

THE HOPKINSVILLE-CHRISTIAN COUNTY EMERGENCY OPERATIONS CENTER,

OR

' 'THREE DEAD BY NOON, WHERE'RE WE GONNA EAT' '

BY

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FOR THE ATHENAEUM SOCIETY OF HOPKINSVILLE, OCTOBER 5TH, 2000

HOW OFTEN HAVE TAXPAYERS AROUND THE COUNTRY BEEN WOODED WITH THE
''PITCH'' TO LET GOVERNMENT COMBINE SERVICES AND THEN SIT BACK AND WATCH
THE SAVINGS MOUNT UP BY AN AVOIDANCE OF A DUPLICATION OF SERVICES,
PERSONNEL, AND EQUIPMENT?

AND HOW OFTEN HAVE THEY SAT BACK AND WATCHED THEIR TAX DOLLARS GOBBLED
UP BY PADDED PAYROLLS, ''CADILLAC'' FACILITIES, AND SERVICES DELIVERED AT
THE SAME--OR A LESSER LEVEL?

HOWEVER, HERE IN THE ''BLUEGRASS'', BELIEVE IT OR NOT, THE HOME OF
''BROTHER-IN-LAW'' CONTRACTS, ''PORK BARREL'' POLITICS, AND ''SWEETHEART''
DEALS, THERE ARE SEVERAL EXAMPLES OF MERGERS WHICH HAVE PROVEN EFFECTIVE AND
EFFICIENT.

THE MOST NOTABLE IS LEXINGTON-FAYETTE COUNTY URBAN GOVERNMENT--THE ONLY
ONE OF ITS KIND IN THE COMMONWEALTH, WHICH, BY MOST ACCOUNTS, HAS PROVEN TO
BE AN EFFECTIVE METHOD OF DELIVERING SERVICES TO THE SECOND LARGEST URBAN
AREAW OF KENTUCKY, WITH THE SYSTEM PROVING SO VIABLE THAT POLITICAL LEADERS
IN JEFFERSON COUNTY, THE STATE'S LARGEST--BUT FLOUNDERING--URBAN AREA HAVE
PLACED THE MATTER ON THE BALLOT NEXT MONTH.

FOR A LOCAL EXAMPLE, YOU NEED LOOK NO FURTHER THAN THE
HOPKINSVILLE-CHRISTIAN COUNTY EMERGENCY OPERATIONS CENTER, WHICH IS TRULY
THE ''NERVE CENTER'' OF THE COMMUNITY BY VIRTUE OF ITS DIRECT CONTACT--AND,
WITH IT, CONTROL--OF ALL THE MAJOR LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES, EXCEPT
OAK GROVE, ALL FIRE DEPARTMENTS, INCLUDING THE CITY OF HOPKINSVILLE AND THE
13 VOLUNTEER DEPARTMENTS SPREAD ACROSS KENTUCKY'S SECOND LARGEST COUNTY IN
LAND AREA;THE EMERGENCY AMBULANCES,THE RESCUE SQUAD, THE CITY STREET
DEPARTMENT, THE HOPKINSVILLE ELECTRIC SYSTEM, THE COUNTY ROAD DEPARTMENT,AND
THE CITY'S TWO ANIMAL CONTROL OFFICERS.

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IN ADDITION, ALL 9-1-1 CALLS WHICH ORIGINATE WITHIN CHRISTIAN COUNTY---AND SOME WHICH ARE ROUTED, IN ERROR, FROM OUTSIDE THE COUNTY, SUCH AS THE NIGHT THE E.O.C. HANDLED SEVERAL EMERGENCY CALLS FOR A COUNTY SOUTH OF NASHVILLE--ARE DIRECTED TO THE LOCAL DISPATCH CENTER.

BECAUSE OAK GROVE HAS ITS OWN DISPATCH CENTER, 9-1-1 CALLS ARE TRANSFERRED THERE, WITH LITTLE DELAY, ONCE IT IS DETERMINED, THROUGH THE E-9-1-1 SYSTEM, THAT THE CALL ORIGINATED IN THEIR JURISDICTION, AND THAT'S WHERE THE HELP IS NEEDED.

ADD TO THIS THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF ENTERING, UPDATING, VERIFYING, MODIFYING, AND MONITORING ALL THE ENTRIES IN THE NATIONAL CRIME INFORMATION CENTER, OR N-C-I-C SYSTEM; THE RECENTLY-ADDED ''EMERGENCY PROTECTIVE ORDER'' FILE; MONITORING A BURGLAR AND FIRE ALARM SYSTEM UNDER CONTRACT WITH WILSON ALARM COMPANY, AND NUMEROUS OTHER DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES WHICH HAVE EVOLVED OVER THE YEARS, AND THE TERM ''NERVE CENTER'' IS BY NO MEANS AN OVERSTATEMENT.

ALL THIS IS ACCOMPLISHED WITH A STAFF OF 13, PLUS TWO ''PART-TIMERS'', ON AN ANNUAL BUDGET WHICH HAS GROWN FROM 414-THOUSAND DOLLARS IN 1992 TO THE CURRENT FIGURE OF 657-THOUSAND DOLLAR, WHICH IS THE SAME AS LAST YEAR.

