The third Monday each April is a state holiday in Massachusetts. We call it Patriots Day. It is a day where the Revolutionary War battle at Lexington and Concord is remembered, where the Red Sox play the only morning game in the Major Leagues – an 11 a.m. start – and where, for 117 years, the Boston Marathon has been run.

This year started off no different. Great weather with temperatures favorable to the 30,000 plus runners of the marathon. The Boston Marathon is considered one of the toughest courses there is. You start off running downhill and battle Heartbreak Hill around the 20-mile mark, all while running through eight cities and towns.

The last push is a straightaway down Boylston Street with the finish line at the Boston Public Library. Here, a bridge is built across the street for the media to cover the finish. Many photographers – both still and digital video – are on it. About 100 yards past the finish line is a massive medical tent with a couple of hundred cots, wheelchairs, backboards – just about everything you can imagine the medics need to treat hundreds. Out the back door, several ambulances are at the ready.

All the first responders – fire, police and EMS – have operations plans for this event. They have been fine tuned over a period of many years. This is augmented by hundreds of volunteers including the military, doctors and nurses.

The Bombings

Nothing could prepare any of us for these terrorist bombings that happened around 2:50 p.m.

When it happened, there were fireballs that lasted a few seconds but no fires. In the immediate aftermath, three people died instantly with 14 people suffering amputations at the scene. These 14 were transported to area hospitals along with more than 100 other victims. All survived and that is an amazing rescue story in itself. In about 20 minutes, all the victims had been moved from the two bomb sites, as the fear of secondary devices was very real.

At the scene, I tried calling the fire commissioner but all cell phones were down. I was told later the sheer volume of calls basically crashed the system. No one could get a line out. I was able to get through to the mayor’s communications director and briefed her on what was happening. The finish line area was flooded with first responders and, in short order, the police and fire commissioners arrived from nearby locations.

I walked with the commissioners and other command staff over to the Westin Hotel about 30 minutes after the bombings. It is located at the backside of the medical tent. Here, a command center was being established. We took over a small ballroom on the third floor. My task was to plan for the media.

Logistics and dealing with breaking news incidents are what I deal with best. I told the police commissioner I would find a suitable location for media briefings. I tracked down a hotel manager and was able to secure a room used by the marathon staff that already had a podium, riser and chairs set up. It was about 3:30 p.m.

I went back to the police commissioner to tell him we have a room for the press conference and asked what time he wanted the first one, sooner or later. He said sooner, 4:30 p.m., so we could start to tell the public the basic information we had.

Back on Boylston Street where the bombings had happened (approximately
Another NIOA training conference is almost upon us and as always the executive board has worked hard to put together a great agenda. We have revised and added sessions, and I am certain every session will have something for everyone.

Recently, I was in Louisville, Ky., for a meeting and I had the opportunity to take in a movie, “BURN: One Year On The Front Lines In The Battle To Save Detroit” (actually it was my fourth time seeing it).

The documentary shows the lives of Detroit firefighters, personal and professional and the struggles they have battled in and day out to keep a department and a city afloat.

While many cities across America have struggled recently due to the economy, Detroit has struggled for generations. Whether it’s due to the development of interstate highways and suburbs in the 1950s, civil unrest in the ‘60s, “white flight” of the ‘70s; the declining American auto and steel industries in the ‘80s or the surge or the surge in outsourcing of American jobs overseas in the 1990s, we witnessed one of the greatest industrial cities in history decay into an abyss. The community’s perception of public safety is that it is non-existent. I know for a fact it exists and it is present in the movie showing how these firefighters care about their city and the citizens they serve. Custom service by the law enforcement, EMS and fire service professionals is alive and well within the City of Detroit.

While watching BURN, I began to think of all the departments, organizations and communities across the country that are suffering because of the bad economy – fire companies are closing, police officers are being laid off and public works downsized. With declining budgets and staffing how can we promote our agencies? The greatest resource we have in promoting our organizations, in good times and bad is always our people. Even though we may be faced with any one of these situations, we still have a job to do for our community, for our customers … and who are always the ones that represent us … our frontline providers.

