

POINTS OF VIEW

Grace under pressure made officer real pro

It was one of those sticky situations — and by design. Detective Bert Cook was the point man in the Farmington Hills Police Department's liquor enforcement operation.

It was a Tuesday afternoon between Christmas and New Year's, and the Farmington Hills police were conducting their liquor sting operation. The sting is not a special kind of drink, but a way the department makes sure restaurants, bars and liquor stores don't sell booze to people under 21.

The operation called for a 19-year-old police cadet, in this case Kevin Cronin, to try to buy a beer at each of the city's restaurants and bars that sell booze.

Fortunately, most refused to serve Cronin. But when they bit, Cook and detective Pat Comini would have to issue a ticket to the server and the establishment. That's when the embarrassment of the manager and anger of the server who would likely be fired came into play and that's when Cook was at his best.

He would calmly take the barrage of criticism that often came and understand when the waitress or bartender used pointed, colorful language expressing their displeasure.

"We had one time when I thought we were going to need some backup," he told me.

But Cook was able to handle those potentially volatile situations with a grace-under-pressure bearing that marked him as a real pro.

Less than five months later, the quiet man who was wise beyond his 37



BILL COUTANT

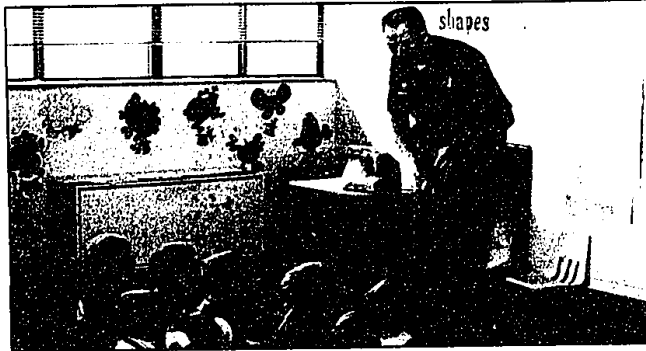
years, is dead, a victim of cancer that was only diagnosed in February. Cook died May 4, two days after he was promoted to sergeant.

The next day, walking through the police complex, there was a numbing silence at the loss of a family member.

One detective who worked with Cook in the juvenile division remembered her fellow detective's reassuring manner that went a long way in dealing with families in crisis.

Cook was the consummate professional, but never stiff or humorless. Deputy Chief Mirl Spencer recalled a visit to Novi by then Vice President Dan Quayle in which Cook was asked to take a picture of Spencer and Quayle shaking hands. Cook thought he had missed the shot, and the vice president walked by, the officer asked Quayle for a retake, explaining that he wouldn't want to disappoint the deputy chief.

"The vice president told him, 'We wouldn't want that to happen,' and went back to shake my hand again," Spencer said. "Both pictures came out



Classroom cop: Much of Bert Cook's work involved going to schools and talking to kids about drugs and other potential problems.

just fine."

And they're both in Spencer's office. Much of Cook's work involved going to schools and talking to kids about drugs and other potential problems.

With the department's approach to prevention, he was perfect for the job.

But Cook also dealt with kids who were physically or sexually abused, a sensitive area where the victims more often than not live in the same house as their tormentors for whom they often retain an emotional bond. It's a delicate situation that fellow detective Sandie Rochford described as hard to leave at work.

"You go home and sit down to dinner

with your own family after dealing with something like that, and sometimes it's really hard," she said.

That was another of Cook's abilities. He could sympathize without being caught up in the emotions, thereby keeping his effectiveness as an officer.

At a time when police have had their share of bad press, it's of some comfort to know that police officers like the late Sgt. Bert Cook are truly the good guys. Police work these days seems, like other professions, specialized and sometimes removed from the everyday life of citizens.

Unlike the cop named Bert played by the late Ward Bond in Frank Capra's

"It's a Wonderful Life," the public doesn't often see these public servants on a regular basis, get to know and trust them. And in Cook's case, families would see him when they were in crisis. He would be coming in as a stranger with authority to a situation where emotions ran high and a steady hand was needed.

And fortunately, his was a steady hand. This "Bert the cop" was a friend. When Bert came back for a visit to the department in March, even though he was severely weakened, it was he who seemed to reassure his fellow officers that everything would be all right. That was just like him.

LETTERS

One angry teacher

I'm angry, insulted, dismayed, and just plain sick and tired of the political games that are being played with my life and the mockery that is being made of my chosen career as a teacher.

For 27 years, I have taught, cajoled and nurtured hundreds of fertile minds in the intricacies of science, history, writing, math and social science.

I have seen eyes widen at the discovery of something new. I have experienced the pangs of frustration with a

student who does not grasp a concept and rejoiced in the glow of success when that same student finally gets it.

