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MORE ABOUT POLICE LITERATURE

E. CAROLINE GABARD

The author is a professional writer working in the police field. This article supplements her paper "The Present Status of Police Literature", published in Vol. 48 of this Journal. She is the co-author with Professor John P. Kenney of *Police Writing* (Charles C Thomas, publisher) and has written for other technical police journals.—EDITOR.

Recently, the author assisted in the writing of an article, "The Present Status of Police Literature," which appeared in this journal.¹ In the article a comparison was made between law enforcement and bacteriology, from the standpoint of a body of literature as a key to professionalization, and the statement was made that for each law enforcement officer who writes, 17.3 bacteriologists also write. The present author received several comments, and among these was the statement: "Yes, but law enforcement officers only write about fifty percent of the literature in their field."

Never having considered this particular point, the present author first selected a representative time area, then made a study of the January through June (1958) issues of four non-restricted law enforcement journals which enjoy national circulation. (Since European and Asian law enforcement is somewhat different from our own, only American authors' works were studied.) The results of the study are somewhat amazing.

Law enforcement officers do not write "most of" their literature, as the present author had so blithely assumed. They do not write fifty percent of their literature, as the forementioned commentator had innocently imagined. They barely write twenty-five percent of their literature, if the four journals studied are any criteria!

It is not a question of "civilians" writing too much, but rather of peace officers writing too little! If "civilians" ceased to write, police journals would be hard-pressed to fill their pages.

In the study of the journals, the present author defined "law enforcement officer" as any person who, when his article appeared, identified himself with a police department. Thus, in the following discussion, civilian employees who wrote articles are included in the ranks of peace officers. In addition, those articles written in collaborations in

which only one author is a peace officer were considered to have been written by "sworn personnel," thus more writing is attributed to "peace officers" than was actually produced by them.

For the purposes of the study, the word "article" was defined as anything beyond an advertisement, a note, an announcement, or a regular column. Even with this definition, questions could arise on whether material (included or omitted) is an article.

Four journals were studied. *Journal of Criminal Law, Criminology, and Police Science* was studied only as police science for the articles written for the criminal law and criminology portion would be expected to have been mostly written by non-police personnel.

The Journal of Criminal Law, Criminology, and Police Science and the Charles C Thomas publication, *Police*, are bi-monthlies, thus three issues of each were studied. *Police Chief* and *Law and Order* are published monthly, thus six issues of each were studied.

Law and Order published 46 articles, of which 10 were by peace officers and 36 were by civilians—only 21.7% of the material was police-written.

Police Chief published 33 articles, of which only 5 were written by peace officers—that is but 15.1% of the leading contributions to the official organ of the International Association of Chiefs of Police!

Police published 41 articles, of which 11, or 27%, were authored by peace officers.

The police section of *Journal of Criminal Law, Criminology, and Police Science* published 13 articles, of which 6 were written by law enforcement officers. This publication was 46.2% officer-written, the highest such percentage of any journal studied. However, this can probably be explained by the fact that it is the oldest police publication studied. *Police* and *Law and Order* are both comparatively recent, while *Police Chief* was merely a news letter a decade ago.

Altogether, 133 articles were published, and 32 of these were by officers, thus only 24.09% of the

¹ E. CAROLINE GABARD AND CHARLES E. GABARD, The Present Status of Police Literature, JOURNAL OF CRIMINAL LAW, CRIMINOLOGY, AND POLICE SCIENCE, Vol. 48, pp. 664-665, March-April 1958.

material published in the four leading non-restricted journals which enjoy national circulation was written by the men who are "striving so diligently to bring about professionalization!"

A man who is interested in his profession is anxious to raise the standards of that profession. To help do this, he communicates his ideas and his discoveries to other men working in his field of interest. Need more be said?

When a peace officer *does* write, what does he write about? The study revealed the following statistics:

Subjects	Articles
Professionalization	5
Criminalistics	4
Training	4
Equipment	3
Traffic	2
Communications	2
Civil defense	1
Auxiliary police	1
Organization	1
Firearms	1
Auto theft	1
Forgery	1
Underwater police	1
Civic government	1
Crime prevention	1
Police unions	1
Civil rights	1
Public relations	1

There was, in comparison with other subjects, much talk about professionalization, yet criminalistics and training, along with equipment, were the only aspects of law enforcement to draw much attention.

Do law enforcement officers of all ranks contribute to the literature they so badly need? The study revealed the following statistics:

Rank of Author ²	Number of Articles
Commissioner	1
Superintendent	1
Chief	16
Deputy Chief	2
Inspector	2
Captain	2
Lieutenant	3
Sergeant	1
Officer	2
Civilian personnel	2

² Based upon claimed authorship; this writer has no way of knowing whether some of these articles were actually "ghost-written."

Police literature, then, at least in journals of national circulation, is written by officers with the rank of lieutenant and above, to the tune of 81.5%. If these men do most of the writing, do they also do most of the reading? If Officer Smith wrote a vital article concerning his beat, would Officer Brown read it, or would it have to eventually filter down to him in the form of an order from his superior officer? If Officer Brown read Officer Smith's article, would Officer Brown's superior find it *necessary* to issue the order to Brown? Criminalistics appears to be the only section of law enforcement in which the rank and file take advantage of the opportunity to communicate—and how many chiefs, inspectors, and captains are scholastically prepared to issue orders concerning the actual tests run by forensic chemists? Could it be that criminalist *must* communicate, while other police officers and employees are able to sit back and wait for orders?