Retired Phoenix Fire Chief and fire service legend Alan Brunacini has been preaching “Take care of Mrs. Smith” for years. If we take care of our customers – “Mrs. Smith” on every routine call – it makes the job of community relations so much easier for the PIO and reflects positively upon the organization, our elected officials and individuals themselves. Any time we can interact with “Mrs. Smith” and turn a bad situation into something positive, we have succeeded in marketing our organization.

For years, I have tried to promote the philosophy that even though we are our agencies official PIO, we must train every member in our agencies to present themselves in a professional manner to the media, at community events and to every citizen – the “Mrs. Smith” we serve.

Take a moment to reflect after reading this, and maybe tomorrow or the next day, make it a point to thank your people for the job they do. Make them feel appreciated, make them feel they’re doing a good job and recognize them for doing something simple and small – like being nice.

As Chief Brunacini has taught through the years, “Prevent harm. Survive. And be Nice.” If we can do that, then we will have accomplished something positive and successful. That’s a life lesson that we should all try to practice every day.
Exclusivity is a dangerous lure

Exclusive story opportunities are a reporter’s best friend, but can be a source of avoidable trouble for the PIO. Reporters, not much unlike us, are a competitive group of professionals. They want to be first, they want to be exclusive, and they want to win.

Exclusive story opportunities have their place, on occasion; as PIOs, however, our focus should be reaching the masses with our agency’s message.

When we feed an inside story to a single reporter and station, we greatly narrow our audience. Doesn’t our constituent public deserve to hear what we have to say, no matter what station they watch?

When reporters from competing news organizations perceive that we have slighted them by feeding one of their competitors a story that they too should have had an opportunity to tell, it can lead to hurt feelings.

Hurt feelings can end up leading to things like unflattering close-ups and sound bites that make it into your next package.

Fighting Back

– Milwaukee Chief of Police Ed Flynn at a news conference the agency called to criticize a WTMJ-TV promo for a “sweeps piece” that strongly implied an officer had done something wrong, even though he had been cleared long before the story aired.

“The erroneous television reports have led to false leads, public concern and wasted valuable state resources…In addition, TBI is concerned that WSMV never confirmed any facts reported in the stories with our agency. Never have we seen such irresponsible and unprofessional journalism on an active and open TBI investigation that has been so harmful to the case.”

– Tennessee Bureau of Investigation Director Mark Gwyn, in a written news release issued to local media to refute a “sweeps” series done by WSMV-TV in Nashville that used a group of private detectives to criticize TBI’s investigation of a missing person.

Career got you stressed? Most likely.

CareerCast.com has compiled its annual list of the most, and least, stressful occupations, along with their median salaries.

If you’re looking for a career change and want to relax, the least stressful are:

1. University Professor – $62,050
2. Seamstress/Tailor – $25,850
3. Medical Records Technician – $32,350
4. Jeweler – $35,170
5. Medical Laboratory Technician – $46,680
6. Audiologist – $66,660
7. Dietitian – $53,250
8. Hair Stylist – $22,500
9. Librarian – $54,500

And the most stressful? Every NIOA member will see yourself on this list at least once, maybe more.

1. Enlisted Military Personnel – $45,528
2. Military General – $196,300
3. Firefighter – $42,250
4. Commercial Airline Pilot – $92,060
5. Public Relations Executive – $57,550
6. Senior Corporate Executive – $101,250
7. Photojournalist – $29,130
8. Newspaper Reporter – $36,000
9. Taxi Driver – $22,440
10. Police Officer – $55,010
NIOA Training Conference is not to be missed

CBS News’ Miller, Boston PD PIO Fiandaca added to speaker lineup

By DON AARON
Past President

For those who wondered how the NIOA would build on last year’s incredibly successful conference in Nashville, just take a look at this year’s mega impressive lineup slated for Clearwater, Fla. This conference is not to be missed!