Yet, in that same 27 years, I have frequently, along with my fellow teachers, been the object of disrespect, slanderous statements, and untruths. . . and not from students.

My critics would rather dwell on teacher strikes and telling us what to do than looking into the classrooms of Michigan and seeing the positive forces at work.

As chairperson of the Warren Education Association Public Relations com-

mittee, I am involved with promoting what's good in the classroom.

And there's lots that's good. Yet, my legislators focus on strikes four last one was in 1978), and eliminating all our collective bargaining rights.

They also criticize our salaries, comparing us to those who work longer hours and don't have summers off. Is this all there is to your knowledge of teaching and teachers? Do you not know what we really are all about?

Come into my classroom, oh you who know so much. Teach my students for

a day. Help those who need extra help. Comfort those who are troubled by problems at home.

Try to be objective and positive and happy while being bashed in the press and in Lansing. Try having your life's work denigrated. And then, because you are a professional, still give our best to those young people who deserve the best.

I will continue to teach with a fervor that won't burn out. I deserve the salary I receive. I deserve more. I'm a trainer of minds, a builder of personalities, and a teacher. I'm proud of it and

I will hold my head up even though our elected leaders are pushing it down.

This onslaught isn't about teacher strikes. It's about an ignorance of the delicate processes of education being used every day in thousands of classrooms around the state of Michigan.

It's about private grudges and jealousies. And, it's about the burning desire to undermine those who teach the future.

Sandra L. Kush,
Carter Middle School,
Warren Consolidated Schools

Gathering reaffirms values that strengthen our towns

The Livonia Community Prayer Breakfast kicked off May 9 at 7:30 a.m., so I had to roll out of bed pretty early to make it.

I'm glad I did, because so many decent and wholesome things got bundled together there.

It stood as a living rebuke to what is happening to our increasingly tolerant and ego-driven political system.

The Livonia breakfast is just one in a series of similar events that take place regularly around the country. Their philosophy is simple: "A reaffirmation that people of good will, standing together for a common purpose, can transcend racial, geographic or cultural differences and create unparalleled opportunities for community progress."

Somewhat the events on the program — each ordinary in itself but together moving and significant — made this philosophy concrete.

We all trooped in and sang "God Bless America" with our orange juice.

Then Sister Mary Danatha, who had been chair of the first Livonia prayer breakfast 20 years ago, reflected on how the event had grown with the community, from just over 200 to nearly 1,100 attendees.

Deborah Westerman, a student at Oakland University, read scripture. Fred Hubbs sang "How Great Thou Art" with beauty and passion. Somebody described how one sixth grader at Cleveland Elementary School got a ticket and how that mushroomed into the entire class being present. The Livonia Observer Academic All Stars were introduced.

Dennis Archer, Detroit's new mayor, spoke about personal ethics and community bridge building. "Success is defined by whether the face you see in the mirror in the morning is one you can respect," he said, "and that has to do with how much you have given back, not how much you have taken."

Reflecting on the relationships between the center city and the suburbs, so strained and hostile for so long, Archer pointed out, "There's no need for city and suburbs to be at odds. Our competition is not Livonia or Troy or Novi; it's Cleveland and Baltimore. We need to pull together, all of us, to succeed."

Archer described how his campaign for mayor started early on with meetings between him and his key aides and a group of faculty from the University of Michigan.



PHILIP POWER

Those meetings took place in Livonia, in the offices of the corporation that owns this newspaper. "We started building bridges right here in this city," Archer said, "and we're not going to stop."

Wonderful! I have lived through an era in which the bored and elderly nastiness of Coleman Young called forth the part pookish and part race-baiting responses of Brooks Patterson.

And here's Dennis Archer, newly elected mayor of a city that's in trouble, talking about building bridges between city and suburb.

Dr. Bartlett Hess led us in prayer: "O God, by whom the meek are guided in judgment, and light rises up in darkness for the godly: Grant us, in our doubts and uncertainties, the grace to ask what you would have us to be."

I left thinking that this prayer breakfast had pulled together all the threads which make our civic life full of hope.

The next morning, I read what angry things the Michigan Education Association said about Gov. John Engler for what Engler said about the MEA — I can't remember.

And I read another story about how many sitting state representatives and senators are not running for another term because the political environment has turned so nasty and partisan, with single-issue groups demanding total obedience to their narrow points of view.

It was not a happy contrast.

Phil Power is the chairman of the company that owns this newspaper. You can leave him a message from a Touch-Tone phone at (313) 853-2047, mailbox 1889.



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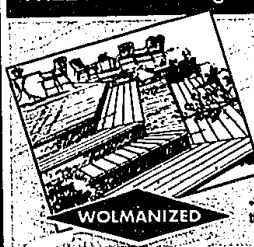
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