases, Twitter, etc.) only to find a bit of panic. He found that after about two hours away from his ubiquitous electric domain, he just “needed to connect.” So he picked up his laptop, “connected” and then felt much better. Frankly, I felt sorry for this fellow. Here’s why.

It has been more than a few years (well before the internet and cell phones and wireless communication) that I strapped on a forty pound backpack, parked my car at a wilderness trailhead, and forged up a strenuous and torturously twisted (but sublime) mountain path to the top. One loses the faint of heart (or aching body) and their car or RV camper sites after about a mile; then the fishermen and fisherwomen are lost after mile two and three. The day packers tend to evaporate after miles five to ten. By the time you hike up thirteen or fourteen miles and come upon a thirteen thousand foot high, pristine mountain lake at the foot of a fourteen thousand foot snow-covered peak, you are usually and hopefully alone. Finally.

But why would any sane person wish to do such a thing? It’s cold. It’s dangerous (lions and tigers and bears – no snakes though – too high and cold for them). It’s lonely. It’s too quiet. What about the football games? Your wife, your children, your buddies, your “connections,” communiqés – your refrigerator?

It’s hard to explain. Especially to that vast majority of us who seem incapable of living without a constant exposure to other people, their messages, or their vapor trails. And maybe the value of being alone, at least for a little while, can’t really be communicated but rather can only be experienced.

I would take the pack from my back (minor blisters under the straps, of course), stretch that aching back, remove my hiking boots (minor to major blisters on the feet too), pitch a tent, gather firewood, start a fire, cook a dinner that I either caught in the

lake or (failing that) that I carried up with me, broke out a small pint of whiskey, eat, sip, think, meditate upon the good and bad of my life, swear to do better and be better when I got back down to the earth below, yawn, roll out the sleeping bag (good to below freezing, thanks to *that* kind of camping technology) and sleep dreamlessly and blissfully under the western night sky.

What’s the big deal? What is the attraction there? Didn’t I miss the people? The action? The sounds? The movement? Was I crazy? And what about those bears (not the ones from the NFL)? Wasn’t I lonesome? Are we not, as Aristotle claimed, social beings?

Here I must doff my hat to a much finer hand than myself to say why Aristotle might be wrong about that. Edward Abbey once said, in his classic book, *Desert Solitaire: A Season in the Wilderness*:

Man is a gregarious creature, we are told, a social being. Does that mean that he is a herd animal? I don’t believe it, despite the character of modern life. The herd is for ungulates, not for men and women and their children. Are men no better than sheep or cattle, that they must live always in view of one another in order to feel a sense of safety? I can’t believe it ... At what distance should good neighbors build their houses? Let it be determined by the community’s mode of travel: if by foot, four miles; if by horseback, eight miles; if by motorcar, twenty-four miles; if by airplane, ninety six miles... Recall the proverb: ‘Set not thy foot too often in thy neighbor’s house, lest he grow weary and hate thee.’¹

I remember asking my college classes throughout the years how many people ever spent a week absolutely alone (answer: none); a few days (answer: very few); a day (answer: a few); or a couple of hours (answer: a few more). I also remember noting that those young college students in my class thought I was certifiably nuts for even asking a question like that. Obviously I did not have the heart to begin quoting from Edward Abbey. But, again, why be concerned with this issue? Why am I making this an issue (when likely it is not one)?

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**JUSTICE:
WRONG NONE,
BY DOING
INJURIES OR
OMITTING THE
BENEFITS THAT
ARE YOUR DUTY.**

**BENJAMIN
FRANKLIN**

The Harm of Almost

By John Jones, Ph.D.

My wife and I were enjoying a last day in Cairo at the end of a wonderfully interesting vacation when Egyptians took to the streets to protest against their President.

