

## **A Few minutes with the Boss**

*By: Joseph Andalina*

### **Fairness for all**

A judge in DuPage County recently pled guilty in a hit-and-run accident. After striking a parked car and narrowly missing a jogger, the highly respected judge fled the scene after the incident.

While witnesses could not identify the driver, the vehicle description matched the judge's vehicle and the police arrived shortly to his residence after the incident occurred. Police located the vehicle and spoke to him. They found no evidence of intoxication and did not ask the judge to take any sobriety tests. He was cited for a hit-and-run violation and other related traffic violations.

As stated above, he pled guilty, but to the lesser offense of reckless driving, as other charges were dropped by prosecutors in the county where the judge is seated.

The judge said he "panicked" and "accepts full and complete responsibility for my actions. The decision to drive home was an error in judgment that was inconsistent with my values and how I have lived my life."

He was sentenced to pay \$500 in fines and serve a conditional discharge, which means it is a non-reporting form of probation. He also apologized to the jogger, his family, friends, colleagues, and to the public.

He stated he regrets his conduct and intends to rededicate himself to the principals and values in his life that have brought him so many blessings. His defense attorney, however, as they sometimes do, muddied up a thoughtful apology, which we believe to be sincere, by stating that the accident may have been a result of mechanical problems to the judge's car.

Okay, maybe so, but it still doesn't excuse leaving the scene, does it? The judge made a mistake. By all accounts he is a good judge and person, and screwed up. Does this obliterate his honored position? I think not. But he was wrong and he knows better. A forgiving court and county will allow him to rededicate himself and keep his job.

Not so, however, with numerous instances of police foul-ups where they have been ticketed, arrested, or accused of misdeeds. Take the case in Streamwood where a brother peace officer was arrested and charged in a highly publicized incident where he struck a subject numerous times with his baton while attempting to take control of a DUI scenario.

Not only does he get criminally charged, but all the charges against the offender were dropped in the state's attorney's haste to tag this officer. I don't know, but it seems that if the offenses were committed **before** the alleged assault by the officer, then maybe they

should still count! Seems logical. But that's what happens when you're a cop and perhaps make a mistake. You **never** get the benefit of the doubt.

To further illustrate the inequity, the officer is fired from his job **before** the trial! Fair? I think not. And what is galling here is this is a good cop, a good man, and a good public servant. Just like the judge. Background has borne that out.

But there is no opportunity to allow this officer to "rededicate himself to the principals and values in his life!" No, he is just humiliated and tossed in the gutter by his chief and others before he can answer to the validity of the charges.

We think the judge received justice. He is contrite, made a mistake, he was treated fairly and we are all good with that. We need good people on the bench.

But we need good people on the street, and the Streamwood officer is a good cop. I hope someone in the courts or a potential jury member sees the value of this officer and gives him a chance to not only answer his accuser, but to get his job back and continue to be an asset to society.

Vita é bella

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