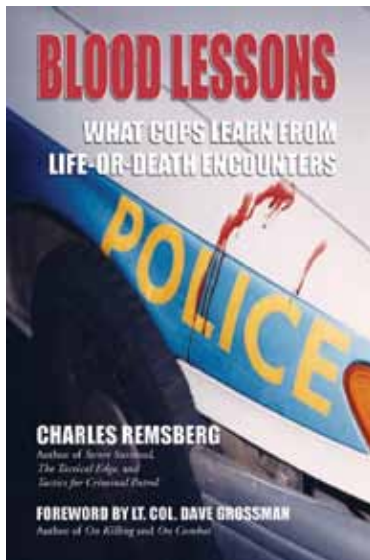


Blood Lessons

What Cops Learn from Life-or-Death Encounters

by Charles Remsberg (Calibre Press)

Reviewed by Barbara A. Schwartz



Ah, the life of a SWAT officer. Attending another training session in who-knows-what city. Another night in a cheap motel room spent watching crappy cable with your smelly partner. Bored and exhausted from a long day on a sun-baked firing range, you decide to retire early. In the middle of the night, screams wake you. Groggy and wiping sleep from your tired eyes, you stumble into the hallway in your skivvies. Wounded, bloodied, frenzied people run by. They point down the hall and yell, “He’s got a gun!”

Are you ready for a middle of the night fight? Have you trained for this scenario? Would you have thought it up?

In his new book *Blood Lessons — What Cops Learn from Life-or-Death Encounters*, Calibre Press founder and author Charles Remsberg includes this story about a SWAT

commander and his similar experience at the Comfort Suites in Oak Creek, Wisconsin. Remsberg describes how the SWAT commander assisted local police in the chaotic minutes that followed and found himself on the phone with the shooter who called the motel’s front desk and said, “Call me The Paperboy, I deliver papers...and death.”

Blood Lessons provides 24 incidents to add to your training repertoire, incidents that can occur not just on duty, but also on your own time, when you are the most vulnerable — when you are with your family.

Charles Remsberg has devoted his life to officer survival and safety. The old cliché, that he wrote the book on it, is true. Remsberg is best known for the three books he penned for Calibre Press: *Street Survival*, *Tactics for Criminal Patrol* and *The Tactical Edge*. His first book spawned the famed Street Survival Seminars in the early 1980s that now span the country and are considered the exemplar that all law enforcement training tries to mirror.

Remsberg departs from the “how-to” format of his previous books in *Blood Lessons* and narrates 24 stories so that the reader experiences the officers’ fear and anxiety and feels the officers’ hearts pounding. Through his exceptional storytelling, Remsberg reveals the officers’ thought processes and instincts.

In the book’s forward, Lt. Col. Dave Grossman writes, “The officers in these narratives believe, intensely and deeply, that sharing their experiences will help others

to meet the challenges of their own survival tests. These warriors have gone into the heart of darkness and returned to tell their tales. If they believe that what they discovered would have helped them had they known these lessons ahead of time, then there must be no doubt in our minds that we should study and learn from what they recount.”

All of Remsberg’s 24 stories are told with an uplifting epilogue, but two stories about brave troopers who refused to give in to their injuries stand out: the account of the “Bionic Trooper” who returned to work after a car accident that cost him a leg, and “Deadly Delivery,” about Ken Gager, maimed for life, after a man he pulled over on a traffic stop sent a package bomb to the trooper’s home. Gager touched Remsberg with his “remarkable integrity of spirit” and lack of “bitterness (and) regret.” The trooper, although blinded by the blast and with only one hand, went on to build the house he now lives in.

As drastic as the stories are, Remsberg tried “to focus on the positive, upbeat aspects as well as the training value that could be obtained from each story.” An after-action report and lessons learned section, supplied by the officers involved in each tale, follows each story.

“A primary consideration for the stories was that in all but one, the officers survived,” Remsberg said. “I was interested in exploring how the officers performed during the incident, what they learned, so those lessons could be passed on to other officers.”

The book reminds officers that preparing for an incident ahead of time is important and can be the key to an officer surviving both physically and emotionally.

“These are true, overwhelming stories that evolved out of ordinary, low-risk calls. These officers were involved in the event of their career. Each story should serve as a wake-up call from complacency. The officers involved were in denial, thinking this ‘can’t be happening to me. I’m a nice guy. Why are they shooting at me?’”

The book offers important reading for supervisors, administrators, investigators and team leaders. *Blood Lessons* details how officers feel, what they need and how they should be treated to survive and heal emotionally from an employment-related critical incident. Support given in the first few hours after an incident can make or break an officer’s recovery and affect his/her future productivity in the agency.

Remsberg includes what he calls three “special reports” that advise officers on how to recover, and/or help another officer, after an incident. “Pulling Back from the Brink of Death,” “Legal First Aid When the Smoke Clears” and “Healing for the Life Ahead” feature prominent survival experts: Doctors Bill Lewinski, Alexis Artwohl and Beverly Anderson; police attorney John Hoag; and trainers Robert Lindsey, Brian Willis, Paul Ruffolo and Dave Smith.

Robert Lindsey shares a dramatic personal story of empowering a wounded officer. Lindsey describes how when he needed “both arms to carry the officer, he handed

the officer his own pistol and told him to cover them on the way out to safety. “That made him part of the process of surviving. It took his mind away from the gravity of his injury and empowered him to be part of saving his own life.”

As a tactical officer, every scene you make is a critical incident waiting to happen. Are you ready to handle that one scene, that one incident, which will haunt you forever? *Blood Lessons* provides the armor and unique training needed to maintain balance when faced with the most provocative moment of your career.

Blood Lessons is available exclusively to law enforcement and will not be sold to the public. The book can be purchased at www.PoliceOneBooks.com for \$24.95. ◀◀

About the author

Barbara A. Schwartz published her first law enforcement-related article in 1972 while a police explorer. She served as a reserve officer and now, as a retired federal employee, Barbara hopes to bring her reality-based scenario training knowledge and experience from working at NASA, where she trained astronauts and served in Mission Control, to the world of law enforcement. She is a civilian member of NTOA and TTPOA. She can be reached at abakas95030@mypacks.net.

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Edited by John A. Kolman (Ret.) B.S., M.A., Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department

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