Just a short distance from our hotel we could hear the chanting crowds and the tear gas explosions. We were close enough to feel the gas sting our eyes. Mayhem broke out and continued for over two weeks. Our original flight home was cancelled when a government curfew was imposed and the airport was closed. We were not permitted to leave our hotel until 7.00 a.m. the following morning. Somehow our travel agent, during the night, was able to book us onto a 10.35 a.m. flight. Getting to the airport, however, promised to be a significant challenge. Our driver met us at the hotel when the curfew lifted. The journey to the airport was surreal and harrowing. It was like driving through a war zone. Several streets were blocked with burned-out vehicles and the devastation was unbelievable. Miraculously, we

THE HIGH LONESOME
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There is the possibility for a few valuable moments in solitude when you come face-to-face with yourself. There is no one else there to distract you from your own interior investigation of yourself, your own sometimes ruthless assessment of yourself – of who you really have been, of who you really are, of who you have pretended to be but are not, and of who you would really like to become. Without the silence, the “high lonesome,” there are too many ways to avoid this self confrontation. Without it, we can easily and smoothly continue to be impostors of our own making – the kind that get us where we think we want to be in life. With the solitude, we get a glimpse of the truth about all that. We can connect authentically and truthfully with ourselves – and perhaps we can then do something about it all for the better – for us and for the others with whom we “just have to connect.” And even I must not get too old and sore to climb.

ⁱ Edward Abbey, *Desert Solitaire: A Season in the Wilderness*, New York: Avon Books, 1982, p. 66.

arrived at the airport and made our flight – one of very few that took off that day. Subsequently, we heard that approximately 3000 people were stranded at the airport and had to sleep there as Egypt descended into chaos.

Some questions remain: *What if* we had somehow been caught up in the protests? *What if* our trip to the airport had been interrupted by the lawless element among the protesters? *What if* we had not made our flight?

Have you ever considered that in our daily lives it is not only *actual* experiences that can have an impact on us? Things that *nearly* happen also have that potential. We can all think of moments that were near-misses in terms of decision-making or actions or behaviours. We can all think of incidents that *almost happened* or *almost didn't happen* that have caused us after the fact to break out in night sweats, have induced sleeplessness or nightmares, have destroyed our peace of mind, have made us mystifyingly depressed or angry, given to unexplainable mood swings and, in the worst case scenarios, more disposed to engage in personally damaging actions.

If our day-to-day experiences as ordinary citizens can unsettle us in this way, *how much more might this “almost syndrome” apply to police personnel?* Your work as a police officer is very challenging, and it brings you face to face with very difficult decisions shift after shift, sometimes moment by moment. Too often your decisions have to be made in tenths of a second. Too often you don't have the luxury to debate and mull over what the appropriate decision should be. As a consequence, even if your decision-making and response is not subject to formal review, it is subject to personal review. Self-congratulation or self-recrimination result. And the after-effects can, residually, collect and gather into a suffocating ball, as it were, rather like a hair ball in a cat's throat.

I recall to this day, over 30 years later, a troubling experience I had as a correctional officer. I was conducting cell checks in the early hours of the morning. It was quiet except for the usual night noises. As I walked from one cell to the next, I was grabbed from behind and had something sharp

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TRANQUILITY:
BE NOT
DISTURBED AT
TRIFLES, OR
AT ACCIDENTS
COMMON OR
UNAVOIDABLE.

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THE HARM OF ALMOST

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held to the side of my neck. The inmate's name remains with me to this day. As he tightened his grip, I remember saying: "Mike, put that thing down, you'll make a mess with it." As it turned out, the comment was intuitive, and after a while he began to loosen his grip and we were able to talk our way through the confrontation. For a long time afterwards I often wondered: *What if* the comment had had the opposite effect? What was deeply troubling for me after the event, and still is to some extent, was what *nearly* happened. Obviously he had planned the attack and armed himself, and the home-made weapon could easily have been my undoing. I might never have seen my family again. What happened was shocking. But what *nearly* happened proved to be just as troubling.