THOSE 15 PEOPLE STAFF THE E.O.C. 24 HOURS A DAY, 7 DAYS A WEEK, 365 DAYS A YEAR, WITH THE MOST RECENT ^{ANNUAL} FIGURES SHOWING A TOTAL OF 186-THOUSAND ADMINISTRATIVE AND 9-1-1 CALLS ANSWERED.

THE CENTRAL DISPATCH CENTER WAS CONCEIVED AS A JOINT CITY/COUNTY OPERATION ~~AND~~ ^{ARISING} ON THE HEELS OF SEVERAL OTHER JOINT VENTURES, SUCH AS THE RECREATION DEPARTMENT, WHICH WERE INITIATED DURING THE ADMINISTRATION OF THEN COUNTY JUDGE GRADY RUFF IN THE MID-TO-LATE 1970'S.

HOWEVER, FOR VARIOUS REASONS, NOT THE LEAST OF WHICH WAS THE NAMING OF FIRE DEPARTMENT CAPTAIN EARL CRAFT AS THE INITIAL DIRECTOR OF THE JOINT CENTER FOR CITY POLICE AND FIRE DISPATCHING, IT DID NOT BECOME A CITY/COUNTY OPERATION UNTIL 1982 WHEN FRANK GARY WAS COUNTY JUDGE AND THE LATE SHERRY JEFFERS WAS MAYOR.

THAT WAS A YEAR AFTER CRAFT STEPPED DOWN, AND WAS REPLACED BY TOM FROMMEL, WHO FORMERLY SERVED AS A DISPATCHER WHEN CALLS WERE HANDLED SEPARATELY BY THE POLICE AND FIRE DEPARTMENTS.

FROMMEL OVERSAW SEVERAL UPGRADES AT THE E.O.C. WHILE TAKING ON ADDITIONAL DUTIES, AND EVEN OPERATED AN ''ACADEMY'' FOR THE HANDICAPPED WHO WISHED TO BECOME DISPATCHERS.

FROMMEL RETIRED IN 1987, AND WAS SUCCEEDED BY BETSY DOBBINS, WHO, LIKE FROMMEL, FORMERLY DISPATCHED.

MS. DOBBINS' FINANCIAL PROBLEMS WERE WIDELY DOCUMENTED AT THE TIME, AND RESULTED IN HER ULTIMATE DISMISSAL AS DIRECTOR, WITH THEN-CITY COUNCILMAN AND FORMER PART-TIME DISPATCHER GENE MACINTOSH ^{ACTING} ~~AS~~ AS INTERIM DIRECTOR.

AS IS IRONICALLY ^{AND} TOO FREQUENTLY THE CASE, THOSE IN THE ''COMMUNICATIONS'' BUSINESS OFTEN ~~FAIL~~ TO COMMUNICATE AMONG THEMSELVES OR WITH THOSE ~~OUTSIDE~~ OUTSIDE THEIR AGENCIES THEY SHOULD MOST CLOSELY COMMUNICATE WITH.

SUCH WAS THE CASE WITH MS. DOBBINS, WHO FELT THAT SHE HAD MADE HER DIRE FINANCIAL CIRCUMSTANCES MORE THAN ABUNDENTLY ~~CL~~EAR TO CITY OFFICIALS, WHO ACTED AS IF THEY WERE ENTIRELY UNAWARE OF THE SITUATION WHEN IT FINALLY CAME TO LIGHT.

FOLLOWING MS. DOBBINS IN A VERY DIFFICULT SITUATION WAS ANOTHER VETERAN DISPATCHER, THOUGH ONE VERY FAMILIAR WITH THE ''INS'' AND ''OUTS'' OF THE COMBINED DISPATCH CENTER--DELORES ''DEE'' HOPPER, WHO REMAINS IN THAT POST TODAY AFTER SUCCEEDING BETSY DOBBINS IN 1992.

MS. HOPPER HAS OVERSEEN THE INSTALLATION OF MORE SOPHISTICATED AND SIGNIFICANT EQUIPMENT DURING HER TENURE THAN HER 3 SUCCESSORS COMBINED.

MOST NOTABLY ARE THE ''COMPUTER ASSISTED DISPATCH'' OR ''CAD'' SYSTEM, INSTALLED IN EARLY 1993 AND THE ''ENHANCED 9-1-1'' SYSTEM, WHICH WENT ''ON-LINE'' LATER THAT SAME YEAR, FOLLOWING A POLITICAL BATTLE OF SOME ^{NOTE,} ~~NOTORIETY~~, LARGELY DUE TO THE MONTHLY FEE ASSESSED EACH PHONE BILL TO PAY FOR THE EQUIPMENT NECESSARY TO SUPPORT THE SYSTEM.

