

## On the Other Side of the Fence

In the early morning hours of the 16<sup>th</sup> of December 2005 things would change for me in a way I never would have dreamed. For 26 years I have been a police officer and firefighter/EMT serving the public; but this morning was to be different. Let me digress a moment to say that I have attended numerous training over my careers, two of them being training as a critical incident stress debriefer with ICISF and NOVA training sponsored by the Attorney General's office. With this training I debriefed a shooting with a police department in Arkansas, and understand the value of it.

At 30 minutes past midnight on the 16<sup>th</sup> of December, I was awakened with a call from an "officer involved" shooting. Numerous thoughts ran through my mind while getting dressed to respond to the scene. I was amazed how calm I was, running over scenarios and possibilities in my mind. I knew by the sound of the officer's voice who called me that things were not good and my men were having a tough time with it. On arrival I was briefed by the son of an officer at the scene and then by the Captain who had arrived prior to me, (who also had attended NOVA training with me). The ambulances are still at the scene working on the victim and trying to set up for a chopper to come in. Other suspects are in patrol units awaiting transport to the jail. The next two thoughts I had was, I have to get the State Police to come investigate this and I need an AR-CRT team for a debriefing for these guys.

Some may wonder why debriefing came to mind but, I feel there is an order to things, God, family, job, and others. This was family. How do I protect my men; the city; how do I fix the problem.

I made the calls for State Police to come in and work the incident and they were on their way. Then to get a team on stand-by for the guys and, wouldn't you know it – I can't find any phone numbers. I went to email and call Ginger Bailey [twice]; can you tell I was anxious?



*Chief Mike Kelly, Gosnell  
Police Chief*

Then it all came together. I talked to Ginger and then Linda Graham, Craighead County CRT Coordinator. Linda and I set up a time to get with the guys, and she kept telling me to go get some sleep. Well, in a small department I am part of one of the shifts and five of my eight officers were involved in the incident and the other three were on the investigation of the incident – no time to sleep. I got the suspects to the jail: one was sent to the trauma unit in Memphis; then I started on the paperwork.

We worked the incident with ASP all day. I gave the story to the media within the first hour. We have a great working relationship with them. At that time I sent the guys home and told them to be back at 4:00 p.m. to get ready for the debriefing. They were advised that I could not make them talk, but it was mandatory that they attend.

I briefed the mayor and city attorney, then waited. The officers started coming in around 4:00 p.m. and we sat down and I explained to them how the debriefings would be and to just remember, say what you want and it all stays here.

I met with Craighead County CRT as

they arrived and I talked with them for a while. The team did an excellent job. My hat's off to them and I sincerely appreciate the help they gave my department. I think some of the team wondered about Fred Roberts and me having the training back in 1998 and then having a team in to debriefing us. However, I told them the old phrase "physician heal thyself" will not work, we need the help.

The guys had nothing but good comments about the debrief team and the process. I know that it helped each of them deal with the situation in their own way.

I can only say that we never know when it will happen to us. I have been in law enforcement for 26 years and it was my first time to have this experience. So I learned as I went, but I was sure that we needed to take care of our own.

My hope is that others see that asking for help - even if you are a responder - is the right thing - actually it is the only thing to do if you truly give a damn about your people. I have preached this from 1998 to the present. The NOVA model is proven to work, and thank God there are those who serve and came willingly to our aid.

I feel strongly that I must share my experience as to what it is like for a trained person to be on the "other side of the fence". It's just like all the others you may see or hear about - people dealing with a extraordinary event in their lives and trying to deal with what happened, but for me there was one difference. I had the knowledge and friends to call and get the help.

*Submitted by Mike Kelly  
Police Chief  
City of Gosnell*

*NOVA Basic CRT, 1998*

## The Phone Call From Ginger

A phone call at 5:45 in the morning is NEVER good news. When Ginger Bailey's name pops up on the caller ID, my first reaction is to head to the bomb shelter or pull the phone out of the wall! Therefore, when that call came in on Friday December 16<sup>th</sup>, I was not surprised to learn a neighboring community was in crisis. As Ginger described the details of the officer-involved shooting in Gosnell, my thoughts immediately went to the first time I met Michael Kelly and Fred Roberts from the Gosnell Police Department.

Both men were participants in the first large NOVA training held in September 1998. I was so impressed that a small department would make the commitment to send two officers to this week-long emotional boot camp. After watching them work that week, I was even more impressed with their individual commitment. And I remember thinking how lucky their city was to have them as front line responders.

After talking to Ginger I called Chief Kelly and offered assistance. Even

after being up all night [yes I tried to talk him into going home for a few hours and yes that suggestion fell on deaf ears] Michael had already set the crisis response into motion. He mandated his officers attend at least one GCI but softened that order with assurance they did not have to talk if they chose not to [talking is NOT a problem with this bunch-getting a word in edgewise is the challenge].

Our challenge was coming up with responders on the last school day before Christmas holidays. Parents were attending children's school parties and offices/agencies were celebrating with their own parties. Fortunately, Ann Brown and Jack Sample were able to reschedule some activities and Mitch Ford agreed to be on stand-by if we needed back up.

Every response brings new experiences and new "lessons learned". DO NOT use the term *trigger reactions* when officer-involved shooting is the issue.

I left their city in the late evening of December 16<sup>th</sup> with impressions very



*Linda Speer Graham,  
Craighead County CRT and  
AR-CRT Board member*

similar to those I formed in 1998. The Gosnell Police Department has fewer than ten officers, most of them related by blood and all of them brothers in that weird way that civilians have difficulty com-

prehending. Their commitment to each other and their community is strong. One of the best things about the event was directly related to good "ole" safety and security. Gosnell Police Department is now mandating that bullet proof vests be worn on duty at all times. Good for them.

*Submitted by Linda Speer Graham  
Coordinator  
Craighead County CRT*

*NOVA Basic CRT, 1998  
NOVA Advanced, 2001  
Certified Crisis Responder, 2002  
Certified Trainer, 2004*

**"It was an honor to assist with the Gosnell P.D. response. It was a learning experience for me as I was able to participate in the deployment process and the on-site intervention activities."**

**Jack Sample  
Craighead County CRT**