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Fourth Annual

Police Officers’ Ball

Saturday, October 19

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Phoenix Law Enforcer is the official publication of the Phoenix Law Enforcement Association (PLEA) and published bimonthly under the supervision of its Board of Trustees. Opinions expressed by individual board members or any other writer in this publication do not necessarily reflect the opinion of the entire Board of Trustees.

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In the last few months, our Department has been the focal point of national and worldwide attention. This attention has prompted the leadership of the City of Phoenix and the Phoenix Police Department to make changes to our daily operations. Body-worn cameras are now standard in our precincts, and reporting protocols for use or non-use of force, such as pointing a firearm at an individual, have changed. Change from the norm usually brings opposition, discussion and uncertainty.

The PLEA Office has received many calls regarding the two aforementioned changes, and the questions aren't coming from only our membership, but from supervisors as well. The questions almost always address “What will happen if...?” I wish we could have an answer for every scenario that is presented, but the reality is that some of the proposed “what if” scenarios will have to occur and the totality of the circumstance and incident will have to be reviewed before a proper expectation of outcome can be given. What I can promise PLEA Membership is that your rights as a member will be fiercely defended by your representative should you find yourself a subject of an administrative investigation because of lawful force used to protect yourself or others.

I have been told the changes we are seeing are for the greater good and reputation of the Phoenix Police Department. Regardless of your personal thoughts on the matter, we are now dealing with new orders and we can adapt to those orders and still be successful.

Please don't ever let a departmental change in protocol deter a solid, lawful action that will keep you or others safe. Don't let the popular law enforcement disrespect get to you. We are still largely supported by the good people of Phoenix and those good people #9284 expect you to do your job as you always have, with professionalism and conviction.

Can you imagine being in uniform and getting water thrown on you while a crowd jeered and distracted you from the task at hand? And then doing nothing about it? Nope, not in Phoenix...never. PLEA

Your rights as a member will be fiercely defended by your representative should you find yourself a subject of an administrative investigation.
Welcome, New Members!

Ed Alonzo             Crystal Garcia              Andrew McClure            Andrea Tenuta
Kyler Anderson        Adrian Go                  Jacob Ninow              Zachary Tipton
Bryan Ayala           Irina Graber                Keegan Oliver            Rocky Vargas
Rayonte Benson        Shaylyn Grega               Anselmo Perez Cordero     Patrick Ward
Cody Bratton          Bradley Harris             Antwon Powell           Philip Willwerts
Anh Bui                John Hornung               Caleb Reid               Jacob Westra
Candice Denning       Adam Houser                 Jonathon Roberson        Jordan Williams
Jessica Fajardo       Matthew Hunter             Dominic Rochotte         Morgan Wilson
Kassidy Freemer        Kyle Mair                  Danny Rubio              Nicholas Woods
Colten Fuller-Espinoza Dominic Maldonado           Jessica Smith           Victoria Wyatt
Brittany Garcia       Austin Martin              Trey Sueing

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Doing More for Our Members

If you have not noticed, over the past several months, we have hosted a few new events for PLEA members and their families that have been a little different from what we have done in the past. As we incorporate some new ideas for member engagement, we are continuing to maintain PLEA’s core mission of providing our members with the best representation during internal investigations (regardless of level), criminal matters, contract issues, public safety issues and all other matters that are important to the membership.

As many of you know, in May, we held the first annual PLEA Family Day at the Main Event in Avondale. This was an awesome event that brought more than 700 members and their immediate family members together for a day of fun. We managed to reserve the entire facility so our members and their families could enjoy their time without any worry of outside distractions. We will be hosting this event again next May, and we would like to see a larger turnout than we had this year. Let’s try to make it one thousand!

Recently, when the newest Spider-Man movie was released, we were able to reserve private screenings at two different Harkins movie theaters on different days for our members to watch the film with their families. We plan on providing more of these types of events throughout the year when opportunities are available. Bringing members and their families together outside of work is one of our focused priorities, and we plan on hosting these types of events more often. I know there are several movies and events throughout the year that are held at different venues that we might not think of, so if there are any that are of interest to you, please reach out to us and we can see what we might be able to facilitate.

