

For
The Record

There he goes again!
The writer of the Chief-Leader's "For the Record" column dated Aug. 24 accuses us of being "so misleading that it warrants a reply" because we questioned the newspaper's assertion that the PBA "has been outmaneuvered by the city" in the current round of bargaining and because we argued that we had done better than the other unions in the last round.

"The most misleading part" of our rebuttal, the writer says, was our assertion that the 2005 PBA award "was valued for each active officer at a full seven percent better than the [DC 37] pattern."

While admitting our claim is "technically... true," The Chief says that the "key phrase" is "each active officer." Isn't that what makes it not just "technically true" but absolutely true? We would have been misleading if we had omitted the word, "active" in our explanation.

It's this kind of muddled thinking — coupled with an inexplicable pro-city bias — that has made The Chief-Leader so unfair to the cause of New York City police officers over the last several years.

WTC Registry Update

In July 2006 the PBA established its own web-based registry to gather information regarding illnesses suffered by our members who worked on the pile at Ground Zero. The effort was unprecedented, and the purpose was to enable our members to self-report their illnesses and share their experiences and, most importantly, to provide information relating to existing federally-funded monitoring and treatment programs.

As of Sept. 11, 2007, there were 218 entries to the registry. They included:

- + 21 cases of sarcoidosis
- + 15 Digestive Issues (GERD, Crohn's disease, Colitis, organ removal)
- + 64 Respiratory Issues (Asthma, RADS, Scarring on lungs, Sinusitis, Bronchitis)
- + 13 Immune blood (red blood cells deficiency, overproduction, high calcium count, mercury in the blood stream and thyroid issues)
- + 16 Organ failure/dysfunction
 - 5 kidneys
 - 3 liver
 - 2 gall bladder
 - 6 heart
- + 35 cases of cancer
 - 9 Respiratory (lung, tonsil, throat)
 - 14 Endocrine System (kidney, thyroid, prostate, bladder, etc.)
 - 4 Random (breast, brain, neck & testicular)
 - 8 Digestive (stomach, colon, rectal, liver)

PBA members can find this information at nycpba.org (WTC). We encourage our members to contact the PBA at (212) 298-9162 and volunteer to provide information about any diagnosed health conditions that may be affecting you so that the anonymous information may be posted on the registry as an aid to other officers.

The need for continued funding for monitoring and treatment continues. We have an obligation to take care of those persons who answered the call ...

PATROLMEN'S BENEVOLENT ASSOCIATION

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Setting the Record Straight

The Police Officer Is a Professional,

And It's Time the City and The Department Stopped Trying to Devalue the Rank.

By PATRICK J. LYNCH



Since this administration took over the leadership of the PBA in 1999 it has worked diligently to enhance the professional status of the rank of police officer. We have been striving not only to ensure that our members are *paid* like the professionals they are, but also that they get the training, education, protections and respect that they deserve as professionals.

In this effort, we have gotten very little help from the department and the city, as the following anecdotes illustrate.

At times and places that shall remain nameless, we have had conversations with high-ranking members of the NYPD — ones that were sympathetic to our cause, I might add — and the conversations were revealing. In the context of discussing the woeful inadequacy of police officer salaries, some of these officials have openly said that, in their view and that of many others, one should not expect to support a family on a police officer's salary. In other words, they stressed, you can't do 20 years as a cop without being promoted and expect to be a provider for your family. While we all know that police salaries in New York City are uncompetitive, what was stunning is that these statements would be openly made by senior department officials, essentially acknowledging that it is accepted by senior police management that police officer pay in New York City will be inferior and not sufficient to provide for one's family.

Being a police officer was formerly considered a profession in this city, and many of our predecessor police officers raised families on their salaries alone. In virtually every other local jurisdiction it's considered a job that enables one to support one's family. But in New York City, all that has changed — you need rank to feed a family, according to views openly expressed by the police leadership. Move up or move out, is the idea.

That sentiment is echoed when you hear senior department officials saying we don't want 20-year police officers. This attitude — from well-meaning sources, I repeat — is relatively new at the NYPD (having developed over the last two decades

or so) and is symptomatic of everything that's wrong with the city's labor relations with its police officers these days. And it's a philosophy, I suspect, that originated with the numbers-crunchers at the city's offices of Management and Budget (OMB) and Labor Relations — people, in other words, who never patrolled in a radio car or walked a beat. Why this devaluation of the rank of police officer has infiltrated the thinking in the department's higher echelons, is beyond me.

It wasn't always so.

Whereas now if you've been a patrol officer for 15 years without being promoted you're viewed by management as dead wood, there was a time when the experienced cop — who enjoyed the frontline work and gained satisfaction, even a sense of achievement from day-to-day policing — was not only respected but highly prized. He or she was not only considered excellent at the job but also acted as a mentor to younger cops. In other words, the veteran officer was a revered professional. Would anyone at the Board of Education be heard to say that a 20-year teacher is, by virtue of having that time in the job, dead wood?

For OMB types, city employees mean the payment of salaries and benefits and NYPD operational/institutional concerns are of lesser importance. The accountants in that office would rather reason this way: Why pay a 20-year cop the top rate, no matter how far below market that rate is, when you can get a three-year cop (though clearly less experienced) at some fraction of that salary?

But why should superior officers, who once were patrol officers themselves, feel this way and in

essence advocate that position? And why should the department agree to sacrifice the professionalism of its on-the-ground troops on the altar of budget considerations?

Of course, grossly inferior salaries do not infect all NYPD ranks. Senior police managers, for example, receive pay approximating their counterparts in other jurisdictions. In the military, the practice is to feed the troops before the officers. In the NYPD, senior management take care of themselves and leave the troops, like the biblical Lazarus, fighting for crumbs from the table.

Another symptom of the disease is the city's increasing reliance on the unarmed, minimally-trained, \$12-an-hour security guards of the business improvement districts (BIDs) to provide the illusion of a police presence. This illusion has been mirrored in the area of auxiliary officers, whose ranks the department is trying to beef up because it can't recruit and retain police officers. The tragic deaths of two auxiliaries recently has shown the necessity of having armed and trained professional police officers patrolling the streets. Equating armed and trained professional police officers with volunteer auxiliaries and BID staffers is not only dangerous to those individuals and the public, it deceives the public and degrades the officer who has chosen true policing as a profession. Can't the most prosperous city in the world afford more than a phony police presence?

Even the increasingly more common and ostensibly generous practice of posthumously promoting hero police officers who die in the line of duty to the rank of detective is a sign of disrespect to the rank they held when they made the supreme sacrifice and an affront to all who continue to hold that rank. We applaud increasing the monetary death benefit for those who give their lives in the line of duty, but these hero officers should be remembered in death in the proud rank they held in life — police officer.

Police officers — from rookies to 20-years-plus veterans — are professionals. It's time that the city and the department begin treating them like professionals again.

Police Commissioner Kelly knows why the NYPD doesn't have enough police officers.

"...frankly, when you can go to another jurisdiction and make over \$100,000 after a few years, including the Port Authority right here in New York City, I think that is a pretty attractive salary for someone interested in law enforcement."

NYPD Police Commissioner Raymond W. Kelly before the NYC Council, March 21, 2007

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Pay NYC police a top pay that is competitive with other local police departments.

Pay NYC Police Now.



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