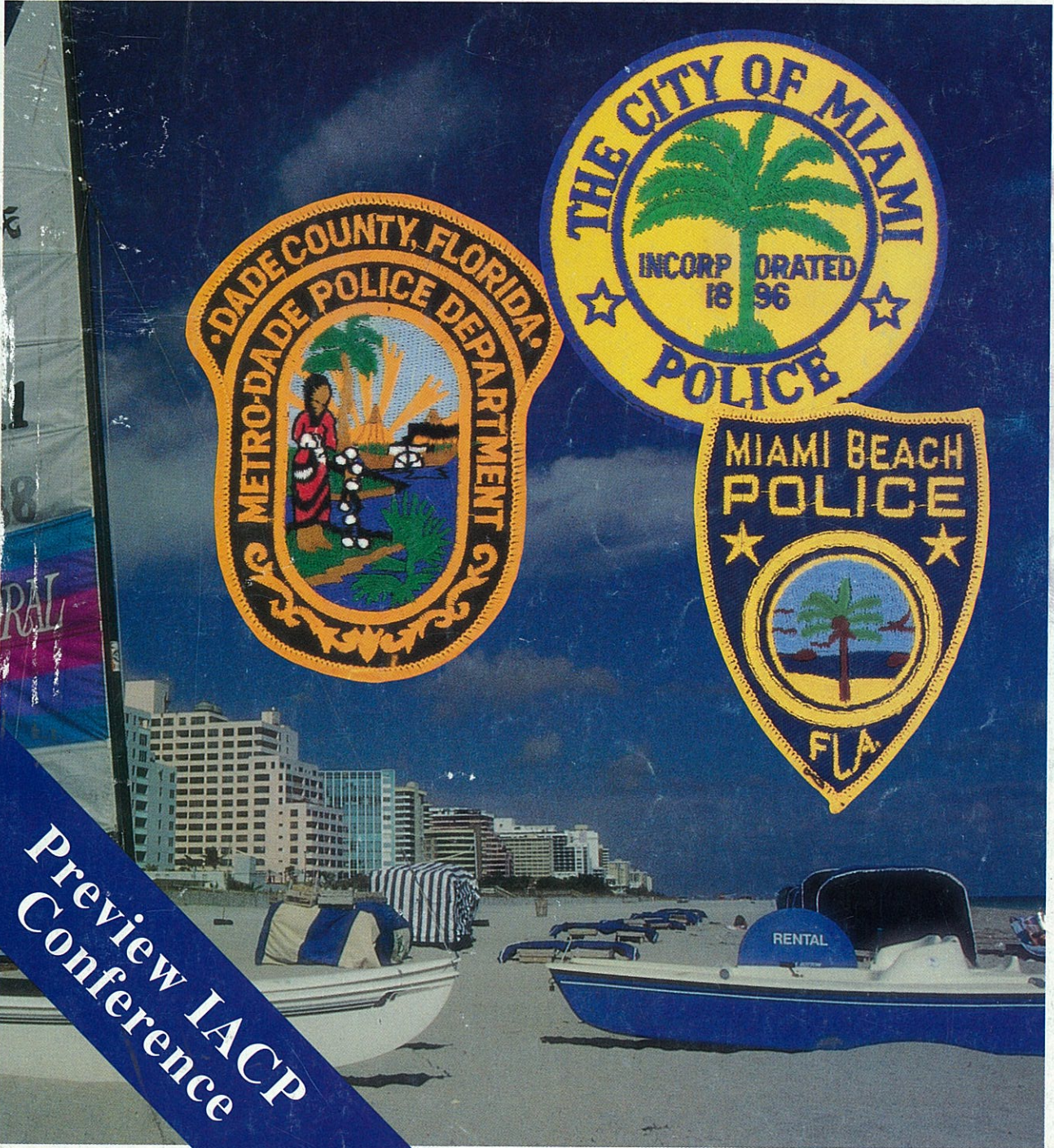


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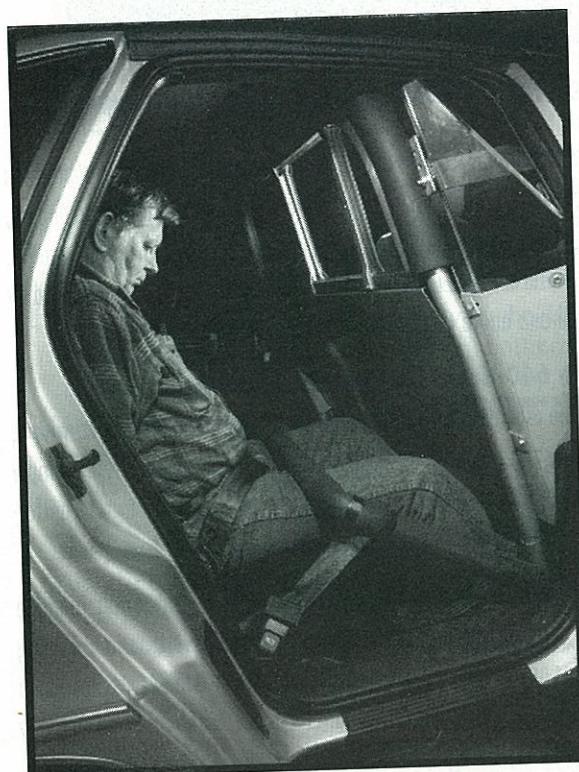
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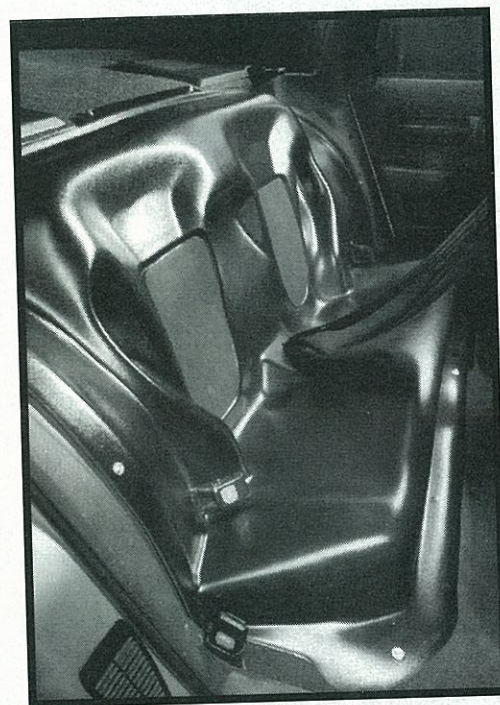
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MANAGEMENT

Black Orchid Leadership

Great leaders are rare and precious resources

BY STEPHEN M. RAMIREZ

A lesson that I learned during my time in the Marine Corps has stayed with me my entire professional life. As recruits the infamous circuit course terminated at the rope climb, which I found to be especially challenging.

The top of that rope proved to be elusive and I was ordered to report to the senior drill instructor. I was locked at attention in front of him when he calmly stated, "Ramirez, you're leader of your squad but you didn't reach the top of the rope climb yesterday." There was a pause then he coolly said, "Leadership is by example, you're fired!"

I was given a day at the rear of the squad to think about this lesson before I was "re-hired" to the squad leader position. During my service in the Corps, I found leadership by example to be the norm. In the past decade of my civilian law enforcement service, it's been my experience that "true" leadership is about as rare as a black orchid.

The Black Orchid Leader

True effective leadership is a phenomenon that is difficult to define, but easy to recognize when you experience it. The best measure of leadership then should be the effect that is exhibited by those who are being led ultimately toward organizational goals. "The measure of leadership is not the quality of the head, but the tone of the body. The signs of outstanding leadership appear primarily among the followers," (DePree 1989).

