

Opinion Page

WHEN IS IT TIME TO PULL THE PLUG?

I have not written an article for the VPA magazine for a sometime. If I recall I believe it was when I was in uniform as a Corporal with my present department that I wrote an article about working the midnight shift. Since that article I have been fortunate enough too had been promoted to Patrol Sergeant then to Detective Sergeant. While in the Detective Sergeant position I was fortunate enough to do a five year tour with the Southern Vermont Drug Task Force. Twenty five years with one department, and three years prior with another department gives me a total of twenty eight years in Law Enforcement.

As the big five "0" approaches next year I am starting to think about, "only six years to go" and out the door. Who thinks of when you can retire? Not when we were young and full of it, no I think it sits in with age and maturity and perhaps the feeling of being sick of dealing with the system and or the public. I often think of how I could have been out four years ago if I had gone to the New Hampshire System when I had two chance to do so, but opted to stay in White River Jct. at the time for the excitement of the some thirty bars this town had and the bars fights and the excitement of the crime kept me here. No I didn't even consider or think about pulling the plug years down the road back then. Who did at the ripe age of the twenties?

I have looked around and have seen many of my peers pull the plug and are enjoying themselves, and have seen the ones that miss the excitement and the street and the folks they worked with. I see changes in the system, some good, some not so good, and some I don't have any idea how they got changed to begin with. I agree with some, I disagree with others, and just ignore the rest. I have seen the cliental that we deal with change over the years, from the guy you rolled with on the street the night before, and

had coffee with the next morning, to the one with the pants dragging on the ground and the speaker in the car, that is more money then the car itself I often wonder where did we go wrong. They are someone's kid, or are they? They shoot up this and that, and snort what they can. New drug on the street changes each day. The court systems are overburdened, but the prosecutors make more deals then Bob Barker (Price is Right). Values have gone out the window. Black gloves replaced a handshake, and now needle sticks we must be weary of on their persons. A bag, a bundle or a bundle. Red Devil, to boxing gloves mark the killer "H" (Heroin) that takes the young lives and turns them into the Funeral Home viewing for families.

I look around and see the young ones coming into the profession, and often ask if they are even of age. Could be we are getting just a little older? Naw, they still look to us for help or to have a question answered, or we ask them how the heck to you process a drunk or which ticket is it now civil or criminal? So I guess they still need us.

I look in the mirror and which was once brown hair, now has streaks of gray. I get afraid to get it cut because it seems the gray comes out more. If we sport a beard it looks like a Billy goat by half way through its growing stage, but I remind myself that perhaps that shows maturity. Never thought of wearing glasses to see the computer screen, or to read the newspaper. Why didn't they prepare me for this at the Six Week Police Academy that I went to get certified as a full timer in 1977, Whoops, showing my age once again?

Well when to pull the plug is up to you, but I think I will stick around another six to make someone's life miserable, maybe my own!

—Detective Sgt. Shawn T. Lundrigan
Hartford Police Department