THE ''E-9-1-1'' SYSTEM IS LINKED TO THE ''CAD'' SYSTEM, WITH A ONE-BUTTON TRANSFER FROM THE EQUIPMENT WHICH DISPLAYS THE GEOGRAPHICAL ORIGIN OF ALL CALLS--WITH THE EXCEPTION OF CELLULARPHONES, AND THAT TECHNOLOGY IS COMING--TO THE ''CAD'' SYSTEM WHICH INTERPRETS THE LOCATION AND PROVIDES ^{THE} DISPATCHER WITH INFORMATION NECESSARY TO DISPATCH THE PROPER RESPONDING UNITS.

THE CITY IS DIVIDED INTO 5 NUMERICL AREAS FOR POLICE PURPOSES, WITH ~~TWO~~ OF THEM ON THE WEST SIDE COMBINED FOR DISPATCH SERVICES, AND THE DISPATCHER SENDING THE OFFICER ASSIGNED TO THAT AREA FOR THAT PARTICULAR SHIFT ^{TO} CALLS ORIGINATING THERE.

THE ''CAD'' SYSTEM ALSO KEEPS A ''HISTORICAL'' RECORD FOR EACH RESIDENCE, THOUGH IT IS PERIODICALLY PURGED.

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THIS ALLOWS A DISPATCHER TO CHECK FOR RECENT INCIDENTS OF A SIMILAR NATURE AT THE SAME ADDRESS, WHO MIGHT HAVE BEEN INVOLVED, AND IF ANY WEAPONS WERE INVOLVED, OR OTHER INFORMATION PERTINENT TO THE CALL AND ABOVE ALL, THE OFFICERS' SAFETY.

I SPEAK OF THE E.O.C. WITH SOME LIMITED DEGREE OF EXPERTISE, FOR I AM ONE OF THOSE ''PART-TIMERS'', AND HAVE BEEN SINCE 1993.

THAT'S WHEN I REALIZED THAT THE HOUSEHOLD INCOME WOULD BE UNDER A STRAIN OVER THE NEXT SEVERAL YEARS AS OUR MIDDLE CHILD PURSUED A COLLEGE CAREER, AND IF I WANTED TO CONTINUE TO INDULGE IN MY 4 VICES OF 25-DOLLAR ROUNDS OF GOLF, 18-DOLLAR A CARTON CIGARETTES, A 10-DOLLAR A WEEK LOTTERY HABIT AND A 12 TO 15-DOLLAR A WEEK AFFINITY FOR BEER, I HAD BETTER DEVELOP A SECOND SOURCE OF INCOME.

ABOUT THAT TIME, THE E.O.C. LOST SEVERAL PART-TIME DISPATCHERS BECAUSE OF A ''QUIRK'' IN STATE EMPLOYMENT LAW, WHICH PRECLUDED THE CONTINUED EMPLOYMENT OF CITY POLICEN CARY HAYES AND BILLY MC-GUIRE AND FIREMAN BUTCH SHELTON ~~FROM CONTINUING THEIR EMPLOYMENT~~ AND THE SEARCH WAS ON FOR SEVERAL REPLACEMENTS.

BECAUSE OF THE NATURE OF MY JOB AT WHOP AND THE ODD HOURS INVOLVED, BEGINNING AT 4 IN THE MRNING, AND SOMETIMES STRETCHING UNTIL MIDNIGHT, WITH TIME OFF IN BETWEEN FOR NAPS---MOST OF THE TIME, IT SEEMED LIKE A PRFECT FIT.

THOUGH I HAD BEEN GOING IN THE E.O.C. SINCE IT WENT INTO OPERATION ON A LIMITED BASIS, SERVING ONLY THE CITY, IN 1977, AND I HAD SOME APPRECIATION FOR THE DUTIES ASSOCIATED WITH BEING A DISPATCHER, OR ''TELECOMMUNICATOR'', AS SOME IN THE BUSINESS OF EMERGENCY DISPATCHING PREFER TO BE KNOWN AS, IT WAS AN ''EYE OPENING'' EXPERIENCE TO ACTUALLY ANSWER THE PHONES, SIT ~~BEHIND~~ AT THE RADIO CONSOLE AND MOVE POLICE AROUND THE CITY, SEND AMBULANCES TO THOSE IN NEED, OR ANY OTHER OF THE NUMEROUS TASKS REQUIRED OF THOSE WHO STAFF THE E.O.C.

SINCE MY INITIAL HALTING EFFORTS, I HAVE PROGRESSED TO THE POINT WHERE I HAVE SOME DEGREE OF CONFIDENCE, THOUGH THROUGH MY LIMITED SCHEDULE, WHICH IS GENERALLY LIMITED TO TWO 8 HOUR SHIFTS PER WEEK, I HAVE YET TO FACE THAT ONE DEFINING MOMENT WHEN DISPATCHERS FIND OUT WHETHER THEY HAVE IT OR NOT, SUCH AS THE SHOOTING OF AN OFFICER, ~~SUCH~~ AS THE CASE INVOLVING CARY HAYES AND ROGER ROBINSON; OR A FIRE DEATH, OR AEHICLE ACCIDENT WITH MULTIPLE INJURIES, SUCH AS THE INCIDENT ON I-24 SEVERAL YEARS AGO INVOLVING THE MURRAY STATE UNIVERSITY CHEERLEADING SQUAD.

