

Our City

As I was walking down Teton last Monday morning I saw a shadow move through the darkness, through the tall grass, and across Lincoln and disappear completely behind the Academy. The shadow seemed familiar in a primal kind of way and then that sense too was gone as I continued on not thinking any more about it. Tuesday morning I had turned off Falls and was almost to Bennett on East Park when the hair on my arms and scalp and Lilly's back stood on end as I heard the primitive yet familiar howl of an adult coyote up ahead in the sagebrush just past the Frisbee Golf Course in upper Stebbins Park. Somethings I have come to expect in my walks, but that was a first. I won't say it scared me; but it sure startled me and woke me up the way that nature's primal essences only seem to. I have heard of coyotes roaming large cities scavenging food; but I never equated that with home and all the available open space around us. Times and creatures change; most being opportunists go where the pickin's are easiest. It seems to be the way of most things; get it while the gettin' is good. Eventually the gettin' gets harder and more dangerous as the predator or scavenger becomes the prey.

I attended an Eastern Idaho Partnership meeting not long ago where Mayors, Police Chiefs, Sheriffs and County Commissioners from Burley to Bear Lake received the first quarterly report from the newly hired Special Assistant United State Attorney Jim Dalton. The information contained below discloses only public information about cases which have actually been filed or indicted. Pending investigations and cases scheduled for Grand Jury in the future are not listed or detailed.

Through April 29, 2016, the Eastern Idaho SAUSA has received 19 referrals for potential federal prosecution, and presently 12 defendants have been indicted or are at various stages of prosecution. Of those indicted, three have pled guilty and are awaiting sentencing, seven are pending trial, and warrants have been issued for the remaining two, who are pending arrest.

To date, none of those indicted have been sentenced, but a preliminary assessment of federal sentencing guidelines suggests that upon conviction, the defendants could face total prison time of between 1,023 months (approx. 85 years) and 1,306 months (approx. 108 years), representing an average potential prison sentence of seven to nine years. Most defendants will also likely be sentenced to at least three years of supervised release upon completion of their prison term. To date, one defendant will be subject to deportation upon completion of his sentence.

To date, about 2,685 grams of methamphetamine have been seized (nearly six pounds). That equates to about 10,740 individual uses of meth, worth between \$75,000 and \$150,000. More importantly, ongoing distribution by the defendants has been halted. One defendant told detectives he had historically been selling about two pounds each month. Likewise, the two cases involving heroin resulted in the seizure of 212 grams of heroin (nearly a half pound). That equates to about 2,120 individual uses of heroin, worth between \$40,000 and \$50,000.

In the above case 13 cities including American Falls, Blackfoot, Chubbuck, Fort Hall, Heyburn, Idaho Falls, Jerome, Lava Hot Springs, Pocatello, Rexburg, Rigby, Shelley, and Soda Springs have been affected or involved. Those cities are included in the following 10 Counties: Bannock, Bingham, Bonneville, Caribou, Cassia, Jefferson, Jerome, Madison, Minidoka, and Power, all of which are members of the Eastern Idaho Partnership.

You will have noticed the place we call home is listed above; SAUSA is making a difference here. There are ongoing investigations and cases involving the American Falls Police Department and Special Assistant United State Attorney Jim Dalton that I believe when resolved will make a very positive difference here at home. The Partnership is made possible by the entities involved sharing a per capita burden of the cost and matching funds being allocated in a State line item approved this year by the Joint Finance-Appropriations Committee this past legislative session. Thank you Senator Jim Guthrie for your support of this critical funding request. Thank you too to the continued efforts of the American Falls Police Department and the Power County Sheriff's Office for making these Federal arrests and prosecutions possible.

If you haven't heard, this week is National Police Appreciation Week. The City, Chief Wilkinson, Kurtis Workman and our local schools have arranged for a series of appreciation gestures throughout the week for our local City officers. Should you get the opportunity to say thank you, I would ask that you take it.

The entire City Council and I are so proud of the service and sacrifice that each of our officers freely gives to our community each and every day and, whether they express it or not, the community should be proud and grateful as well. Too often all of the kind, caring and I will even say loving things the officers do on our behalf go unnoticed and unsung. Too often the horror that only first responders see and deal with routinely goes unheralded and under-recognized. I know what they do daily takes its toll not only on them personally but on their families and loved ones as well. As Mayor I do not know how to lessen that burden and I am apologetic about that. What I do know is that American Falls is fortunate to have each of them not only as police officers but as members of our community; we are a better place to live because of each of them.

Wednesday morning found me back on upper Teton. I was carrying my walking sticks so they had gone silent; and Lilly was close at heel. Up ahead I saw him, he was complacent, large and well fed from easy living. He was under the light on Pierce. As Lilly and I emerged from the shadows I gave a shrill whistle; stopping Lilly and sending him into the tall grass at a dead run with his tail tucked between his legs. I haven't seen or heard him since; kind of like the 12 suspects awaiting Federal prosecution by Jim Dalton. Things change and at some point the predators become prey whether they be wild animals or humans with no social conscience. Yes, it is primal but it is the way of things. My sincerest thanks goes out to all the exceptional women and men in law enforcement on every level; thank you for doing every day that which makes the rest of us safer, that which makes American Falls the best place to live.

Until next week...