

Mills' May 10 reply to Boyle

Christopher "Blaze" Boyle, you are an amazing guy. It was my pleasure to sit with you and get to know you, even if for a short time. My door is always open to you and your friends. People on FB mentioned your creativity, artistic prowess, and sensitivity toward others. I think they unintentionally sold you short. Your ability to write and express your thoughts are evidence of this poetry.

In our conversation you wanted to "help, build and improve" not tear down EPD, the profession or the individual officers. This rang true in your words and demeanor. Improvement was the essence of our conversation. You clearly desired to improve policing, especially here in Eureka. We in policing do not have all the answers. When one has been in this profession for many years, he/she has a tendency to become professionally myopic. While this parochial weakness is true of all professions, policing is particularly susceptible.

Blaze, I thought you summed up our conversation well. We may not agree fully with one another on every point, but at a time when civility seems to be at a very low point nationally, it is nice that two people can sit down, discuss a difficult topic and even laugh together. There was no trenching for position, but genuine dialog. Discourse such as this brings hope. Hope fosters accountability, because if someone seeks your best interest accountability comes easy. President Obama's 21st Century TF on policing discussed this very issue of procedural justice and fairness. What took place between us is an example of the President's high ideals. Now to replicate it on a larger scale.

I do worry about compassion fatigue among the police. It is easy to become worn out when dealing with the same problems or difficult people daily. My friends who are surgeons, preachers and teachers all lament about compassion fatigue also. But we cannot weary in doing well, as this is what is expected of us. There are times however when a cop must go from the polite level one, to an aggressive level 10 in an instant. This is to avoid violence. If you have to get physical, you want it to be over quickly. The longer it goes the greater the chance for injury. This ability to use discernment and know when to make decisions takes time, judgement and experience.

Discernment and kindness comes, as you rightly pointed out, from the heart of the individual. EPD tries to screen for this in the hiring process, by the questions we ask, the psychological exam each person takes and the indoctrination they receive. Policing must do better and if you or any of your friends have suggestions, please do not hesitate to sit down with me and explain your thoughts.

This I know, the profession changes you. We have recently implemented a "wellness" program. The program is to mitigate the effects of years of physical and psychological trauma. Few cops with tenure have not been seriously injured. Many crack under the oppressive weight and the long term grind of stress. In policing you get small doses of hell for sustained periods of time. Cops feel like a frog boiling to death in the cauldron of cumulative stress.

Past experiences do affect how one handles situations you perceive as volatile. I have been shot at, stabbed, had stiches in my head, and broken my wrist and elbow making

arrests. These past experiences shape how I handle people and when to make snap judgements to ensure self- preservation. Sometimes my judgements are wrong and I miss judge people or the situation. I have left people emotionally wounded. For that, I am sorry.

Blaze, the EPD ship is turning. Some people might think not fast enough, yet I ask for your continued support and positive interaction. I appreciate how you ended your email to me, and I quote it here.

“The line is one to be illuminated in the field of ethics, and painted on the streets of our cities, for ultimately that is the arena where right, and wrong is filtered.” We as a community are painting the mosaic of Eureka together. The streets are our canvas and our interaction is the paint. You, me and those reading this FB post are the artist plying brush to canvas.

Let's make a master piece.

Andy Mills