Even though conference brochures with session topics were mailed out several weeks ago, talks have continued with additional potential speakers in an effort to further enhance what was already a tremendous training opportunity.

The NIOA Board of Directors is delighted to announce that CBS News Senior Correspondent and former FBI Assistant Director John Miller will join us in Clearwater on August 27 to deliver this year’s keynote address. John reports for all CBS News platforms and broadcasts. He brings to us a unique perspective, having served not only as a network correspondent for CBS and ABC, but also in top-level positions with the FBI, Los Angeles Police Department and New York City Police Department.

The Board is also pleased to announce the addition of Cheryl Fiandaca, Boston Police Department Bureau Chief of Public Information, as a presenter in Clearwater. Cheryl will speak with us on Wednesday morning, August 28, on messaging to the media and the public in the wake of the Boston Marathon bombings.

In reviewing this year’s conference as a whole, the Board thinks you will agree that each day is incredibly strong, particularly with the above two new additions. Lessons learned will abound from the meeting room. As you make your travel arrangements, we strongly encourage you to plan on staying for the entire conference.

For those who arrive by Sunday, Ronnie Jones will lead a day-long class on The Art & Science of Being a Great PIO. We will start on Monday with a session on the Aurora movie theater shootings and then end on Wednesday with the Los Angeles Christopher Dorner case. Talented speakers will impart a wealth of knowledge throughout to help you in your jobs. And yes, as always, there will be networking opportunities to help in the formation of PIO friendships that will last long after we depart Clearwater.

I join my board colleagues in looking forward to seeing you in Florida for what promises to be one great conference that will significantly add to your professional growth regardless of how long you have been on the job.

Safe travels!

Dress Code

Dress for all conference sessions is professional business casual. Collared golf/Polo shirts are acceptable. Yes, it’s Florida, but save your beachwear for the beach – no shorts, T-shirts or sandals are permitted.
Candidates for NIOA 2013-14 Board to be elected

Two candidates have declared their intent to run for the position of Vice President. Members will elect one of them at the annual Training Conference in Clearwater. Meanwhile, incumbent Lou Thurston was the only candidate to declare for the position of Secretary, meaning he is re-elected to a two-year term.

Steve Davis

I am in the 33rd year of my law enforcement career, 13 of which have been as a PIO. In 1998, after 20 years as a uniformed patrol officer for the Jefferson County Sheriff’s Office in Colorado, I was selected as the department’s PIO. That same year, I became a member of the NIOA and attended the annual Training Conference in San Antonio, Texas. As a new PIO, I was amazed at the level of professionalism and the training opportunities, but even more so at the nationwide networking available to me as a NIOA member.

In April 1999, I learned just how important the training and networking was when I found myself acting as the lead PIO during the shootings at Columbine High School. That same year, I received the “PIO of Excellence” award from the National Press Photographers Association, the “PIO of the Year” from the Emergency Services Public Information Officers of Colorado (ESPIOC) and the “Communicator of the Year” from the National Association of Government Communicators.

After leaving the Sheriff’s Office in August 2000, I became director of security and safety for the Olympic Torch Relay for the 2002 Olympic Games in Salt Lake City.

I again called upon many of my NIOA contacts during those two years to assist me as we traveled through almost 2,500 jurisdictions with the Olympic Flame. In early 2003, I returned to PIO work at the Lakewood Police Department in Colorado and quickly reestablished my NIOA membership. Lakewood is the third largest city in the Denver metropolitan area, and I have managed many large media events.

Over the years, my NIOA training and colleagues have been priceless to me. I have been an NIOA member for about 11 years. Additionally, I have been a member of the ESPIOC for the same amount of time.