Throughout the year, we are always seeking new benefits for our membership. When they become available, we make sure they are available to our members. Over the past year, we were able to secure reduced pricing for admission to the OdySea Aquarium (which now has lowered their original pricing and made the discount available online). For our members who like to travel, you should check out the Heroes Vacation Club (heroesvacationclub.com), a program that provides police officers and first responders access to vacation destinations worldwide at a discounted rate. GovX (govx.com) also provides discounts on some travel as well as merchandise for law enforcement, first responders and military personnel. For outdoor enthusiasts who enjoy hunting, fishing, hiking, etc., I recently came across Guidefitter (guidefitter.com/firstgear), a site that offers first responders gear discounts of up to 60%. For shooters, A&A Optics (aaoptics.com) offers law enforcement discounts on optics (to access the discount, click on the “Military/LEO” tab on the home page and follow the prompts).

Hopefully you can take advantage of some of these law enforcement discounts. We will continue to search for new benefits for the membership, and try to provide fun activities for you and your family. I hope to see you at one of our next events. Speaking of which, remember to buy your tickets to the Police Officers’ Ball, scheduled for October 19 at the Pointe Hilton Tapatio (see page 7 for details). This year, there will be a live auction, mystery boxes, dueling pianos and dancing, and KNIX radio host Tim Hattrick will be our emcee. Come to the ball and have a good time! I hope to see you there! PLEA
Enjoy dinner, drinks, dessert, entertainment and the opportunity to support PLEA Charities’ mission of providing for police and caring for our community.

Tickets: $95 EACH OR $900 FOR TABLE OF 10

To purchase tickets, please visit pleacharities.org.

All proceeds will benefit PLEA Charities, a 501 (c)(3) nonprofit organization.

For sponsorship and event information, contact PLEA Charities Director Cassandra Jarles at cassandra@pleacharities.org or (602) 246-7869.
SECRETARY’S MESSAGE

THE CURRENT STATE OF POLITICS AND RECENT ATTENTION VIA NEWS AND SOCIAL MEDIA HAVE BROUGHT RAPIDLY OCCURRING CHANGES WITHIN THE DEPARTMENT.

The Times They Are A-Changin’

Bob Dylan’s hit was included on his 1964 album of the same name and was in essence a protest song, which over the years has been influential on society as it carries a lasting message of change. When it comes to change, as viewed by police officers, there is a saying: “Cops hate change and the way things are.” This can be interpreted in the following way:

1. As creatures of habit, generally speaking, cops are not favorable to changes in policies and procedure, yet they will complain about the status quo.
2. While there may be some initial pushback as the changes are implemented, eventually everyone gets dialed in and gets used to working within the new parameters.

Having been around the Phoenix Police Department for 25 years, I can recall more than one occasion where something changed and people who were around long before I was thought the world was going to end. Eventually, we worked through it and life and operations moved on. However, the current state of politics and recent attention via news and social media have brought rapidly occurring changes within the Phoenix Police Department. Many of us have issues with some of these changes, proposed changes and the effect they will have on the work we are expected to do.

I have talked to many #9140 senior members who collectively believe these changes are going to have a negative effect on our mission. We talk about the days of being a cop when it was a passion to hit the streets after a briefing and actively do police work. We kept our own “creep files” and beat books and would run known troublemakers from our beat and squad areas for warrants prior to, or shortly after, hitting the street. Some of us would check with the Maricopa County Adult Probation officers we regularly backed up to see if any of their charges were being violated. Depending on radio traffic and calls holding, we would make proactive attempts to locate these individuals and take them into custody.

Sometimes these incidents went off without a hitch and the suspects were easily detained and taken into custody before being booked into jail or turned over to their probation officer. In other instances, the suspects chose to elude and/or fight us, resulting in canine searches and completely justified use-of-force incidents, including canine deployments and bites. Keep in mind, these suspects weren’t wanted on traffic charges or misdemeanors; they were convicted felons, many whom had a history of violence, including criminal street gang members. The common denominator was they were willing to do whatever they had to in order to avoid going back to prison. We knew full well what we were getting into and were willing to accept that we’d be notifying our supervisors of what we planned to do and the end results, including having them respond to take care of a use-of-force report. Some of us were lucky enough to have supervisors who wanted to participate, whether it was holding a perimeter position or actively participating in the arrest, and they never took issue with letting a shift lieutenant know what was going on, completing a use-of-force report, or hearing a few f-bombs being dropped while confronting and actively taking these individuals into custody.