This may have been best stated long ago by Lao Tsu: *The wicked leader is he who the people despise. The good leader is he who the people revere.*

The great leader is he whose people say, "We did it ourselves."

The question remains; what is effective leadership? The first problem is separating managers from leaders. Police organizations are replete with managers. Leaders may be found at any level within an organization; however wherever they are found, they are rare and precious resources.

A good description of the distinctions between managers and leaders is: *Managers administer; leaders innovate.*

Managers are copies; leaders are originals.

Managers focus on systems and structure; leaders on people.

Managers rely on control; leaders inspire trust.

Managers have short range views; leaders long range perspectives.

Managers ask how and when; leaders ask what and why.

Managers always eye the bottom line; leaders eye the horizon.

Managers imitate; leaders originate.

Managers accept status quo; leaders challenge it.

Managers are classic good soldiers; leaders are their own person.

Managers do things right; leaders do the right thing.

(Bennis 1989)

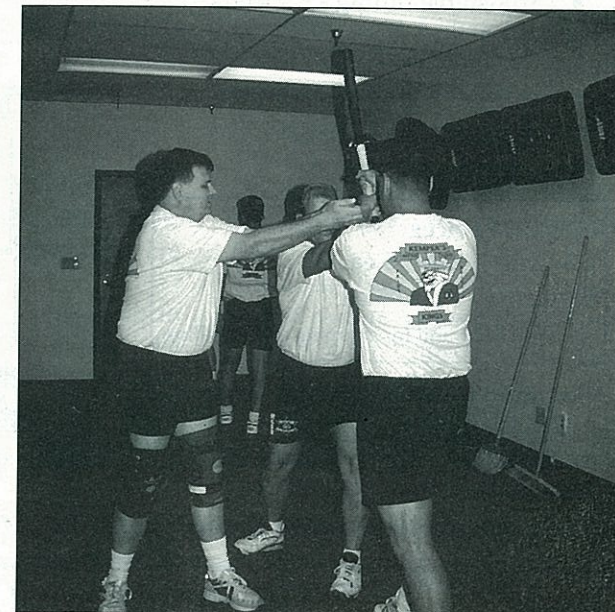


PHOTO BY JERI MANNING

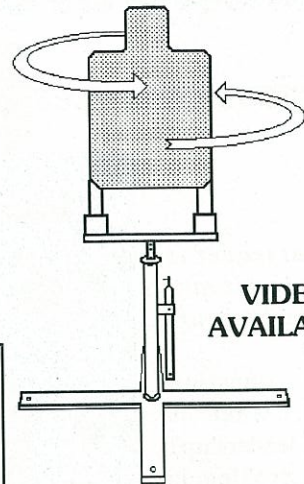
Doing the right thing is a part of effective leadership that can cause the most anguish. A well-meaning law enforcement professional in an executive level position may find the focus shifting away from the organizational mission and toward political survival. This individual may take or withhold actions or communications in such a manner that is not congruent with the organizational mission. Instead, as Jesus said, "Simply let your 'yes' be 'yes,' and your 'no,' 'no.'" We as leaders should simply do the right thing.