THERE ARE NORMALLY 3 DISPATCHERS ON DUTY, WITH AN IDENTICAL RADIO CONSLE AVAILABLE TO EACH OF THEM.

THOUGH ANY DISPATCHER CAN PERFORM ANY DUTY FROM A GIVEN STATION, THE DUTIES HAVE EVOLVED OVER THE YEARS INTO WHAT ARE KNOWN S THE ''CITY DISPATCHER'', THE ''COUNTY DIPATCHER'' AND ''PHONES''.

WHILE THE TITLES ARE PRETTY MUCH SELF-EXPLANATORY AND OUTLINE THE DUTIES, THE PEOPE WHO WORK IN EACH AREA HAVE OTHER RESPONSIBILITIES ALSO.

THE CITY DISPATCHER IS CUSTOMARILY THE BUSIEST AMONG THE 3 PEOPLE ON DUTY BECAUSE OF THE NUMBER OF OFFICERS ON THE STREET AND THE CORRESPONDING POPULATION OF HOPKINSVILLE WHO GENERATE THE MAJORITY OF THE CALLS TO THE E.O.C.

IN ADDITION TO DISPATCHING DEPUTY SHERIFFS AND THE COUNTY POLICE, THE ''COUNTY DISPATCHER'' ALSO HANDLES WHAT IS KNOWN AS THE ''COMPUTER WORK'' CONSISTING OF ENTERING STOLEN CARS AND OTHER ITEMS AND MISSING PERSONS INTO THE N.C.I.C. SYSTEM AND ENTERING ''EMERGENCY PROTECTION ORDERS'' AND ''DOMESTIC VIOLENCE'' ORDERS, WITH 3 MEMBERS OF THE SOCIETY INTIMATELY FAMILIAR WITH THOSE.

IN ADDITION TO ANSWERING THE PHONES, THE PERSON AT THE 3RD CONSOLE ALSO DISPATCHES EMERGENCY AMBULANCES, PROVIDES DIRECTIONS AND CONDITION UPDATES AND ''LOGS'' NECESSARY INFORMATION, SUCH AS ''TIMES'' AND ''MILAGES'', WITH THE MILAGE FIGURE USED, IN PART, TO DETERMINE THE BILL.

THE PERSON ANSWERING THE PHONES ALSO MONITORS THE ARM SYSTEM, WHICH INCLUDES SEVERAL HUNDRED DIRECT LINES TO BUSINESSES, INDUSTRIAL CONCERNS, GOVERNMENT BUILDINGS AND RESIDENCES FOR BOTH BURGLARY AND FIRE, WITH THE MORE SOPHISTICATED LINES ABLE TO DESCRIBE THE ''POINT OF ENTRY'' OR, IN THE CASE OF A CONVENIENCESTORE, A ''ROBBERY'' OR ''PANIC'' ALARM.

DISPATCHERS HAVE A PREFERENE OR AN AVERSION TO ONE PARTICULAR AREA, THOUGH EACH SHIFT CUSTOMARILY ROATES THE DUTIES AMONG THE MEMBERS N A DAY-TO-DAY BASS.

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SOME PEOPLE ARE PUT OFF BY DEALING WITH THE PUBLIC OVER THE TELEPHONE, THOUGH I FIND IT INTERESTING--AND FREQUENTLY AMUSING, MUCH LIKE ANSWERING THE PHONE AT THE RADIO STATION--TO PICK UP THE PHONE, NEVER KNOWING WHAT'S ON THE OTHER END--PARTICULARLY THE 9-1-1 CALLS.

I RECENTLY RECEIVED ONE IN WHICH THE CALLER VERY EXCITEDLY SAID SHE NEEDED AN AMBULANCE TO GO TO 45-13 BRIARWOOD ROAD IN SYLACAUGA, ALABAMA.

I INFORMED HER THAT OUR AMBULANCES ONLY TRANSPORTED PATIENTS FROM WITHIN THE COUNTY BOUNDARIES TO HOSPITALS IN THE SAME AREA.

SHE RESPONDED, ''WELL, 9-1-1 IS NATIONWIDE, ISN'T IT?''

I WAS PROUD OF MYSELF WHEN I TOOK MY FIRST SUICIDE CALL, WITH A RESIDENT OF THE ED SMITH ROAD CALLING ONE NIGHT TO INFORM THE E.O.C. THAT THE CORONER WAS NEEDED AT HIS HOME SINCE HIS WIFE HAD COMMITTED SUICIDE.

WITHOUT INFORMING ANYONE ELSE, I ''PAGED'' CONER DORRIS LAMB AND AWAITED HISPHONE.

SOMEONE ELSE TOOK IT AND IS FREQUENTLY THE CASE, ASKED, ''DID ANYONE AGE DORRIS?''.

I RESPONDED AND INFORMED THEM OF THE SITUATION, AND WHOEVER THE OTHER DISPATCHER WAS ASKED IF I HAD AN AMBULANCE N ROUTE.