Moving forward, with body-worn cameras, I don’t see many in patrol willing to put themselves out on a limb to do this type of work anymore. This ties directly with the “post-Ferguson Effect,” where officers are only answering radio calls instead of doing on-view work, which in my opinion is a lost art. Their logic, which is completely understandable, is: “Why should I put myself in a situation where I’m going to be scrutinized and second-guessed, by
not only the public, but my own agency?” It also dovetails with the theme of an article I wrote in the March/April 2016 issue of the Law Enforcer titled “Protect and Serve or Observe and Report?” where I discussed how to avoid confrontations while reducing potential liabilities for the City and the Department.

All things considered, it is my opinion and belief that so-called “leaders” of our city don’t want us to do police work. Just look at what is happening across the country. The 1982 “broken windows” theory of crime and policing, authored by criminologist George L. Kelling and James Q. Wilson, has come under attack by the “left” and the American Civil Liberties Union because of the perception it’s unfairly applied to minorities, the poor and the homeless. Public order crimes like urinating/defecating in public are no longer being enforced, trespassing by the homeless is being promoted as “urban camping,” and more and more states are decriminalizing illegal drug use and/or legalizing marijuana possession and use. Even shoplifting has been decriminalized to an extent by broadcasting thefts and raising the value needed to meet felony charging requirements, and traffic enforcement is being left to technology like photo radar and red-light cameras. The flipside to all this is that contacting individuals for minor traffic violations and low-level crimes actually does lead to the proverbial bigger fish in many cases. These “fish” include felony and misdemeanor warrants, some from outside jurisdictions, where the individual has been a fugitive from justice, suspects wanted in connection with more serious and violent crimes, including drug and human trafficking, organized retail theft, armed robbery, aggravated assault, homicide, adult and child sex crimes and a hodgepodge of others. While there are famous cases like serial killer Ted Bundy and Oklahoma City Bomber Timothy McVeigh, a few years into my career, a traffic stop at Central Avenue and Van Buren Street for throwing a cigarette butt out the window of a vehicle led to contact of a passenger with a file stop (remember those?) who was a suspect in multiple drive-by shootings. A follow-up interview with a gang detective led to a confession and conviction.

Once again, going back to an old theme echoed by a now-retired lieutenant I worked for, are we becoming “secretaries with guns” since more restrictive polices could potentially lead to more officers only responding to calls for service and taking reports without conducting follow-up or contacting a potential suspect? Don’t let that happen, because as we’ve seen before, officers have been investigated and disciplined for neglect of duty. However, if you do contact them and happen to be filmed by a citizen with a cellphone and the video makes the national media, you’ll find yourself being thrown under the bus and investigated for unprofessional conduct, unreasonable force and a host of other policy violations.

Slow down, wear your vest, stop advising on calls, and stay safe!
Body Cameras — They’re Here!

I have been a police officer for 25 years. Approximately five years ago, while still working patrol in 800, I was told that I was one of the “lucky” officers who happened to be on a squad that was getting body-worn video cameras. To say the least, I was not happy. I immediately felt as if we were being labeled untrustworthy, and could not understand how the Department would give in to the media types and boisterous community members who painted with a broad brush that we were all corrupt and could not be trusted. I even heard grumblings among my squadmates that they were considering transferring to different squads.

Then-Commander Kurtenbach explained to us this technology was coming and there was no escape. Fast forward to 2019, and, in fact, he was right. They are here to stay.