Again, it is not a matter of supervising and ranking officers writing too much; it is a matter of the average officer writing too little. The more a man knows about his profession, the fewer orders he must be given. The logical goal in police training would be to groom the average officer to the point where he needs orders only under extreme conditions. One of the simplest ways of achieving this goal would be to encourage officers to read and to write police literature.

Unfortunately, and perhaps paradoxically, persons who *should* read this article probably will not even pick up this journal. This is true of almost any article suggesting that the rank and file communicate with each other. Because of this phenomenon, any encouragement will probably have to come through the same chain of command as would the order which, were this article to succeed in "getting its point across," perhaps might not be necessary.

Why is it that the average officer does not write even the briefest article? The present author and a group of interested acquaintances have been asking this question of officers, both orally and by letter, across the nation, for some time. Here are the answers received, in their order of frequency (the answers "I'm too lazy" and "I have nothing to say" are also heard, but less frequently than one would imagine):

I don't know how to write.

This is true of many of us, and it is also true of members of other professions, but this has

not stopped other professions—they have at least learned to write with sufficient clarity to be understood—and it should not seriously hamper law enforcement. Chiefs who wish their men to contribute to police literature might delegate to one or two members of their departments the task of aiding officers in presenting material in acceptable form.

I don't have time to write—my job keeps me too busy.

This is nonsense. According to this reasoning, the chief of police has even less time to write, yet chiefs occasionally *do* find time to express their ideas, with their own pens (not ghost-written).

I'm afraid to write.

This statement should cause superior officers to seriously contemplate their personnel policies. The present author, and others to whom this statement has been made, has consistently asked, "What do you mean? Of what are you afraid?" The answers were: (1) statements intended as constructive criticism might be taken as "gripes," and (2) the officer might be considered "dangerous" (as in Caesar's comment, "He thinks too much. Such men are dangerous."). The mere fact that numerous officers state that they are *afraid* to write speaks badly for police personnel policy, and indicates that the matter needs attention.

Editors wouldn't accept articles from mere patrolmen.

Here editorial policy needs clarification. From the list of "civilian" authors given below, it is the present author's opinion that editors are willing to accept material from those who have something to say, regardless of rank or occupation.

The present author believes that chiefs of police who are interested in seeing law enforcement become a profession (interested beyond the point of merely speaking words themselves) should spend time in contemplating the advantages of their officers writing, and should devise methods by which officers who care to write and who have something to say (and almost any experienced officer has a great deal to say) are encouraged to put their thoughts on paper and thus to communicate them to others.

Care should be taken, if such a program be started, that official offers of assistance do not become, either in reality or in the minds of officers, censorship programs. Persons who give assistance should be carefully chosen, in order to avoid such a mishap, for censorship (other than for security reasons), besides being morally repugnant, is obviously dangerous to this or to any other cause.

As a concluding thought on the subject of officers of the ranks writing, the present author would like to make this observation: One talks about, reads, and writes about a profession. One merely chatters about and then forgets a job! Might this not be one of the criteria by which a profession may be distinguished from a job?

The study of four journals revealed other interesting facts. First, law enforcement draws contributors from an assortment of fields. The study revealed the following collection of "civilian" authors:³

Occupation	Frequency
College instructor	17
Employee of industry (incl. research)	11
Medical doctor	4
City official or employee ⁴	4
Newspaper man	4
Judges and attorneys	4
Fed'l or official employee ⁴	3
Private investigator	3
State official or employee ⁴	3
Armed forces ⁵	2
Congressman (U.S.)	1
County official or employee ⁴	1
Graduate student	1
Boy Scout official	1
Inmate of prison	1

Of the college-written material, Michigan State furnished five articles, Iowa State and Long Beach State (California) two each; the remaining college articles came from many schools, at the rate of one per campus. The University of Southern California and the Berkeley Campus of the University of California are conspicuous by their absence.

³ Of the 101 articles written by persons outside the field of law enforcement, 66 were signed by authors who identified their professions, and 10 by persons who did not identify their professions. The rest were staff written or were unsigned. Of the 66 identified authors, 5 wrote more than one item, thus the discrepancy between 66 articles and the 61 authors listed below.

⁴ Excludes judges, who are counted separately.

⁵ Excludes reporters for STARS AND STRIPES, who are included as newspaper men.

Last, but by no means of the least importance, the study clearly shows that everyone, including Boy Scout officials & prison inmates, has something to say *except* the average law enforcement officer, without whom law enforcement could not function! *Police* literature is apparently either a misnomer or a joke!

EDITOR'S NOTE

The editorial board of this Journal is particularly pleased to publish the observations made by Mrs. Gabard and her pleas to law enforcement officers

to write more. It has been, and continues to be, an editorial policy of this Journal to accept and publish worthwhile original papers prepared by any law enforcement officer. We welcome contributions from all officers, regardless of rank, when they have something to contribute to the police literature, and we will certainly welcome eagerly a quantity of articles dealing with professional skills and methods. It is the hope of this editorial board that more law enforcement officers reading this article will pick up their pens and begin to write.—
EDITOR.