I ASKED WHY AN AMBULANCE WAS NEEDED WHEN A PERSON WAS ALREADY DEAD, AND WAS TOLD THAT IT WAS ''STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE'' TO SEND AN AMBULANCE AND THAT ONLY AN EMERGENCY MEDICAL TECHNICIAN A PARAMEDIC, OR A LW ENFORCEMENT OFFICER COULD SUMMON THE CORONER, WHICH MAKES SENSE IN RETROSPECT.

AS AN ASIDE, AND THOUGH I DIDN'T KNOW IT AT THE TIME, IT TURNED OUT THAT THE PERSON WHO COMMITTED SUICIDE HAPPENED TO HAVE BEEN A CLERK AT ONE OF THE CONVENIENCE STORES WHERE I FREQUENTLY PURCHASED BEER.

AND WITHIN TWO WEEKS, HER HUSBAND WAS IN JAIL FOR CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE, AND I LATER LEARNED THAT HIS WIFE FOUND OUT ABOUT IT PRIOR TO HER DEATH, AND MAY HAVE COMMITTED SUICIDE BECAUSE SHE EITHER KNEW ABOUT IT AND DIDN'T ACT, OR DIDN'T KNOW, AND TOOK HER LIFE AFTER FINDING OUT.

A SOMEWHAT RELATED STORY--AND A SITUATION I FREQUENTLY FIND MYSELF IN, WHICH IS THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MY TWO JOBS AND HOW MUCH THAT I LEARN FROM ONE I CAN USE TO FURTHER THE OTHER.

DURING MY INTERVIEW FOR THE E.O.C. JOB, I ASSURED THE PANEL DOING THE INTERVIEWING THAT I WOULD DO EVERYTHING I COULD TO SEPARATE MY JOB AS WHOP NEWS DIRECTOR FROM ANY PART-TIME WORK AT THE E.O.C., WHILE NOTING THAT I HAD DEVELOPED A MORE THAN PURELY PROFESSIONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH ALMOST ALL OF THE DISPATCHERS, AND MUCH OF WHAT I MIGHT USE WOULD HAVE BEEN AVAILABLE ANYWAY THROUGH CONVERSATIONS WITH THOSE DISPATCHERS, THOUGH THE OTHER NEWS MEDIA CONTINUE TO ACCUSE ME OF USING MY E.O.C. JOB TO OBTAIN NEWS STORS, WHEN MOST OF THEM I GET JUST BY BEING THERE WHEN SOMETHING OCCURS IN THE EARLY MORNING HOURS.

AS A MATTER OF FACT, I AS STANDING NOT 3 FEET AWAY FROM FORMER DISPATCER PHILLIP PETERSON WHEN HE OOK THE CALL FROM THE ''NEWLIFE MASAGE PARLOR'' IN OAK GROVE CONCERNIN THE MURDERS OF THE TWO PROSITUTES.

ANYWAY, WHAT I CONSIDER MY IRST MAJOR CAL STARTED OUT AS A ''THIRD PARTY'' CALL FROM THE MOTHEROF A WOMAN WHO LIVEDON THE FAR WEST SIDE OF HOPKINSVILLE, WH HAD CALLED HER MOTHER AND ASKED THAT SHE CALL THE POLICE

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I DIDN'T SEEK ANY DETAILS, AND IN THE INTEREST OF TIME, I DID NOT ASK THE CALLER WHY HER DAUGHTER WANTED THE PERSON REMOVED, BUT ONLY OBTAINED THE DAUGHTER'S ADDRESS, A "CALL-BACK" NUMBER FROM THE MOTHER AND FORWARDED THE CALL TO CITY DISPATCHER WHO SENT TWO UNITS---AS IS THE S.O.P.---TO REMOVE THE OFFENDING "SUBJECT"---AS PEOPLE ARE CUSTOMARILY REFERRED TO IN POLICE PARLANCE.

OFFICERS WENT TO THE SCENE, AND AFTER SPENDING SOME TIME THERE, SUBSEQUENTLY MADE AN ARREST.

MAKING THE "ROUNDS" AS A NEWS REPORTER THE NEXT MORNING, I RECOGNIZED THE ADDRESS ON THE ARREST CARD FOR THE OFFENDING MALE, ONLY TO SEE THAT HE HAD BEEN CHARGED WITH MULTIPLE COUNTS OF CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE.

IT SEEMED THAT HIS GIRL FRIEND HAD FOUND OUT THAT HE HAD BEEN ABUSING HER CHILDREN; HOWEVER, SHE ONLY WANTED HIM TEMPORARILY REMOVED FROM THE PREMISES.

BUT DURING THE COURSE OF THE OFFICERS INTERVIEWING THE WOMAN, SHE INFORMED THEM OF HER BOY FRIEND'S ILLEGAL ACTIVITY.

I LEARNED THAT SUCH AN ADMISSION CONSTITUTES SUFFICIENT "PROBABLE

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OR OFFICER TO MAKE AN ARREST.