When we were all issued our cameras, we were told initially they would be used during any type of enforcement contact with the public, or when it was in the best interest of the Department. As I began to use it during my shifts, I noticed a few things. Initially, I noted I was now much more patient with people and went out of my way to explain things more clearly. I noticed many of the individuals I was contacting had no clue that they were being recorded and paid no attention to the camera right in the middle of my chest, and some continued to act as foolishly as they normally would. I soon began to realize how valuable this tool was becoming when it was able to capture raw emotion upon arriving at a domestic violence call where the female victim began telling me how she had been assaulted. We all know how many domestic violence victims recant their stories and sometimes flat-out call us liars when we get to court months down the road. There is no disputing their statements and the fear they exhibited when it is all caught on video. This is just one example of how beneficial the recordings can be.

As the ASU study progressed, an alarming issue came to light: The cameras were not being activated as prescribed by policy. Some of the more egregious violators had gone weeks without a single activation. Those few officers were not served NOIs. Instead, they were brought in by their sergeants and spoken to about the issue. The old days, when not everything went pen-to-paper, were back to some degree. The powers that be, then-Commander Kurtenbach, wanted compliance, not discipline. Those officers saw the writing on the wall and complied with the policy.

Here we are some five years or so later, and now the climate across the country is to assume that all police officers are corrupt and our sole intention for going to work is to brutalize and kill people. We are assumed guilty until we can prove our innocence. Any use of force by a police officer is becoming more scrutinized by the media, the community and the Department.

On two separate occasions, I found myself having to use force against larger female suspects. Both were during the day in the middle of public view, and both suspects were under the influence of illegal drugs and had no intention of making it easy for me to take them to jail. Even though misconduct allegations were initially claimed by the suspects, I was exonerated before any NOIs were even considered. My actions during these incidents were justified without me even having to speak a word, as the video spoke for me.

I found myself activating my camera on every call I was dispatched to, even Priority 3 paper calls. My mindset became “I need to protect myself and my family’s welfare at all costs.” None of us can afford to be labeled by the media and overzealous community leaders, or accused of some misconduct that calls our integrity into question. Just consider how different the unfortunate incident in Ferguson, Missouri, would have been.
been if Officer Wilson had a body-worn camera recording that event. All the media hype and false allegations made against him would have never occurred. There are countless examples of these types of scenarios that could have been avoided if only the officer had been wearing some sort of video recording device. Face it: Almost everyone in the country has the ability to record our actions, and many routinely do. Wouldn’t it be prudent to have our own video that has not been edited or manipulated before it hits the evening news?

After having had the opportunity to work with the technology, I am a proponent of on-officer video. I believe it will save careers from false allegations of egregious misconduct, and I believe it will keep unwanted discipline or even the unresolved allegations from being in our files. It will save officers the stress of being called into the sergeant’s office or to PSB, or worse, being the lead story on the 6 o’clock news. I think it will make our Department as a whole much better, and we will regain the trust of all community members.

I also feel that the good officers, which 99.9% of us are, will be made better by knowing that our actions and words are being recorded. The other 0.1% will either become better or work themselves out of a job. Ultimately, the choice is theirs.

This is the way of the police world as we know it now. It is time to embrace body-worn cameras as a tool that can help us become better as officers. We are fortunate that our Department has people like Executive Chief Kurtenbach and Sergeant Kevin Johnson developing the policy that governs this technology. They are leaders who have employed a common-sense approach to writing this policy and have kept the “gotcha” out of it. Don’t be foolish enough to think that those who fail to comply with policy won’t eventually be disciplined. It will just be #8878 progressive, as other policies are.

The days of people believing what we say to be the absolute truth because we are police officers have passed. It is very unfortunate, but this has happened for many reasons. I do believe the majority of citizens trust us and know that we do good work. We don’t need the video to protect us from those individuals; we need it to protect us from the people who mean to do us harm. Ultimately, our families rely on us to provide for them. We need to do whatever it takes to be that provider, and if that requires wearing a video camera for 40 hours a week to ensure our family’s success, so be it.

Remember, body camera or not, assume you are always being recorded.

As always, take care of each other out there, so we can all reach the retirement finish line.

If you have any questions or comments, you can call me at the PLEA Office or email me at dkriplean@azplea.com.
GET INVOLVED WITH YOUR ASSOCIATION!

PLEA Board and membership meetings are now held on the third Tuesday of the month. Each Board meeting begins at 8 a.m. and is immediately followed by the membership meeting at 11:30 a.m., where lunch is served.

