

A Few minutes with the Boss

By: Joseph Andalina

An end to a sad story

As you know, Officer Jim Mandarino of Streamwood was charged a while back with a felony resulting from actions he took during a traffic stop and an arrest.

He stopped a vehicle with two occupants on suspicion, I believe, of DUI. During this stop, action taken or not taken by the suspect caused Officer Mandarino to use his taser on the passenger and his baton (or asp) on the driver. He struck the driver for non-compliance numerous times when his commands were not heeded.

While there was video to this action, there was no audio, so we do not know what was said by any of the parties. Anytime this happens, it looks bad. Multiple strikes with a club of any sort by a police officer trying to subdue a subject engenders thoughts of Rodney King. And that is never good for the officer in the absence of video or audio that supports the use of force engaged by the officer.

To what extent does non-compliance support multiple strikes by the arresting officer? When this happens, the chief in any department will make the incident known to the corresponding State's Attorney for review. The Cook County State's Attorney in this incident felt that the actions taken by Mandarino were egregious and he was charged with felonies.

While Jim received support from his family, his fellow officers, and this union in administrative issues, it was not enough when he faced trial. The judge in this case, Thomas P. Fecarotta, found him guilty of two felony counts. Jim's life was already in a mess as he lost his job that he loved and now has no hope of returning to law enforcement.

His home was in foreclosure, and upon his conviction, he lost his security job as well as any possible security clearance. Sentencing occurred recently where he could have faced prison. But Judge Fecarotta, a good man, spared him this final humiliation. He took note of Jim's profound decency and spotless record as a police officer in over 15 years on the job.

He spared him from a reproof and endangerment that can only be experienced by a cop going to jail. His sentence of 30 months probation and 150 hours of community service was just and fitting. Judge Fecarotta stated that he "wanted to minimize any further harm caused by Mandarino's actions," calling any prospective prison time "more about revenge and less about justice."

The Judge considered Jim's entire career instead of the short period of time when the actions Jim took on March 10, 2010, were deemed over the line. Judge Fecarotta asked himself "what kind of judge would I be if I didn't." No need to ask, judge, you are truly an honorable guy.

Jim was thankful for the judge's decision, and so are we here at MAP. Police are always held to a higher standard. I don't know if that's the way it should be as we are expected to take more and

more abuse from the bad guys, the politicians, and those with an axe to grind. But whether or not that is proper is a story for another time.

Jim says this does not define him as a man. Good, Jim, keep your head up. Your mistake or actions in the heat of the moment, alone on a traffic stop with two subjects was made and that can't be changed. It is important that you all know that "There but for the grace of God go I" and this can happen to anyone despite their best intentions. As street cops, you must think about this and know that your actions will be examined and scrutinized and not always will be deemed right or necessary in the performance of your duty.

The results can and often do go against you. There is no going back for a do-over. Don't take a bullet for anyone but assess your response to real or personal threats and act accordingly.

In Jim's case, it did not go to his fortunes. Law enforcement has lost a good cop and more importantly, a good guy. We wish him well in all his future endeavors and thank the judge for his compassion and common sense.

Stay safe. Vita é bella