FOLLOED THE CASE THROUGH THE COURTS WITH A GOOD DEAL OF INTEREST, WITH THE CASE RESOLVED WITH A 'GUILTY PLEA' SOMETIME LATER, AND THOSE OF YOU FAMILIAR WITH THE LOCAL CIRCUIT COURT DOCKET AND THE PENALTIES RECOMMENDED ON A REGULAR BASIS, WILL BE AS SURPRISED AS I WAS TO LEARN THAT THE "SUBJECT" INVOLVED RECEIVED---AND WAS SENTENCED TO 17 YEARS IN PRISON FOR HIS OFFENSES.

SO WHAT BEGAN AS ONLY A ROUTINE ''REMOVE SUBJECT'' TURNED INTO A MULTIPLE FELONY ARREST WITH PRISON TIME FAR ABOVE THE AVERAGE PENALTY DEALT WITH IN CIRCUIT COURT.

THOUGH I RECENTLY LEARNED DURING A 3 DAY CLASS ON ''EMERGENCY MEDICAL DISPATCHING'' AT EASTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY AT RICHMOND THAT ONLY 4-PERCENT OF CALLERS FOR EMERGENCY SERVICES CAN TRULY BE CLASSIFIED AS ''HYSTERICAL'', SUCH OUT OF CONTROL CALLERS ARE PART OF THE JOB, AND I'LL NEVER FORGET THE FIRST ONE I RECEIVED, WHO HAPPENED TO BE A BLACK FEMALE ON NORTH MAIN STREET, WHO CALLED 9-1-1 ONE EVENING TO SAY, IN THE SHRILLEST POSSIBLY VOICE, ''MY BABY IS DYING''.

INEXPERIENCED AS I WAS, I NEGLECTED TO OBTAIN HER ''BABY'S'' AGE, THOUGH AFTER A SERIES OF QUESTIONS I WAS ABLE TO GET THE ADDRESS AND DISPATCH AN AMBULANCE, AND THEN LEARN THAT IT WAS SOME SORT OF DIABETIC PROBLEM.

IT WAS ONLY LATER THAT I LEARNED THAT HER ''BABY'' WAS 36-YEARS OLD, WEIGHED WELL OVER 300 POUNDS, AND WHILE HE, INDEED, HAD A DIABETIC PROBLEM, HE COMPLICATED IT BY DRINKING ALL DAY AND NOT EATING ANY SOLID FOOD.

AS FAR AS HER ''BABY'S'' AGE, I SHOULD HAVE KNOWN THAT HE WAS PAST THE INFANCY STAGE WHEN, AFTER I DISPATCHED THE AMBULANCE, AND WHILE I WAS ATTEMPTING TO GATHER ADDITIONAL INFORMATION WHILE THE EMERGENCY VEHICLE WAS ON THE WAY, HIS MOTHER REPEATEDLY KEPT YELLING, ''MY BABY'S DYING'', BUT ALSO COMMENTED IN HIS DIRECTION, ''DON'T DIE, M_____F_____''.

NOW, HAVING BEEN IN THE ARMY, COLLEGE, AND FREQUENTED LOCKER ROOMS DURING MY LIFE, WAS CERTAINLY NOT SHOCKED BY SUCH LANGUAGE, THOUGH ADMITTEDLY I WAS TAKEN ABACK SOMEWHAT BY ITS ORIGIN.

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I SOON LEARNED THAT PROFANITIES, OBSCENITIES, AND VULGARITIES ARE APPARENTLY A STAPLE OF CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN ADULT--AND JUVENILE--SPEECH PATTERNS--AT LEAST AMONG THOSE WHO FREQUENTLY CALL THE HOPKINSVILLE-CHRISTIAN COUNTY EMERGENCY OPERATIONS CENTER, AND ARE CERTAINLY NOT CONFINED TO THE MALE GENDER.

I REFRAIN FROM IT WHILE DEALING WITH THOSE ON THE OTHER END OF THE LINE, THOUGH THE FACT THAT EACH CALL IS RECORDED MORE FREQUENTLY ACTS AS A DETERRENT THAN MY OWN SELF-CONTROL, PARTICULARLY WHEN THE COMMENTS ARE AIMED AT ME PERSONALLY.

SITUATIONS PECULIAR TO THE CITY DISPATCHER GENERALLY RELATE TO THE RADIO RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE DISPATCHER AND THE OFFICER ON THE STREET, WHICH CAN OFTEN LEAD TO PROBLEMS.

MANY OF THEM ARE ASSOCIATED WITH THE NEWLY-HIRED OFFICERS SHORTLY AFTER THEY COMPLETE THEIR TRAINING WITH A MORE SENIOR OFFICER AND ARE PUT ''ON THEIR OWN'' WITH THEIR OWN CAR AND A WHOLE CITY POLICE AND CRIME TO PREVENT.

MANY OF THEM FEEL LIKHEY HAVE TO STOP EVERY CAR THAT MOVES AND THEN CHECK THE DRIVER OR A VALID DRIVER'S LICENSE, REQUIRING ONE COMPUTER OPERATION; CHECK FOR ANY OUTTANDING LOCAL WARRANTS OR SUMMONSES, REQUIRING YET ANOTHER COMPUTER CHECK; AND THEN A CHECK FOR ANY NATIONWIDE ''WANTS'' OR WARRANTS, WHICH REQUIRES A THID COMPUTER CHECK.