This is a great opportunity to meet your Board members and learn what is going on with your Association, including upcoming events. If you want to attend a meeting, please contact the office at (602) 246-7869 or office@azplea.com so we can plan accordingly for lunch.

CALLING ALL RETIREES!

PLEA wants to stay in touch and needs your up-to-date contact information. Please send your name and email address to office@azplea.com. Thank you!

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We’ve hidden five serial numbers within this issue of Phoenix Law Enforcer. If your number is among them and you call (602) 246-7869 to let us know that you found it, you’ll win $50. If you didn’t find your number this time, try again in the next issue, where we’ll hide five more! (Excludes serial numbers listed in Retirees section.)

FOR MANY REASONS, IT PAYS TO READ PHOENIX LAW ENFORCER.

This giveaway is open to PLEA members only. You must be 18 or older to win.

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RETIRED PHOENIX POLICE DETECTIVE DARIN FREDRICKSON REVEALS THE TRADECRAFT SECRETS OF COVERT SURVEILLANCE

PHOENIX LAW ENFORCER

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2019

PHOENIX LAW ENFORCER

September/October 2019
Avoid the Perils of Probate!

By John Mariner
Founder, Generation Living Trusts

There is no greater estate planning need to protect individuals and their families than that represented by the men and women of law enforcement. However, this is a seriously underserved group of professionals who often lack basic documents that can protect themselves and their families. Of course, one of the most important questions deals with whether you should acquire a traditional will or a living trust. Many have been told that trusts are only for those with a million-dollar estate, which is simply not true. In fact, our clients are surprised that even a small estate can be damaged and left unprotected with a traditional will.

If you have $75,000 or more in personal assets (including the equity in your home), you will be subject to the perils of probate. A will does not avoid probate. Probate is the legal process associated with first determining every asset you own or hold title to, then properly transferring those assets to your loved ones, charities or other beneficiaries of your choosing at your death. This process is very expensive, extremely time-consuming and frustrating to all concerned. It raises the question: “After I die, why should I have to pay courts and attorneys to transfer my assets to my loved ones? It’s my stuff! Why can’t I simply give my stuff to whoever I want to, when I want to?”

If you have a will, at least you’ve made some decisions concerning who will speak for you (an executor) and who will be receiving your money (a beneficiary). However, a will does not protect you while you’re alive. It’s not designed to do that, and that’s one of the serious problems associated with a traditional will. If you become incapacitated, a will alone cannot help because it does not name who you might want as your guardian.

For these reasons and more, a living trust, with all of its support documents (medical powers of attorney, living will, durable power of attorney, etc.), is often the better choice. With a living trust there is no probate, you are allowed to select a legal guardian long before you might need one and there’s little or no #9696 delay in transferring your assets to your loved ones at your death.

“We believe every officer and all support staff within the PLEA family should seriously consider moving forward with a comprehensive estate plan to protect themselves and those they love,” says Michael Napier, founder of the Napier Law Group.

STAY UP TO DATE WITH AZPLEA.COM!

Access the latest association news and important members-only information instantly on the PLEA website.

JOIN US on the second Thursday of every month in the PLEA Conference Room for a free on-site presentation on living trusts, wills and probate. Spouses are welcome! Seating is limited.

RSVP to (623) 262-0845 for more information, or to arrange a free, no-obligation appointment in your home.
AVOID the PERILS of PROBATE

WHETHER YOU HAVE A WILL OR NOT, YOU CAN BECOME A VICTIM OF THE PERILS OF PROBATE.

A Will does NOT avoid probate. Probate is the legal process of transferring your assets to your loved ones at your death. Probate is very expensive, extremely time-consuming, and frustrating to all concerned. Remember - you’re not the only one in danger. It’s time to protect yourself and those you love from the perils of probate.

We’re Generation Living Trusts.

We’ve been serving the needs of Arizona families just like yours for more than 30 years. How? We’ll meet you in the privacy of your home or at work to discuss the merits of acquiring a Living Trust. Our fees are very affordable, our legal expertise is exceptional, and our customer service commitment to you and your loved ones is second to none.

