



What can't be unseen

Witnessing despicable evil shatters an officer's assumptions about how the world is supposed to work



By: Barbara A. Swartz

Another school massacre leaves officers with images and memories they can't unsee.

The Uvalde school incident is different, the pain and horror compounded, because officers' loved ones have perished.

One of the two teachers who sacrificed their lives to protect their students, Eva Mireles, was married to a Uvalde Independent School District police officer. A Uvalde Sheriff Deputy's daughter is among the murdered children. These agencies are not only dealing with the shooting incident, they are mourning the loss of family members.

Uvalde, Texas, is a small town where citizens and police families know each other. This makes the grief and horror worse. Officers personally know the victims and their families.

The pain of the losses for these officers who took an oath to protect and serve, to see their own wife and child slain, to see friends and neighbors' children murdered, is devastating. The images of murdered children at Robb Elementary School will forever be carved into their beings.

Texas Governor Greg Abbott acknowledged in his Wednesday press conference that police officers are struggling emotionally to process this horrendous crime. He stated that the Texas Department of Public Safety and the FBI are providing emotional support resources to officers and federal agents.

The governor encouraged first responders to reach out for support.

Police officers must investigate, notify loved ones of their murdered child, process the crime scene, while enduring horrific bloody sights they can't unsee. Officers regularly experience death: natural, vehicular, overdose, homicide, suicide, assault, abuse and neglect. None of those calls can prepare an officer for the aftermath of an active shooter gunning down 19 fourth graders and two faculty members in their classroom, and injuring 17 more.

In an interview after the Columbine incident, then Jefferson County Sheriff SWAT lieutenant Terry Manwaring told me that the scene was overwhelming. He thought about his own kids and wondered how human beings could slaughter others in that manner. But you "have to shake it off like a football injury and play the game professionally." He said that the images never leave you. "You wake up and go to bed with it." "Something in you gets changed," he said, describing that he saw an older man looking back at him from the mirror.

Manwaring admitted that media scrutiny made it difficult to heal. He says it "was hard to be second-guessed by everyone." His officers had to deal with, and process what happened, with the whole world watching.

Houston Police sergeant David Svahn made the scene in June 2001 where Andrea Yates drowned her five children. One of the most profound memories for him was the look of utter shock and disbelief on the faces of the other officers and first responders.

They had never encountered a multiple child homicide scene before. That a mother could murder her own children so methodically was beyond comprehension.

DON'T NUMB OUT. YOU MUST FEEL TO HEAL

The officers responding to the Robb elementary school will likewise be changed forever. Witnessing despicable evil shatters an officer's assumptions about how the world is supposed to work. The evil act wounds your soul. It doesn't matter how many years officers have on the job or what other horrors they have seen. This will change them. Innocent children were murdered.

WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO WITH YOUR PAIN? WHERE WILL YOU PUT IT?

Both Svahn and Manwaring stressed that there is no shame in seeking help. Officers **MUST** talk about how they feel. They **MUST** share their feelings with someone.

Talk with the officers who share your shock. The other cops who were there. With them, you don't have to explain what you saw. They share what was seen that can't be unseen. Share your grief and cry with each other.

Share your suffering and pain.

And you must grieve. For the murdered children and teachers and your lost assumptions about life. Grieve the lost part of yourself that you can never get back. The part of you that has seen what can't be unseen.

In his book, "[Surviving the Shadows](#)," former New Jersey State Trooper and NBA Referee Bob Delaney states: "[officers] see things the rest of the world doesn't, things that can cause scars that may not be visible. But the injuries are just as real as a broken leg or a gunshot wound."

How you treat that wound will determine how you heal. With grief, you don't get over it, you get through it. You learn to live with it. Make it part of your life. Everyone heals and grieves differently. It's unique to you. There is no right or wrong way to grieve. Do what will heal you. Svahn attended the children's funeral and visited the children's graves.

Jefferson County started a peer support team. Officers who were at Columbine share a connection that binds them together for the rest of their lives. They share a bond because of what they saw that can't be unseen.

We must ensure that more lives are not lost due to this tragedy. Keep an eye on your partners and brother and sister officers. If they seem distressed, say something. Don't leave them alone. Be with them and help shoulder their pain. Encourage them to take advantage of the emotional support resources being offered.

Cops control chaos. Understand that a traumatic event can leave you feeling vulnerable and helpless. Understand that these are normal feelings in the aftermath of a mass casualty event. And are hard and uncomfortable for a cop to accept and feel.

Avoid "what-ifs" and playing the shame blame game. Cops would rather blame themselves than admit they had no control over the outcome of an event. Blame provides a false sense of control.