WHILE THESE ARE CERTAINLY VALID REQUESTS FOR SERVICE, THEY CONSUME VALUABLE RADIO TIME, AND ARE SOMETIMES PERFORMED WHEN OTHER, MORE PRESSING TRAFFIC NEEDS TO BE DISPATCHED.

THERE IS ALSO THE DREADED TIME WHEN MORE THAN ONE ''ROOKIE'' IS TURNED LOOSE ON A SHIFT AND IT SEEMS THAT THEY ARE TRYING TO OUTDO EACH OTHER.

ADD TO THAT THE VETERAN OFFICER WHO REMAINS A ''HARD CHARGER'' AND THOSE WHO HAVE FALLEN BEHIND IN THE NUMBER OF ''CONTACTS'' THEY HAVE HAD IN RECENT WEEKS, AND IT MAKES FOR A HECTIC EIGHT HOUR SHIFT ON THE CITY CONSOLE.

THE THIRD MEMBER OF AN E.O.C. SHIFT CUSTOMARILY HAS THE ''EASY'' JOB FOR EIGHT HOURS SINCE THE COUNTY USUALLY HAS NO MORE THAN 3 ROAD UNITS OUT AT ANY GIVEN TIME.

HOWEVER, THAT ALL CHANGES ON THE DAY THAT FAMILY COURT MEETS.

THAT'S WHEN ACTION IS TAKEN ON THE ''EMERGENCY PROTECTIVE ORDERS'' AND ''DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ORDERS'' BY THE VARIOUS JUDGES.

THE ORDERS ARE INITIALLY ISSUED AS ''TEMPORARY PROTECTION ORDERS'' REQUIRING A SOMEWHAT INVOLVED COMPUTER ENTRY CONSISTING OF THE ''VITALS'' OF THE PERSON KNOWN AS THE ''RESPONDENT'', ALONG WITH THE DATE OF BIRTH OF THE PERSON WHO OBTAINED THE P.O., WHO IS KNOWN AS THE ''PROTECTED PERSON''.

THE STANDARD FORM HAS SEVERAL LINES, WITH A ''BOX'' OUT FRONT TO BE CHECKED BY THE JUDGE DECLARING THAT THE ''RESPONDENT'' IS PROHIBITED FROM ANY CONTACT WITH THE ''PROTECTED PERSON'', FROM COMMITTING ANY FURTHER ACTS OF VILENCE OR ABUSE, IS PROHIBITED FROM DISPOSING OR DAMAGING ANY OF THE ''PROTECTED PERSON'S'' PROPERTY, AND IS ORDERED TO VACATE A SPECIFIC RESIDENCE.

IN ADDITION, IF THERE ARE CHILDREN, CUSTODY CONDITIONS ARE ATTACHED, AND, IN MOST CASES, CUSTODY IS ASSIGNED TO THE ''PROTECTED PERSON''.

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ALL OF THE SPECIFIC INFORMATION, SUCH AS THE EXACT ADDRESS OF THE PREMISES THE RESPONDENT MUST VACATE, THE EXACT DISTANCE HE MUST REMAIN FROM THE PROTECTED PERSON, AND THE NAMES AND AGES OF THE CHILDREN INVOLVED, IS ENTERED IN A ''MISCELLEANEOUS'' CATEGORY ON THE E.P.O., WHICH IS FREQUENTLY ALTERED WHEN THE COUPLE APPEARS IN COURT.

I DETAIL ALL OF THIS NOT TO BORE YOU, BUT TO GIVE YOU AN IDEA OF THE TEDIOUS NATURE OF THE WORK, WHICH IS OF A REPETITIVE NATURE, BUT STILL REQUIRES A GREAT DEAL OF CONCENTRATION SINCE MULTIPLE DIGIT NUMBERS ARE ASSIGNED TO EACH CASE, NOT ONLY BY THE COURT, BUT ALSO THROUGH THE COMPUTER ENTRY, WITH ALL OF THAT DOCUMENTED IN A FOLDER, AND EACH ENTRY AND CHANGE THOROUGHLY REVIEWED AND INITIALED BY A ''SECOND PARTY'' REVIEW, MOST FREQUENTLY BY THE ''COUNTY'' DISPATCHER ON THE SHIFT IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING THE ONE DURING WHICH THE ACTION WAS COMPLETED.

AT PRESENT, THERE ARE NO LESS THAN FIVE DRAWERS, WHICH ARE EACH 4 FEET LONG, FILLED WITH ACTIVE E.P.O.'S AN.V.O.'S IN CHRISTIAN COUNTY.

THE E.P.O.'S AND D.V.O. ENTRIES ARE SIILAR TO OTHER N.C.I.C. ENTRIES, WHICH ARE ENTERED INTO A ''FORMATTED'' SCREEN WITH SEVERAL SPECIFIC PIECES OF INFORMATION REQUIRED BEFORE THE ENTRY WILL BE ACCETED.