We can help. Call today.

When bad things happen to good people, families are often not prepared. We welcome the chance to help prepare you and your loved ones, and to address the estate planning needs of PLEA, its officers and support staff, and their families. We’re excited to help protect those who protect us. When can we get started?

Protecting you from generation to generation

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623.262.0845
As many of you remember, with the 2014–2016 Terms and Conditions of Employment, the City of Phoenix eliminated certain provisions from your MOU. These provisions had allowed eligible officers to receive additional compensation instead of accruing additional sick or vacation leave or receiving their annual uniform allowance. The additional compensation was structured in a way that allowed it to be included in the officers’ pension calculations.

Following imposition of the TCE, PLEA filed a lawsuit on behalf of all rank and file officers alleging claims for breach of contract and violations of the pension and contracts clauses of the Arizona Constitution.

Over the last five years, our office has fought several legal battles related to this lawsuit — in the superior court, court of appeals, and the supreme court. At each stage, we prevailed. In June, however, the superior court found that “[a]ny claim for relief is barred unless a plaintiff was approved and participating in the wage enhancement program on or before July 1, 2014.” This decision significantly narrowed the issues and the potential class size going forward. Officers who were not yet participating in the conversion programs as of July 1, 2014 do not have a claim going forward.

Since that ruling, our office has been focused on ensuring that the officers who were participating in the conversion programs receive relief for the economic losses that the City caused by eliminating these benefits. This is a group of over 400 officers. To that end, we filed a motion for class certification, which is currently pending. The case is currently scheduled for mediation in late October.

You can expect to receive an update after the court has issued a ruling on the class certification motion. In the meantime, if you have any questions about this case or its impact on you, specifically, please contact our office at (602) 248-9107.

About the Author

Cassidy L. Bacon is an associate at Napier, Coury & Baillie, P.C., representing clients in various public-sector employment and personal injury matters. She received a Bachelor of Science summa cum laude in 2009 and a J.D. cum laude in 2013 from Arizona State University. Bacon clerked at the Napier firm during her second and third years of law school and returned in 2014 following a one-year judicial clerkship for the Honorable Patricia K. Norris on the Arizona Court of Appeals.
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On August 15, PLEA Charities hosted its Back to School event at Pueblo del Sol Elementary School. PLEA Board members, Phoenix police officers and volunteers spent the afternoon in the school’s packed auditorium, handing out back-packs filled with school supplies to students, as well as hosting an assembly with fun games and activities designed to get everyone pumped up to tackle the upcoming school year.

Thanks to generous donations from Walmart, AZTV, the Phoenix Police Communications Bureau and members of the community, PLEA was able to provide much-needed supplies to 1,200 students and 45 teachers. PLEA President Michael London said these donations were the most PLEA Charities has ever received.

PLEA Charities has helped thousands of students with their school supplies drive, which is held in partnership with a select area school each year. We believe it’s important to do what we can in order to help provide the tools students need to succeed and reduce the amount of money teachers spend out of their own pockets. This event is just one example of how PLEA Charities provides and cares for its local community.
What did you do before you were a cop?” This is a common line I remember hearing at many a choir practice at zero dark thirty while drinking Budweiser around a roaring bonfire in the north Phoenix desert.

A good portion of my squad mates are prior service military, and they all having boring, stupid, exciting and hilarious stories to tell.

A police recruiter once said that he loved hiring ex-servicemen. He told me, “They have been there, done that, and are less likely drop out of the police academy when things get tough.” After doing your hitch in the service and putting up with all the bullshit involved, nothing will be a surprise to you.

I was not in the military, having graduated high school in 1972, just missing the Vietnam War. My funny stories revolved around my exploits in high school and the next closest thing to the service, the Phoenix Police Academy. I did get a taste for boot camp as my class (Class #153) was the last academy class for Sergeant Ralph Griffith. But this story isn’t about me; it’s about someone I consider a real American hero, my close friend and mentor, retired Phoenix Police Lieutenant Mike Nikolin. Last year, I sat down with Mike at his home for several days listening to him tell exciting story after story, and I wrote hundreds of pages of notes for his Phoenix Police Museum biography. These are just a few of the many stories Mike told me. Enjoy!