You don't have to share your experience with all those who are curious. Each time you tell it, you are dragging yourself through it again and rekindling the trauma. Develop a one-line sentence to answer those rude enough to inquire about your worst day at work.

Keep busy. Keep your routine as normal as possible. Write about how you feel. Putting words to feelings activates the language center of your brain that can help you process traumatic memories.

Emotional and grief support has to be ongoing. Grief has no end date. Support programs must be in place for months and even years ahead. Kids need to remain engaged with others over the summer. Don't let anyone, adult, cop, or child, become isolated and alone.

Part 3 of The Department of Justice's publication "[Preparing for the Unimaginable: How Chiefs Can Safeguard Officer Mental Health Before and After Mass Casualty Events](#)" provides tips for agencies on how to support officers after a mass shooting.

Over the years, I have had to write too many articles in support of officers in the aftermath of a mass shooting. My previous articles, (links below) contain additional suggestions on self-care for officers. [Reach out to me here](#). I will acknowledge and honor your pain. Do not suffer alone. As a fellow Texan, I grieve with you.

2022 Illinois Fallen Officers Memorial

Please click on the image below to view 3:29 video

Honor.
Respect.
Remember.



[Click the above image to view the video](#)

Support for 'defund the police' has dropped nationwide, poll finds

"It is no surprise that the public's one-time enthusiasm [...] has waned in the last year," the poll's director said

By [Will Katcher](#)

A national poll by the University of Massachusetts Amherst found support dropping for the Black Lives Matter movement and a number of police reform policies — from bans on police use of military-grade equipment to bans on officers using chokeholds — which had seen rising popularity in recent years.

But even as support for reforming America's local and state police departments dropped, opposition to the policies did not necessarily increase. Rather, roughly one-quarter of respondents expressed indifference to the proposed policy changes.



"It is no surprise that the public's one-time enthusiasm for policies designed to bring about whoBSale changes to the nation's police departments has waned in the past year," said Tatishe Nteta, the poll's director and an associate professor of political science at UMass.

"What is somewhat surprising," he added, "is that this decline is seen across the board, with ardent supporters of police reforms such as progressives, Democrats, African Americans and young Americans also exhibiting a decrease in their support for these changes."

The poll of 1,000 people nationwide found that "defund the police" policies remain highly unpopular, even more so than in a UMass poll from April of 2021.

Support for transferring funding from state and local police departments to social services dropped from 38% to 31%. But while opposition remained relatively stable at about 45%, UMass' poll found the number of people with no opinion on the topic jumped from 17% to 23%.

Banning police from using military-grade weapons and equipment had 48% approval last year, but 42% approval this year. Opposition to such a ban fell three points, but indifference on it rose 10 points, the poll said.

Similar patterns existed with other police reform policies, including allowing citizens to sue police officers for excessive use of force (which fell from 59% support to 54%) and support for banning police from using

chokeholds (dropped from 62% to 58%).

The Black Lives Matter movement also saw a diminished backing, with support for its goals falling from 48% to 41% and support for its strategies dropping from 40% to 31%.

Some of the steepest drops in support came among African Americans, 56% of whom now support the movement's goals, down from 67% last April. The poll found a 49% minority of African Americans support the Black Lives Matter movement's strategies, a drop of 16 points from last year.

"While Black Lives Matter signs still adorn lawns from coast to coast, Americans may be growing tired of the Black Lives Matter movement," Nteta said.



3 Roll-Call Training Reminders for Summer Patrol Safety

By: [Doug Wyllie](#)

#1 Stay Sufficiently Hydrated

You're no good to anyone if you're not good yourself, and as the days get longer and hotter, staying hydrated is baseline for self-care. Water is optimal—keeping a flat of 12-ounce bottles in the trunk is a great idea—but many choose popular

"energy drinks" like PowerAde and Gatorade. Those flavored choices are fine, but be advised that they often contain sugars and carbohydrates—calories that don't count for a heck of a lot nutritionally. Bottom line: drink plenty of liquids before feeling parched—if you're really thirsty, you're too late.

#2 Check Your First Aid Kits

Summer time is the season of minor cuts and bruises for children of all ages. Police frequently find themselves tending to injuries suffered such as bites from a variety of critters—domestic and wild—and burns from fireworks to campfires. Make sure those items' "use by dates" are up to date.

While you're at it, take some time to refresh yourself on water rescue tactics and tools. Lots of people are in bodies of water of all kinds—pools, ponds, rivers, streams, and lakes—and some of them invariably get themselves into trouble.

Bottom line: You're likely to be first on the scene of an injury incident so be ready to provide First Aid.