THOSE ENTRIES, INCLUDING STOLEN CAR, GUNS, TELEVISIONS, MICROWAVE OVENS, AND OTHER ASSORTED ITEMS, ALONG WITH MISSING ADULTS AND JUVENILES, AND WANED PERSONS, BOTH ADULT AND JUVENILE..

AT THE OUTSET, YOU HEARD THE SUB-TITLE, ''THREE DEAD BEFORE NON, WHERE'R WE GONNA EAT''.

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THAT'S THE WORKING TITLE FOR A BOOK ON ANECDOTES, ADVENTURES, AND ANTICS FROM E.O.C. ACTIVITIES THAT VETERAN E.O.C. DISPATCHER SUSAN MACINTOSH AND I ARE THREATENING TO WRITE, AND STEMS FROM A TRUE INCIDENT--OR SERIES OF INCIDENTS IN WHICH SUSAN, OR ''BIG MAC'', AS SHE'S KNOWN FAR AND WIDE, HAD TO CALL THE CORONER OUT FOR 3 DIFFERENT DEATHS BEFORE 12 PM.

THE SECOND HALF OF THE TITLE WAS SUGGESTED BY E.O.C. CAPTAIN SUSAN ELLIOT, WHO ADDED IT WHEN I WAS TELLING HER ABOUT THE SUGGESTED TITLE FOR THE BOOK OF DISPATCHER'S STORIES.

THE TITLE CAPTURES THE VERY ESSENCE OF WHAT IT MEANS TO DEAL WITH THE DAY IN AND DAY OUT BUSINESS OF DEALING WITH TRAGEDIES AND EMERGENCIES IN ADDITION TO THE ROUTINE, TEDIOUS BUSINESS OF RESPONDING TO WHAT SEEM TO FALL IN THOSE CATEGORIES TO THE AVERAGE CALLER.

IF YOU TAKE EACH CALL PERSONALLY, THEY WILL WEIGH YOU DOWN IN A VERY SHORT TIME, SO YOU LEARN TO IGNORE THEM, OR DEVELOP ''ESCAPE MECHANISMS'' TO DEAL WITH PROBLEMS WHICH ARE VERY REAL, VERY SERIOUS AND, IN MANY CASES, ONCE-IN-A-LIFETIME OCCURRENCES TO THE CALLERS.

IN A SENSE, YOU BECOME LESS OF A PERSON BECAUSE YOU TEND TO ATTACH LESS SIGNIFICANCE TO THE POTENTIAL EFFECTS OF A CALL AND THE AFTERMATH, WHILE STILL MAINTAINING SUFFICIENT ''FOCUS'' TO ENSURE THAT EVERY POSSIBLE RESOURCE IS DIRECTED AT A PROBLEM TO MINIMIZE ITS IMPACT.

LET ME CONCLUDE BY SAYING THAT LIKE MANY ATHENAEUM PAPERS, THIS IS SOMEWHAT OF A COMPROMISE, OR IN THIS CASE, A SECOND CHOICE.

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IT'S INTERESTING THAT I FOCUSED ON MY ''SECOND JOB'', SINCE IT IS SPECIFICALLY PROHIBITED AMONG ''MANAGEMENT'' PERSONNEL, ACCORDING TO THE PERSONNEL HANDBOOK OF KEY BROADCASTING OF CORBIN, THE CURRENT OWNERS OF WHOP, AND THEREFORE, MY EMPLOYER.

I AM STILL AWAITING A REPLY FROM CORPORATE HEADQUARTERS IN RESPONSE TO MY REACTION TO THEIR ''SECOND JOB'' POLICY IN WHICH I POLITELY INFORMED THEM THAT IT WAS NONE OF THEIR BUSINESS WHAT I DID IN MY SPARE TIME IF IT WASN'T IN DIRECT CONFLICT WITH MY DUTIES AT WHOP OR DIDN'T REFLECT UNFAVORABLY ON THE WHOP OR KEY BROADCASTING.

MY ORIGINAL INTENTION WAS TO MAINTAIN AND REINFORCE MY REPUTATION AS THE RESIDENT ''LIGHTWEIGHT'' AMONG SOCIETY PRESENTORS, HAVING NEVER AUTHORED A PAPER OF A SERIOUS NATURE, BY REGALING YOU THIS EVENING WITH MY ENCOUNTERS WITH ''CORPORATE AMERICA''.

WHEN THE ACQUISITION OF WHOP BY KEY BROADCASTING WAS COMPLETED LATE LAST YEAR, I FULLY EXPECTED TO BE EMPLOYED ELSEWHERE BY THE TIME I CAME UP AGAIN THE ''ROTATION'' TO PRESENT AN ATHENAEUM PAPER; HOWEVER, MY LUCK HAS HELD AND IN ORDER TO EXTEND MY EMPLOYMENT AS LONG AS POSSIBLE, I HAVE DEFERRED A PRESENTATION ON MY VIEWS OF CORPORATE OWNERSHIP UNTIL LATER.

YOU HAVE BEEN WARNED.