Just as his dad had promised, on graduation day in 1961, Mike Nikolin was taken to the recruiter #8679 in downtown Mesa, Arizona, where he enlisted in the United States Air Force at the ripe old age of 17. Mike did his basic training at the Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio, Texas.

After completing his basic training, Mike gravitated toward the Air Police. He was sent to Air Defense and Command/Strategic Air Command in Amarillo, Texas, where he was assigned to guard the flight lines on the various bases that housed the B-52 bomber. Mike spent the next two years doing this very important duty assignment.

On October 16, 1962, while working the flight line, a military truck pulled up to his location, where Mike and his fellow air police officers were ordered into the truck immediately. The truck took the men to a C-123 cargo plane that was waiting for them. The plane took off quickly and headed southeast. Nothing like this had ever occurred before, and Mike and his fellow airmen had no idea what was happening. They soon learned that the Soviet Union was attempting to put nuclear missiles on Cuba. Mike and his squad mates were the first soldiers on the way to the island during the Cuban Missile Crisis.

Shortly after takeoff, the plane’s crew chief came back and advised them that there was another C-123 behind them, and that they had all better pray hard for that plane. The men asked why they should worry about that plane. The crew chief responded, “Because it’s loaded with our ammunition.” The only ammo the men had was what they were carrying on them.

The two C-123 cargo planes made it three-quarters of the way to Cuba when they were ordered to return to the base. Nuclear war with the Soviet Union had been averted. Luckily, President John F. Kennedy was able to call Nikita Khrushchev’s bluff, and the Soviets turned their ships around.

Mike would eventually be reassigned to Stewart Air Force Base from 1963 to 1964. Mike was given a very unusual assignment: guarding the atomic bomb on its flights across the East Coast. The bomb was quite mobile and at the time was loaded into a C-123 cargo plane. Mike’s duties were to ensure that nobody came near the bomb at any time.

Mike traveled with the bomb on approximately 50 missions. A typical mission would leave Stewart AFB and fly to Dow AFB SAC in Bangor, Maine. From there, they would fly south along the East Coast to Florida. In Florida, they would not land, but turn around and head back north to Stewart AFB. This mission would take six to seven hours.

While guarding the bomb, Mike would be armed with a standard issue M1911A1 .45 caliber semi-automatic pistol and an M-2 carbine.
The M-2 differed from the M-1 in that it was smaller and lighter, could fire fully automatic and fired a different cartridge.

Mike did this job for approximately one year, and during that time the Air Force had some very interesting incidents occur on the week of November 18, 1963. That week, there were two incidents of possible sabotage of communications at two SAC bases that caused all SAC crews to go on full alert and all SAC bases to go on lock down. Then, four days later, on Friday, November 22, President Kennedy was assassinated in Dallas, Texas. At that time, the atomic bombs were loaded inside a B-58 jet bomber.

Eventually, the flights along the eastern seaboard would stop because of an incident that occurred while Mike was aboard the C-123 guarding the atomic bomb.

The nose gear of the C-123 failed to deploy for landing. The pilot attempted to land three times, bouncing the plane on the runway to try to loosen the gear and get it to drop. Third time’s a charm. It came down and they were able to land safely with the A-bomb tucked safely away. How many people can say that they were guarding a real, armed atomic bomb and came this close to crashing the plane?

When Mike wasn’t bouncing along the runway with an atomic bomb on board, he was doing his other expected duties as an air policeman. One evening when he was on patrol in a military housing area, he observed a house on fire. The electrically-charged power and phone lines were down and burning and had also set fire to a nearby barn. Mike kicked open the door to the smoke-filled burning house and went inside. He woke the sleeping residents and got them out before the fire reached them. Mike was later given the Air Force Commendation Medal for meritorious service for his actions that day. The commendation was signed by General Curtis LeMay.

