

The AMLA Times

September 2019

Teach-Coach-Mentor-Lead

AMLA Values: Coach!

By Jim Steddum, Executive Director

See: amla-tcml.org/values

In our second monthly installment of AMLA Values, we look at Coach! And, its perfect timing—as College football is in full swing. When I think of the value or action of Coach, I think of the great football coaches and the teams they lead.

There are many definitions of the term Coach. Merriam-Webster says, “a person who instructs or trains a performer or team; or a person who teaches students individually.” Cambridge Dictionary say, “someone whose job is to teach people to improve at a sport, skill, or school subject.” Finally, old Army doctrine found in FM 6-22, Leadership states that a Coach is, someone whose job is to teach people to improve at a sport, skill, or school subject. Coaching is often confused with mentoring (which we will cover in more detail next month). However, some academics see Coaching related to the team and mentoring more above and beyond on an individual basis—less organizational focus. Coaching is developing and encouraging a person or people to perform better for the benefit of the organization and mission accomplishment.

AMLA supports the value of Coach because the organization is all about improving military legal administrative or organizations where our members work. It also, through the Veteran’s Success program works to develop and encourage veterans to improve skills for their own organizations and teams.

In the words of my favorite Coach, Nick Saban, “The Disease of Me Dominance Lesson 1. There is no ‘I’ in team but there is an ‘I’ in win. Lesson 2. Everything you do, you do to the team. Lesson 3. Get out of yourself and into the team. Lesson 4. Don’t forget the fundamentals. Lesson 5. You can have no flickering lights. Lesson 6. Do not allow mistakes to go uncorrected. Lesson 7. Having skill is not having talent. Lesson 8. You must trust, not just believe. Lesson 9. Sometimes what is best for the individual is not what is best for the team. Lesson 10. Teams must take ownership for themselves and their personalities. Lesson 11. Teams that play together often end up lucky. Lesson 12. With your A game, you can beat anybody; anything less and they can beat you.” Nick Saban, [How Good Do You Want to Be?: A Champion's Tips on How to Lead and Succeed at Work and in Life](#)

AMLA
New Life Member:
Alana Alamon-Scott

Next
AMLA Board Meeting
October 17, 2019 7pm!

515-604-9300
Code 294964



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Member Spotlight: by Duane Struntz, Chief Warrant Officer 3 (Retired)



About a year ago I was asked to write about my post-retirement years and what influenced me in making my career choices. Now, being the diligent kind of guy that I am (not), I finally worked up the effort, between surgeries and kidney stones, to get it done. Even though I suffer greatly from CRS, I think the following accurately describes my life, a few years prior, and after my career as a JA Legal Administrator Warrant Officer. I'll begin with a short joke.

Do you know the difference between a fairy tale and a war story? The fairy tale starts out with "Once upon a time..." The war story starts out with "No shit, this really happened!"

I left Frankfurt, Germany in February of 1984 and attended the Warrant Officer Advanced Course at Fort Ben Harrison, IN. I arrived at my next duty station, Presidio of San Francisco (PSF), CA in May of 1984, not knowing at the time that this would be my last assignment before retiring from the Army. My wife (now ex-wife) at the time was still in Germany where we met, and joined me at PSF in November of 1984, after completing her military obligation as an Army SGT (Russian linguist) in the MI field. She continued to serve in the Army Reserve and one of her Reserve friends was a police officer with Oakland Police Department. Oakland was short on police officers and he encouraged her to apply. She did apply and completed Oakland Police Academy in April of 1986.

As I was nearing completion of three years at PSF in 1987, I was told by PP&TO that I needed to be thinking about my next assignment. I asked for another year at PSF and it was approved. During the next several months my wife and I began the serious discussion of my pending relocation the next year. Generally, most military wives follow their husbands from duty station to duty station until retirement. However, my wife wanted to remain working in her position as a police officer, as her salary was about twice that of mine. We didn't want her to give up her well-paying job to follow me to an assignment most likely to the East Coast or OCONUS. My choices were simple, relocate by myself or retire and find a job in the Bay Area.

At the end of my fourth year at PSF, PP&TO was again asking me to make a choice of which new assignment I wanted. As I had predicted they were all East Coast or back to Germany. My wife and I talked it over and I opted to retire. I applied for a retirement date of 1 June 1989. That date allowed me to complete my two-year service lock-in requirement after my promotion to CW3 in June of 1987. I would retire as a CW3, and have 20.5 years of active military service. Previously, I had always thought that I would spend at least 30 years in the Army and retire as a senior CW4. There was no CW5 at that time. Needless to say, I was a little apprehensive about leaving the Army

and starting all over, possibly in a new career field unrelated to law office management.

I had a full year to find a new job. The news that I had submitted my retirement papers got around the San Francisco/Oakland area pretty quickly. I had many law firms in the Bay Area calling me to find out if I had any interest in law office manager positions. I researched that possibility and found that many of the civilian law office managers in the area were not happy in their positions. Lots of them were approaching burn out as they were expected to perform management miracles and work 60-hour plus weeks. Their starting salaries were only a little more than entry level police positions. I interviewed with several smaller law firms (mostly under 15 attorneys) and found everything negative that I had heard was true. As these firms grew they tended to promote senior secretaries to office manager positions, and most failed as they had no idea how to do the job. I decided that I didn't want to put myself into one of these positions. Federal Civil Service positions were not an option as I had accepted an RA commission, thus barring me from those jobs. I think that restriction was lifted some years later.

