

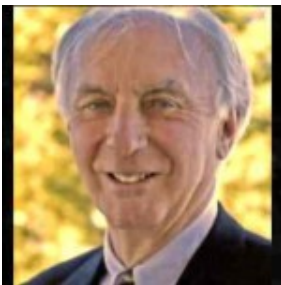
Evidence room – lots of guns and marijuana

By Ted Long

We come to the end of our introduction of the sheriff's department with an inspection and tour of the evidence room and a detailed description of a traffic stop. The evidence room is, to say the least, very crowded, mostly with guns and marijuana.

We were shown how evidence is received and processed. Great care is taken to ensure a chain of control, and availability for court.

If we could do something about the number and availability of guns, the job would be a lot easier. It all so speaks to the use of guns in crime. The legality of marijuana is also brought to question when you see the volume and the filling of our jails.



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Traffic stops are not a major function of the sheriff's office, as our instructors said on several occasions that are really the job of the Highway Patrol. However, they are expected to write some citations as a measure of "doing their job."

The procedure has been worked out over the years. I can recall

when the police stopped you, got out of the car, waked back and said hello. An effort to show your cooperation and friendliness, all designed to avoid the citation. Today you stay in the car, put your hands on the wheel while the officer approaches. Looking in the back seat, being careful not to walk between the cars and always ready for a surprise. We saw some amusing video of traffic stops, the angry driver and the dangerous one who when approached pulled a gun and shot.

The entire process of the academy was a pleasant one and informative. Our nation was founded on the principle of checks and balances and while many people think they are limited to the structure of government on the larger scale, with the executive, legislative and judicial branches, I firmly believe that the concept goes all the way to the local level. I encourage all of you to consider getting involved. It is the fact that when someone is looking it avoids most mischief, it being your children or the police.

I doubt very much that any military leader could pull off a revolt. The military is way too large and the leader is the president – a civilian. That is not true at the local level. The policeman on the beat has incredible power. He has a gun and the full force of a small army behind him and we all know that a judge is much more likely to believe him than you. It's not the take over of the government I am concerned about it is the individual potential for abuse, the Rodney King incident at one end and the carrying out of a personal grudge at the other end. Let's face it, even police persons are human and have emotions. Our constant "looking over the shoulder" assist them on doing the good job they intended in the first place.

Sign up for the next academy, take a ride along, show your concern and support, you will enjoy it and it helps to make our community a safe place.

Thanks for listening.

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