#3 Don't Shed Your Body Armor

As the weather goes from pleasantly warm in late May to mind-bendingly hot in mid-August, the temptation to leave the ballistic armor in the locker can be difficult to resist. Resist that temptation. There are several after-market products available to layer with your armor that actually helps reduce the effects of the heat.

One is the [TacVent](#), a "passive ventilation device" that allows the body's warmth to pass out through a space created by a corrugated and perforated panel. Another option is the [Qore Performance IcePlate](#), a 50-ounce water bottle curved and shaped to be worn under body armor. It is filled and frozen with drinking water, which cools the body and provides hydration (there's a drinking tube attached) as the water melts.

Bottom line: Bad guys with guns don't care if you're sweating when they shoot at you—wear your vest.

Final Thoughts

The warmer weather always seems to bring out the worst in some people. Over-indulging in alcohol at the family bar-b-que leads to DV calls. Ongoing economic strains—and a host of other factors—keep looters busily looting and rioters busily rioting. The approaching election season will heat things up politically just after the outside air temperature slips back down to more moderate levels. Practice all your most basic officer safety protocols, and return home at the end of every shift.

Former MMA fighter sees cop under attack and jumps into action

A Brazilian jiu-jitsu trainer put his skills to the test



By [Suzie Ziegler](#)

PORTAGE, Ind. — A former MMA fighter put his martial arts skills to the test this week when he stopped to help a police officer under attack, [NBC Chicago](#) reported.

William Cassoday, who is also a trainer in Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu, was driving when he saw a man try to punch Officer Jamison Smith, according to the [Olean Times Herald](#). Cassoday says he carefully approached Smith's line of sight, so as to not surprise the officer. The suspect, 37-year-old Christopher Delgado, noticed the newcomer and repositioned himself. That's when Cassoday made his move.

"I just did a little drag so that his body would turn and I put him in what we call a rear naked choke and just tighten it up dropped him to the ground," Cassoday told NBC Chicago. "He couldn't do anything because I was squeezing on his neck and then he kinda felt like he went limp for a second and so I loosened it up."

Cassoday restrained Delgado until Smith was able to place the handcuffs. Police said Delgado had been wanted on an outstanding warrant for auto theft. Delgado was charged with felony battery of a police officer resulting in bodily injury and misdemeanor resisting law enforcement and false informing, the report said.

The Porter County Sheriff's Office thanked Cassoday for stepping in and said he would be honored soon, the [Olean Times Herald](#) reported.

Smith suffered swelling to his face but is expected to be OK. In another twist of fate, Cassoday later realized he knew Smith, who is a friend of the family.

Cassoday has been training MMA on and off for 13 years and has a brown belt in Jiu-Jitsu, according to NBC Chicago.



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Meet Sangamon County Sheriff: Jack Campbell

Tell us about yourself and your family:

My wife, Lori, and I have been married 37 years. We have two daughters whom are schoolteachers. We have four grandchildren.

Describe what you do professionally, as well as your roles within the community:

Besides my role as Sheriff, I also keep the scoreboard for the football team and occasional basketball

games. I have been on the board of our local golf tournament since 1986.

What first made you get involved with your chosen field?

My Dad and Great-Uncle were Sangamon County Deputies. In the early '90s, I began exploring the possibility of becoming a Deputy and began pursuing that career. I had a desire at that point in my life, to help our community.



Describe what drives you to get involved within the community:

I have always lived in small towns and every individual can make a large difference there. My involvement in law enforcement stems from just wanting to make a difference to our residents.

What's the best thing to happen to you because of your community or career service?

I have always been able to help people.

What's your personal philosophy on life?

Work hard. Play hard. Give back.

Tell us about someone or something that has influenced you:

My Mom and Dad influenced me the most. Dad as to becoming a Deputy, and my Mother in her drive and determination.

What changes would you like to see in your community in the next 10 years, and how can they be brought to fruition?

We need manufacturing jobs. Work with an industry to make Sangamon County the leader in that area.

If you weren't doing what you do now, what would you be doing instead?

Construction. Love it. I know enough to make me dangerous. I did my own general contracting when I built my house in 1996.

How do you think someone meeting you for the first time would describe you?

Upbeat and talkative.

What do you do when you aren't working or volunteering?

Watching and/or playing sports. Specifically golf and crossfit.

What do you consider the biggest challenge about your community?

We need more job opportunities.

Tell us about your biggest strength:

My inner-drive. I don't give up and I don't take no for an answer.

What are your goals for yourself?

To be better tomorrow than I was today.

What might someone be surprised to know about you?

I'm a softy at heart.

THANK YOU

Illinois Officers