In his book, "The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization", Peter M. Senge points to new roles for today's leaders. Leaders are organizational designers. They design core values, policies, strategy and structures by which the members function. Leaders are teachers, guides, coaches, and facilitators. They help all organizational members, including themselves, develop enlightened views of reality.

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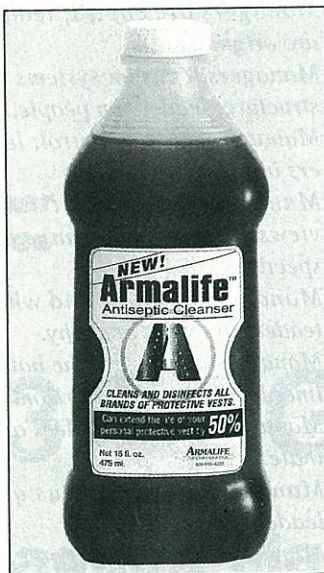
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178 LAW and ORDER September 1995

the harness of service" every day, and see life "as a mission" (Covey 1991). Leaders are system thinkers understanding that there exists interrelationships between the organization, its environment, and its future.

What characteristics are inherent to the rare "black orchid leader?" Stephen R. Covey outlined eight discernible characteristics of "principle-centered" leaders:

1. "They are continually learning."
—"They are educated by their experiences. They read, seek training, listen to others, are curious, and use self-initiated learning."
2. "They are service oriented."
—"Life is a mission in the service of others."
3. "They radiate positive energy."
—"They are cheerful, optimistic, positive, enthusiastic, hopeful, and neutralize negative energy."
4. "They believe in other people."
—"They believe in the unseen potential of all people. "They create a climate for growth and opportunity."
5. "They lead balanced lives."
6. "They see life as an adventure."
—"They are flexible and draw strength from within."
7. "They are change catalysts."
—"They are not threatened by the talents of others and feel no need to micro-manage."
8. "They exercise for self-renewal."
—"They regularly exercise the four dimensions of the human personality: physical, mental, emotional and spiritual" (Covey 1991).

The characteristics given by Covey are central to the kind of person who is an effective leader. To take the analysis a step further, the leader must be seen from the point of view of personal and professional focus and motivation.

Here is where we come full circle to the lessons learned on the drill fields of Parris Island.

The first lesson is that an effective leader is totally mission oriented. Personalities and private agendas do not deter true leaders. The mission at hand drives actions, decisions, and directions.

The second lesson is that the effective leader leads by example. These people, secure in themselves, encour-

age contrary opinions (Depree, 1989). They understand the value of diversity. Most of all, they truly "walk the walk."

False Prophets

Do not mistake leaders for politicians. Politicians are focused on self, winning, position, and power. Leaders are focused on mission, effectiveness, vision, and people.

Mixing the two is like creating a mule. The progeny look something like both parents, but isn't really either—and is always sterile.

False prophets can be identified by their point of focus, lack of vision and virtue. They often believe that all wisdom flows down from them. False prophets wear the chrome helmet of position and pearl-handled pistols of power, however, in reality they are afraid of the dark.

They are so afraid of losing power that they never realize the destruction caused by their actions or inaction. False prophets are afraid to admit to themselves or anyone else that "people

are the heart and spirit of all that counts" (Depree 1989).

Where Black Orchids Never Grow

Warren Bennis observed that "We lost the edge because, however skillful managers and bureaucrats are at holding actions, they have no talent at all for advancing.

"Thus, today, America no longer leads the world and is itself leaderless." He refers to today's business executives as "not leaders but merely bosses that confuse quantity with quality and substitute ambition for imagination."

What will be the result if the "leaders" in law enforcement, allow themselves to become false prophets? The result will be organizations that are ineffective.

We will muddle through, crisis to crisis, forever attempting to circle the wagons. We will lose our talented people to attrition or the dulling of their spirit. We will lose the faith and respect of those we are sworn to serve. Ultimately, we will lose ourselves.

To be a leader in our profession we

must fix our eyes on the horizon, our minds on our mission, our spirits on a commitment to service, and climb to the top of the rope. We must never allow our profession to be one where black orchids never grow. L&O

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Stephen M. Ramirez is the Director of Campus Safety at Palm Beach Atlantic College.

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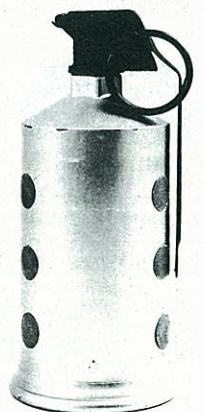
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