

Sonny: I think he makes a valid point. If the gay community would report, and I know they're hesitant to report a lot of it because we might identify them as gay, then we would have a better idea of what's going on.

Tim: Do things like "Day in Court" and "Police Log" stop people?

OITM: You bet. I've had a number of people talk to me about feeling uncomfortable about the "Police Log."

Tim: There are really routine questions in there. I know people think we keep records, and we do keep records when we file a report, that's so we can document that we talked with a person.

OITM: For someone who is relegated to the role of being an under class person in the culture there's no way for that to not be intimidating.

Dave: Absolutely.

OITM: Are you all willing to participate in a meeting with the gay and lesbian Community?

Greg: Yes.

Tim: Yes, depending on one thing. I'm a Republican and I've been vocal, but I'm not a homophobe, and I'm not against gay rights, but I wonder if...since the Republican Convention...

OITM: What would you like to say about the convention?

Tim: Well it tipped way off to the right and all the cups rolled off the shelf.

Sonny: I'm as left as anybody. Tim and I were the first one's there behind Pearls and we did everything we could do. I was really affected by that.

OITM: Did that change your view of the danger to gay people in this town?

Tim: I hadn't even thought about it seriously before that. Not in serious terms. I thought he'd been shot in the head, it was so violent. There was blood everywhere.

OITM: It sounds like your view of the danger changed.

Sonny: It's very real. When something happens and I get sent to Pearls because of an assault, let me tell you, my priority scale is much higher going to an assault at Pearls than it would be going to an assault at J.P.s Pub. At J.P.s Pub I get the picture of two locals who had too much to drink and they're punching it out, and the picture

I get with Pearls is that someone's really being victimized, and I don't perceive the batterer to be another gay person. Not that it wouldn't happen, but the perception I have is that they're being victimized again. Somebody is being victimized. I think the gay community is more vulnerable to a higher degree of hatred from somebody who's not gay or lesbian. Just like a racial issue. No matter what the race is, when you view a person of one color against another, there is something else there fueling that. Roger Macomber was a perfect example.

Dave: I view society in general as being fairly ignorant.

OITM: Is there any particular message you personally want to send in this interview?

Greg: I'll take that. The message is my intent, which is to be sure the gay and lesbian Community receives the same service that any other community receives. That's it. I want to break down the walls and let people know that we're here, we're open, the lines of communication are open, all they've got to do is pick up the phone and call us. If they need anything, we're here.

Dave: There's no doubt in my mind that they are entitled to everything anybody else is when it comes to the police. There's controversy over the domestic partner issue, there's no controversy here. They are no different from anybody else. Just because your sexual orientation is not like the majority of society doesn't mean that you should receive less service. I also stress patience and thoroughness. If you're not receiving the service you think you should, contact us, contact somebody and be thorough, be persistent. It's your duty to do that. It is your right to receive that and you should go for it, 'cause it's the only way any sense of normalcy will ever be awarded the gay and lesbian community is if you stand up for your rights and go for it.

Greg: If you're a victim you should come away from dealing with the police feeling good, feeling that you received the service you should have received. We work for the community, we don't work for the police department. We are public servants. When you call you are my employer.

Tim: We've all got defenses for good reasons. I don't think anybody should let their defenses down, at the same time give the individual a chance to help you. Don't automatically assume we're not interested in helping. At the same time don't automatically let all your defenses down.

Author's Note:

I enjoyed meeting with Greg, Sonny, Tim and Dave, and my sense is that they are sincere in both their desire to serve our community and their recognition that the police department is not perfect. They also seem to understand that they have much to learn about us. I hope people who read this article will take them up on their offer. Call them, talk with them, get to know the Community Based Police Officer for the section of town where you work and where you live. Utilize them, they are our public servants.

There are presently five officers assigned to CBP, each with a responsibility to a specific area of Burlington. The officers and their areas are as follows:

- Officer Tim Ahonen - New North End (until 4/1/93)
- Officer Pat McManomon - New North End (after 4/1/93)
- Officer Dave Scibek - Old North End
- Officer Greg Knight - Downtown
- Corporal Robert Booher - Downtown
- Officer Sony Provetto - South End/Hill Section

Officers may be reached at 658-7658, the Community Based Police Office. ▼



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