Another day while on base patrol, along with another air policeman, Mike went to check on the Bachelor Officers Quarters, an old, two-story building located on a hill. Suddenly, Mike heard a strange noise coming from the basement of the building. He and his partner quickly went down to check on it. As they started to enter the double basement doors, the boiler inside the building exploded. Mike’s partner went flying through the air and over their parked truck. Mike was blown approximately eight feet through the air and into the truck. Luckily, neither man was injured. It turned out to be a steam explosion from the defective boiler.

Mike really enjoyed being an air policeman. He loved to do off-base work with the New York State Police while he was stationed at Stewart Air Force Base. He would occasionally do “town patrol” alongside NYSP troopers. Witnessing the professionalism of the troopers with whom he worked caused him to start thinking about a police career when he left the Air Force.

The Vietnam War began in 1964, at which time, Mike had eight months to go in his enlistment. The Air Force tried to get Mike to re-up so they could send him to Vietnam; however, because he had less than a year to go, they could not send him overseas. Mike continually said “no way” to the recruitment efforts. Mike’s close friend and roommate, Matt, wasn’t so lucky and was sent to Vietnam. Matt was killed during his first week overseas. Everyone Mike knew at the time was being sent to Vietnam. The casualty rate in Vietnam in 1964 was 216. In 1965, it jumped to 1,928, and by 1968, it was almost 17,000.

Mike does not regret his decision to leave the Air Force. He was thankful for the experience and credits the training he received as being instrumental in his distinguished career as a Phoenix Police officer. But, you know, as we were looking back at his military career, he may have had “a few too many close calls.”

Mike is now retired from the Phoenix Police Department and working part-time as the curator for the Phoenix Police Museum, located at the old police headquarters on 120 South Second Ave. in downtown Phoenix.

Feel free to stop by some day and say “hello.”
CONGRATULATIONS
to the following PLEA members who won the July/August 2019 contests:

Hidden Symbol Contest ($250)
Christopher Meraz

Serial # Contest ($50)
Kyle Cosner
Anthony Konesky
Roman Narbaez

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PHOENIX POLICE DEPARTMENT OFFICERS FALLEN IN THE LINE OF DUTY

EOW: Tuesday, September 18, 2007
Officer Nick Erfle was shot when he and his partner attempted to take a felonious suspect into custody. Officer Erfle was rushed to the hospital but did not survive. He had served on the Department for eight years.

EOW: Saturday, October 25, 2008
Officer Figueroa was responding to a "shots fired" call when a truck turned in front of his patrol car. Officer Figueroa died from his injuries shortly thereafter. He had served with the PPD for more than two years.

EOW: Wednesday, September 4, 1991
Responding to a 9-1-1 emergency call, Officer Kolodziej was shot and killed by a sniper barricaded in a Phoenix home. Officer Kolodziej was a 19-year veteran officer.

EOW: Friday, September 7, 1984
While working off-duty directing traffic, Officer Forsythe was struck by a semi truck and killed. Officer Forsythe was a seven-year veteran of the PPD and active in the police officers’ union.

EOW: Tuesday, September 10, 2002
While Officer Scott was on route to assist in a DUI/fatality investigation, a driver pulled out in front of Scott’s motorcycle, killing him instantly. Officer Scott had served as an El Mirage P.D. officer prior to joining the PPD.

EOW: Tuesday, September 18, 2007
Officer Nicci "Nick" James Erfle

EOW: Thursday, October 20, 1994
K9 Dax

EOW: Saturday, October 25, 2008
Officer Shane Cory Figueroa

EOW: Friday, September 10, 1984
Officer Beryl Wayne Scott

EOW: Tuesday, September 10, 2002
Officer Leonard L. Kolodziej

EOW: Wednesday, September 4, 1991
Officer Kevin W. Forsythe

EOW: Thursday, October 20, 1994
Officer Kolodziej was shot and killed by a sniper barricaded in a Phoenix home. Officer Kolodziej was a 19-year veteran officer.

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In 1994 Ardy Jorjani graduated from college and moved to Phoenix to work for the Phoenix Police Department and to take advantage of the Valley’s booming real estate market.

Since then, he has put his enthusiasm, integrity and unrelenting work ethic to work as a Real Estate Advisor and continues to use his vast experience and creativity to assist clients with making their financial and retirement dreams come true.

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