Our last few NIOA conferences have been amazing examples of how far we have come in raising the level of professionalism as well as providing training and networking for those in our line of work. I have developed an enormous appreciation, respect and pride for the NIOA and its members. It has been my pleasure to serve as the Region 8 Director for the last two years. I will always appreciate what the organization and its members have done for me and will take every opportunity to promote the NIOA. You may hear it from candidates often, but I would truly consider it an honor to serve the NOIA members as their next vice president. See you in Clearwater.

When a crisis comes, there’s a group of public information officers who I always reach out to for advice. They’ve been through it. They know better than anyone how to handle it.

It is thanks to NIOA that I have developed these relationships with PIOs throughout the country. Now, I want to give back to the organization that has done so much to make me a better PIO for my agency.

It would be my honor to serve you and this tremendous association as vice president. I have been a member of NIOA since 2007, the same year I became the public information officer of the Boynton Beach (FL) Police Department. I have had the pleasure of sharing what I do in Boynton Beach with the NIOA membership at previous conferences, and I look forward to speaking about our social media program again in Clearwater this year.

I am also a member of the Florida Law Enforcement Public Information Officers Association, and I have served on their Executive Board for four years. I graduated from the S. I. Newhouse School of Public Communications at Syracuse University with a degree in print journalism.

Those who know me best can attest to these two truths – I always keep my word and I love my job. I have the utmost respect for this association and the vital role it plays in building relationships and providing outstanding training.

I hope you will consider placing your vote for me for vice president, and I look forward to seeing you in Clearwater.

Planned Agenda-at-a-Glance

Sunday, August 25

7:00am - 2:00pm – Conference Check-in
8:30am - 3:45pm – The Art & Science of Being a Great PIO
5:00 - 5:30pm – New Member Orientation Meeting
5:30 - 6:15pm – Regional Meetings
6:30 - 7:30pm – President’s Reception

Monday, August 26

8:00 - 8:20am – Opening Ceremonies
8:30 – 10:00am – The Aurora Movie

The 2002 Olympic Games in Salt Lake City.

Stephanie Slater

I have had the pleasure of sharing what I learned during my time in the 33rd year of my law enforcement career, 13 of which have been as a PIO. In 1998, after 20 years as a uniformed patrol officer for the Jefferson County Sheriff’s Office in Colorado, I was selected as the department’s PIO. That same year, I became a member of the NIOA and attended the annual Training Conference in San Antonio, Texas. As a new PIO, I was amazed at the level of professionalism and the training opportunities, but even more so at the nationwide networking available to me as a NIOA member.

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COPS

Langley Productions, creators of the popular television show COPS, has again signed on as our major conference sponsor. The original “reality show”, COPS debuted on the Fox Network in 1989 and recently moved to Spike TV.

The Sheraton Sand Key Resort in Clearwater, Fla., is the site of the NIOA Training Conference.
Blogger considered a journalist under Shield Law

NEW JERSEY – A New Jersey blogger qualifies for protection under the state’s shield law and does not have to reveal the names of government officials she accused of wrongdoing, a judge ruled.

Union County Superior Court Judge Karen Cassidy quashed county prosecutors’ subpoena served on blogger Tina Renna, who runs the website The County Watchers. Prosecutors sought the names of 16 local government officials Renna accused of misusing county generators after Hurricane Sandy in a December blog post.

Cassidy ruled that Renna passed a three-part test that determines whether someone qualifies as a journalist and should receive protection under the shield law.

In the opinion, Cassidy considered the three factors: whether Renna had a connection to news media, whether her purpose was to gather or disseminate news, and whether she obtained her information through professional newsgathering activities. “These original posts are arguably newsworthy and constitute ‘news’ under the Statute,” Cassidy wrote in her opinion. “In addition, her method of talking to sources, attending freeholder meetings, and using Open Public Records Act requests ... is sufficiently similar to the methods used by traditional news media entities.”