In a conversation I had with a mid-level police supervisor, she told me how she was in her office one Friday afternoon. She was working hard on a report that was due at the end of that day. There was a tap on her door, and one of her officers asked if she had a minute. Explaining the pressure to finish the report, she gently suggested that if it could wait till Monday that would be good. He disappeared and killed himself that weekend using his service weapon. Needless to say, this event has haunted this supervisor for many years: *What if* I had given him ten minutes? *What if* I had lifted myself from the damned report and given him the time he deserved? *What if* I did not have this screwed up sense of priorities? *What if* he had been a little more assertive in saying he needed to talk then. *What if* my style of supervision precluded this from happening? And so the self-recrimination goes on, sometimes for many years, as was the case here.

Of course, we can retreat to rationalizing and from the outside say that the ultimate responsibility for this officer's suicide must reside with him – and it does. But that response is of little or no comfort to the person who *feels* responsible. And just because some officers may be able to put events like that in a box and move on does not mean others can.

You know better than I that there simply isn't a police officer alive who, upon moderate reflection, cannot recall several incidents that raise

the *what if* question. *What if* the gun had been loaded or had not jammed? *What if* I had used a different expression when negotiating that hostage deal that went wrong? *What if* I had been able to get that child to hospital a couple of minutes sooner? *What if* I had taken ten seconds longer before I reacted? *What if* I had made a better choice of words when testifying?

During a police seminar on ethical leadership and duty of care that I was conducting, a mid-level police veteran officer lost his composure to such an extent he had to move back from the group. He had been telling the participants how he had shot someone twelve years previously. After a few very quiet minutes he came back into the conversation and requested permission to make some comments. Primarily, he said two things: a) that he thought "his employer had given him permission to move on from this event" but that he could now see he was mistaken, and b) that his discomfort and self-recrimination, twelve years later, was the result of his second-guessing his split-second decision. *What if* I had not acted so hastily? *What if* I had been more in control of my emotions at that moment?

In the last several months I have been interviewing the wife of a police officer whose career, and almost his family life, imploded. The officer was a 20-year veteran. For the 17 years he was in uniform he conducted himself in an exemplary manner, enjoyed an excellent reputation with his colleagues, and attracted many awards for his good police work. He applied for and was successful in a competition for a detective-status position in a Partner Assault Unit. He could now shed his uniform and go to work each day in a suit. He enjoyed his new-found status despite his understanding that the unit was a highly stressed one. He and his colleagues were deeply conscious of their difficult task of ensuring that none of their clients became homicide victims. The Unit was known to be understaffed and no sooner had an officer decided to work on the next urgent case in his/her queue than another one landed on the desk. Tension was high; nerves were frayed as the Unit staff sought to keep afloat. Some staff left prematurely; others left at the end of their term. And so a constant rotation of staff added to the stress. Over time, the officer's wife could see troubling changes in him and implored him to go back into uniform. His response was (and I paraphrase): You don't

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**MODERATION:
AVOID
EXTREMES.
FOREBEAR
RESENTING
INJURIES SO
MUCH AS YOU
THINK THEY
DESERVE.
BENJAMIN
FRANKLIN**

THE HARM OF ALMOST
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understand. For me to walk away would be tantamount to admitting weakness. In policing you can't do that.

During the personal upheaval this officer went through, he sought refuge in a toxic mix of alcohol and prescription drugs. His increasingly bizarre and troubling behaviour culminated in a horrific domestic situation. Precipitating his rapid decline was his failure to pass his annual Use of Force testing. You know what this would mean to any police officer. The following day, in a highly agitated and psychotic state at home with his wife and children present, he took a knife and started puncturing the walls and cushions with it.

Later, the children ran out of the house past this man they no longer knew and went to the home of a neighbour. For a few seconds the neighbour (and family friend) debated whether or not to call the police. She made the call. Four of this man's colleagues attended the home, got into an altercation, tasered him, and applied handcuffs. He was arrested, charged criminally, and admitted to a psychiatric facility.

