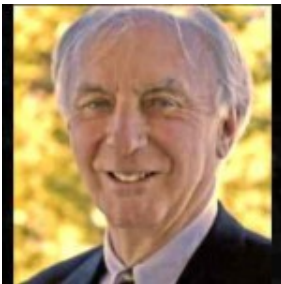


'Not all of us are in fact a bad guy'

By Ted Long

This week's session was the most interesting so far and the most troubling. Our instructor, Mike Roberts, is a longtime El Dorado County sheriff's deputy who began his career in the jail at 19, then moved to deputy status at 21, gave us the patrol officer's view of the job.

Mike is serious, hard working and in my view a dedicated officer. He is typical of what I call the "type", not intended as a bad thing, just how it is when the job is handled and hiring year after year from and by the same general view.



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Mike told us about the job, often mentioning the boredom and the struggle to continually respond to false alarms at homes and businesses, almost to the point where it is difficult to take them seriously.

He painted a clear picture of the possibility of danger, using examples of obvious bad guys, examples where there is going to be trouble. The traffic stops where the person has a gun, the domestic violence call where the officer is assaulted. In other words, he made it very clear to us that this is a dangerous job, not for everyone. Mike expressed numerous times his willingness to shoot to kill and showed us videos that

would justify that position.

I certainly agree, and acknowledged to him, that this is in fact a dangerous job and we all appreciate his and others willingness to take it on. However, on questioning about the potential for abuse, the over use of force and the fact that not all of us are in fact a “bad guy” he had little to offer. Please do not misunderstand me, I know my view has been impacted by my personal experience in handling several police misconduct cases and my concern about those in authority controlling the message, but I do think that the majority of us need to be aware of the potential abuse by those that have the power to lock us up or otherwise silence us. All I ask is that there is an effort, in the quest for safety, a recognition that we also need to be aware of the honest citizen, a courtesy if you will, that needs to be recognized. I am not sure how you maintain that, but I do know, if you are not looking, you don’t find much.

My conclusion, yes, this is a dangerous job, and appreciation of the service is more than warranted, however, we must remember ever society, good or bad, justifies its actions. Even the most extreme examples make this clear, like Nazi Germany. And I am sure King George at the founding of our nation told the English citizen that we were dangerous rebels, bent on disobeying the law. Efforts like this academy help with public input, public oversight, but I am not sure that is the intention?

Next week we will hear a presentation by a deputy district attorney on laws of arrest and search.

Ted Long is a South Lake Tahoe resident participating in the El Dorado County Sheriff’s Citizens Academy.