Editor’s Note: The following are very simplistic synopses of recent reported court decisions and legal issues that may affect PIO’s and are presented for informational purposes only, courtesy of the Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press. For more information on these cases, visit their web site at www.rcfp.org. Please consult your agency’s legal advisor to determine if any of these rulings may apply to you.

Supreme Court: States can prohibit non-residents from using public records laws to gather information

States do not violate the U.S. Constitution when their public records laws prevent out-of-state residents from accessing government records, a unanimous Supreme Court ruled.

The court in McBurney v. Young dismissed a challenge to Virginia’s Freedom of Information Act brought by two plaintiffs who argued in part that the ability of individuals to access state public records, regardless of whether they are citizens of that particular state, is a fundamental right protected by the Privileges and Immunities Clause of the Constitution.

Although the Supreme Court’s decision was limited to affirming Virginia’s citizens-only restriction in its public records law, the impact of the ruling extends to a handful of other states across the country that similarly restrict public records access to in-state residents, including Alabama, Arkansas, New Hampshire, New Jersey and Tennessee. Key to the high court’s ruling was its belief that the two out-of-state residents were able to access most, though not all, of the information they were seeking through other means.

From TVSPY.COM

Elle Duncan, morning traffic reporter for Atlanta NBC affiliate WXIA was arrested recently for DUI.

“I am greatly embarrassed for my actions,” said Duncan in a statement posted to the station website. “I have been reminded – in a very difficult way – that any amount of alcohol can impair us. I take full responsibility for my actions. I apologize to my fans, our community, and my 11Alive family.”

Scott Pickey, news director for Wilmington, N.C., ABC affiliate WWAY told the StarNews Online that he has agreed to take a defensive driving class in hopes of ending the legal drama over his recent arrest.

Pickey was charged with failure to obey a traffic officer and careless and reckless driving after attempting to drive through the local Martin Luther King Jr. parade in January. Police were not allowing staffers to leave the station’s lot during the parade.

Pickey asked officers to allow reporters to leave during what the station says were one of many breaks in the parade, but he was denied. Police arrested him when he got in a car and drove out of the parking lot during a break.

Veteran WDIV investigative reporter Kevin Dietz was recently released from jail after serving more than three weeks for DUI, according to the Detroit Free Press.

Dietz was jailed in April under Michigan’s “super drunk” law, which increases the consequences for people convicted of driving with a blood alcohol content of .17 percent or higher.

“I made a mistake for which I apologize to my family, WDIV and to the viewers,” Dietz said in a statement posted to the WDIV website. “I accept full responsibility and am taking the necessary steps to deal with this matter.”

Nathaniel “Zeke” Campfield, 31, a reporter for The Oklahoman newspaper, was arrested and charged with assault and battery after he allegedly bumped into several women while taking “upskirt” pictures under their dresses.

It happened at the combined graduation ceremonies for Moore’s three high schools just days after the town was devastated by tornado damage. Campfield was covering the event when police were called. Witnesses said Campfield tried to leave but they detained him until officers arrived. At least one caller told police Campfield appeared to be trying to delete photos from his camera before police got there. Campfield allowed officers to examine his camera and no photos were found on it, as there was no SD card inside.

Multiple witnesses told police Campfield repeatedly bumped into several high school age girls while taking photos under their dresses. Campfield was arrested and charged with assault and battery.

In the wake of Campfield’s arrest, other published reports indicated he had previously been arrested in 2003 in Montana for burglarizing a woman’s home and stealing her panties.
200 yards apart), all the victims and the public were clear of the area. The massive task of processing the crime scene started. It would take a week to complete. The area was sealed off from media. In fact, those who vacated the finish line camera positions left their gear in place.

In the meantime, the Westin Hotel was being flooded with marathoners who were guests there, every public safety agency you can think of and the media. Out on the sidewalk, media covering the marathon had repositioned to the sidewalk around the Westin. Most had been evacuated from the media bridge at the finish line. I walked among them telling all the first press briefing will be at 4:30 p.m. up on the hotel’s third floor. It was now around 3:45 p.m., just about an hour since the bombings.