My wife kept telling me how great her job as a police officer was, so I applied to five different police agencies, all with similar starting salaries. The process of applying for police officer positions in CA takes on average nine months to complete. You have to be squeaky clean in all areas, be physically fit and be able to pass a very comprehensive background investigation. At that time there was a severe shortage of law enforcement officers in CA. I got job offers from all of the agencies I applied with and I accepted the offer from Contra Costa County Sheriff's Office, as a Deputy Sheriff. Contra Costa County is located across the bay from San Francisco, and just north of Oakland. I was officially hired in July of 1989 and started the 18-week Police Academy. My position as a Deputy Sheriff was contingent upon me graduating from the Police Academy as well as successfully completing a one-year probationary period.

My Police Academy class started with 42 cadets hired by numerous East Bay agencies, and 31 graduated. Most were eliminated academically and a few didn't have the driving, shooting or physical skills required. I was the old man in the class at 41 years as most of the cadets were in their twenties or early thirties. I managed to pull off a third-place finish in my class overall, and placed first in the group of eight hired by Contra Costa County. For me the shooting and driving courses were by far the most enjoyable.

Member Spotlight: Continued

Upon graduating from the academy we were promoted to Deputy Sheriff (Step One). I completed my probationary period successfully and after four years attained Step Five, the highest level. We received 13 paid holidays per year which were paid at the rate of time and a half, and our regular overtime pay was paid at the same rate. If you worked a holiday overtime shift on a day off, it was paid at triple time. We were allowed to work up to 100 hours of overtime per month and because we were so short staffed, I did work that much overtime for my first two years. Eventually the county was able to fill about half of the 100 vacant sworn positions (we had over 650 sworn positions) and the forced overtime was reduced to about half. The longest shift I ever worked was 23 hours. It was a multiple homicide case with the suspects in custody. It took me about five hours to write the very complicated report after investigating the incident. I remember working very long hours most of my career in the military, but without the benefit of overtime pay.

My years with the Sheriff's Office introduced me to the criminal element of our society, and it was a real eye-opener for me. The gangbangers operating in the county were responsible for about 90 per cent of the homicides. They continuously clashed during their turf wars and gang initiation killings. Fortunately, these gangs mostly killed rival gang members. We even had a professional hit man that contracted with drug dealers to kill 12 people, one of whom was his own mother because of her involvement in a disputed drug deal.

In the early 1990s I got to meet a few celebrities while on the job. Mark McGwire and Jose Canseco of the Oakland As not only had heavy bats, but heavy hands as well. They liked to thump on their wives/girlfriends and both were booked and cite released a few times at the main jail where I worked. They were very humble as they were brought handcuffed into the jail. They both lived in a very affluent gated community called Blackhawk, which is an unincorporated part of the city of Danville. Most of the sports elites from Bay Area teams live there in their multi-million dollar homes. Another celebrity who achieved frequent flyer status was Ed Asner. He lived in San Francisco but was arrested numerous times for disturbing the peace while protesting at the Concord Naval Weapons Station in

Contra Costa County. I was trying to fingerprint him one evening and he was being a butthead. He continuously squirmed around and managed to smear most of his prints. He was in need of an attitude adjustment.

We put him in one of the single drunk tank cells to mellow out. These cells were usually smeared with vomit, urine and feces from the violent drunks and druggies who were detained there, and were usually hosed out about twice per shift. The one Asner got was particularly messy and smelled horribly. He lasted for about an hour and begged to be let out, saying that he would cooperate with us. We all knew that he was just trying to get one of us to rough him up a bit so he could claim police brutality, as he had done in the past. In 1996 I got to meet John Madden at his house in Blackhawk while on a disturbance call. He seemed to be a really nice guy and invited us back for dinner that evening. While working patrol one night in 1998 I stopped a speeding car being driven by Jeremy Newbery, the new San Francisco 49ers center. He was driving a newly restored 1969 Chevy Chevelle SS that he had just purchased that morning with money from his \$800,000 signing bonus. He was pleasant mannered so I didn't cite him for speeding.

I worked for the Sheriff's Office for 16 years and three months, retiring in October of 2005 at age 57. Monetarily I made the right move to retire from the military and go into law enforcement. My Sheriff's Office annual retirement pay is considerably more than double that of my military retirement pay. My Sheriff's Office retirement package also includes paid health and dental care, relieving me of any co-pays for medical treatment and prescription drugs, and only a small co-pay for dental care.

I was extremely fortunate to have two very enjoyable and very satisfying careers that together spanned nearly 37 years. I probably had the most fun while in the military, primarily because of the myriad travel opportunities while stationed OCONUS. Both careers were very memorable but in significantly different ways. I have no regrets with either of them. Life has been pretty good to me.