The officer's wife has often, without assigning blame, asked herself the question: *What if* my neighbour had not called the police? *What if* I had had more time in trying to connect with my husband? And the neighbour – what must she have been thinking? The detective, of course, is haunted by the questions: *What if* I had been able to admit to the stress I was under and sought help? *What if* I had been strong enough and wise enough to seek help when I first knew I was in trouble?

For this officer, the incident was a momentous career-destroying event. Everything meaningful to him was put at risk and the sense of self-incrimination two years later must still be overwhelming. I am sure that many of you have known colleagues going through similar significant, destructive, life-altering moments. What about our personal responsibility at such times? How many times, after an event, have you chastised yourself with the *what if* questions? *What if* I had taken the time to express concern? Or offer assistance? *What if* I had chosen to not ignore the troubling signs?

It's not hard to imagine the collateral damage that can occur when officers are haunted by the

what if's in their own personal and professional lives. Haunting regret or haunting relief (when you narrowly escape a nasty incident or disaster) can do a number on officers. What I am suggesting is that it's not only the calamitous events that can cause harm in your profession, but it's also the haunting afterthoughts that can disturb and sometimes destroy your peace of mind. Many of these afterthoughts are irrational and quite unnecessary but over time they can become quite damaging. You can feel guilt, as you know, should any of your actions or moments of inaction lead to bad outcomes. Your feelings are your feelings. It's difficult to escape them, and unless they are dealt with, they can collect and, consciously or subconsciously, do great harm.

Can you think of a time when you or a colleague got tipped over or rattled by what seemed like a small, rather insignificant event? You may have wondered why that relatively small incident had such an impact. Could it be that when such an event is added to the detritus of other events and haunting *what if's*, that it takes on a dimension far beyond what would be the case if it were a stand-alone experience? These everyday events in your life as a police officer, including near-events, can build incrementally. It's not only the day-to-day frustrations, the cases thrown out of court, the disrespect, the subpoenas, the shift work, the rough, hurly-burly of police work that can do a number on you and your colleagues. It's also the intangibles. These are the moments you may think you can shrug off and move on from...until they return in a bad dream or affect your judgement on the next call or inexplicably freak you out. Why wonder where the unexplained anger and rage is coming from? The alcoholism. The marital discord. The impatience with the kids and the dog. The shutting off and shutting down. The refusal to communicate. The inability to sleep. The recurring nightmares.

Correct me if I'm wrong, but it seems to me that it's not only actual nasty events, like the examples I have given, that can cause us harm, but it's also *nearly* nasty events. It's the haunting afterthoughts. And given the nature of police work, how many more incidents are there that have the potential to continue to haunt officers long after the event or near-event? I don't claim any particular wisdom in this respect, and I may have it wrong. But we only have to consider everyday near-misses that we all experience to gain some understanding of the potential for psy-

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HUMILITY:
IMITATE JESUS
AND SOCRATES.

BENJAMIN
FRANKLIN

THE HARM OF ALMOST
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chological and emotional harm these events can have on us. As a police officer you have *more than your fair share of haunting moments and you are particularly vulnerable in this regard.*

Please consider whether there's any truth in the central theme of this essay. Do at least some of the sentiments warrant careful consideration? If they do, then, along with your supervisors, colleagues, and all other resources available to you, please search for and find your own ways of dealing with the harm caused by cumulative guilt and self-recrimination, or even haunting relief after a close call.

Thoughts? Comments? Contact:

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Dr. Jones has over thirty years experience in the human development field as a minister, youth leader, high school teacher, hospital chaplain, soccer coach, probation officer, institution administrator, and college professor and administrator. He has lived and worked in the UK, Jamaica, Australia and Canada. He is a long-time friend and valued adjunct faculty member and contributor to many activities at the ILEA and the Center for Law Enforcement Ethics. We are in his debt for that and for the ideas he has offered in this fine article.

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