We secured several breakout rooms on the third floor for the different agencies to set up. Heavily armed law enforcement established a secure zone around our area of the third floor with the media starting to fill the briefing room.

The first briefing around 4:45 p.m. had the governor, police commissioner, fire commissioner, FBI SAC, EMS chief, head of the State Police, adjacent general of the National Guard and others. We limited the speakers to just a few. It did, however, set the stage for future briefings with location and format established for the briefings.

We pretty much just had Boston media at the first briefing—about six cameras. After that briefing, I announced that the next one would be at 7 p.m. The media set up shop in this room.

The mayor had been in the hospital. He checked himself out and headed to the Westin Hotel. I got a call that he wanted to address the media. We settled on a time of 6 p.m. These briefings had repositioned to the sidewalk around the Westin. We pretty much just had Boston media at the Wednesday briefing. The mayor had been in the hospital. He checked himself out and headed to the Westin Hotel. I got a call that he wanted to address the media. We settled on a time of 6 p.m. These briefings had repositioned to the sidewalk around the Westin. We pretty much just had Boston media at the Wednesday briefing.

The Monday briefing on Tuesday morning had 43 cameras at it. As we had the night before, all the principals for the press briefing met in a holding room to go over details. Speakers were coordinated and the press was briefed. I set the next briefing for 5 p.m. This would allow the agencies to get some work done.

The outside of the Westin Hotel was surrounded with satellite trucks. At the end of Boylston Street, about a half-mile from the finish line, about 30 additional sat truck parks. A lot of foreign press was arriving in Boston to cover this.

As Boston Fire’s only PIO, I was getting swamped with requests for interviews with the many firefighters that worked the marathon. My problem was that I was also running the press ops for the city at the Westin Hotel. It became a balancing act. I also had to be careful with not pushing the firefighters too much. They treated many of the victims and it was a truly horrific scene. We activated our Critical Stress Management Team and our national union, the IAFF sent in FDNY counselors to help.

Every national morning and evening news show was in Boston, with CNN going non-stop from the Westin sidewalk.

The Boston Police and State Police PIOs were on scene to help, but they also were getting requests non-stop, as this had become a criminal investigation of the highest order.

At the 5 p.m. briefing, the FBI SAC and police commissioner put out the call for video and still photos from the scene. We knew there were hundreds of people at the finish line area talking photos and law enforcement needed the public’s help to get these now. In addition, the governor announced that President Obama would come to Boston on Thursday for a prayer service. I announced after this briefing that the next one would not be until late Wednesday afternoon.

Brothers Tamerlan and Dzhokhar Tsarnaev are seen on surveillance video shortly before planting two pressure-cooker bombs near the finish line of the Boston Marathon April 15. Tamerlan died during a shootout with MBTA police, while Dzhokhar remains in jail awaiting trial.

Thursday’s Presidential visit went well. I estimate there were 30 media outlets broadcasting live from outside the Cathedral. My time as the PIO coordinating briefings had ended at the Cathedral that day. The FBI called their first briefing at the Sheraton Hotel late Thursday afternoon. Here, they released the photos of the two suspects.

What happened after is a separate story with the murder of a police officer, a car chase, a shootout and a successful manhunt.

Aftermath

My next week was spent on making firefighters available for the media. There were also many demands for public appearances at Red Sox, Bruins and Celtics games.

The national media wanted more and more. Every human-interest story was there. It was like nothing I had ever worked before. You think of your training and some established procedures just went out the door. There was never any time to have a Joint Information Center. The media were moving at a pace no one had seen before. Bloggers, cell phone—photos, Twitter, Facebook and YouTube—new information was surfacing by the hour.

The big question we face as PIOs is how do we plan for this instantaneous information that is released within minutes of a major incident. Discussing it is a start.
Street’s injuries were incompatible with life.