



## SECURITY TRAINING: WHY WE HAVE FAILED

BY STEVEN R. KELLER, CPP

Recently in Istanbul, the Prime Minister of Turkey was giving a speech when a bullet pierced his right thumb, nicking a bone before exiting. A second shot whizzed past his head as he made an undignified dive to the floor.

Miraculously, on the third attempt, the assailant's gun jammed and bodyguards captured him. After the gunman was led away, the Prime Minister of Turkey, a handkerchief tourniquet on his wound, got up and finished the speech. When asked why, he replied, "Because it was a good speech, and they needed to hear it."

Much of what I am about to say will be unpopular. While I think that I will be permitted to finish before the shooting begins, some will surely be offended or will simply disagree. In my business, it does not pay to be unpopular. There is always risk in being the messenger who carries the bad news. Nevertheless, I think that what I have to say, you need to hear.

When little Harry was a young boy in Louisiana, he was always getting into trouble. One morning while waiting for the school bus, he pushed the outhouse into the bayou and went off for school as if nothing had happened. When he returned, his father was waiting for him. He said, "Son, did you push the outhouse into



the bayou?" "Yes, father," said Harry. "Like George Washington, I cannot tell a lie." Harry's father took off his belt and said, "All right, son, bend over. I'm going to have to whip you." Harry tried to explain that Mr. Washington didn't spank George when he admitted chopping down the cherry tree. "Yes, son," said Harry's father, "but George's father wasn't in the tree."

In my work as security consultant to museums, libraries, cultural centers and historic sites around the U.S., I have seen many training programs and have spoken to many cultural institution managers about training. For ten years, I have emphasized the need for training. Many of you use a film I wrote and produced several years ago that was designed to serve as a basis for security training in our institutions. Never have I found a security manager, or even a museum director, who has disagreed with the concept of security training for staff and security personnel. All readily endorse the concept and most freely complain about performance and quality of protection, stating that more training is needed

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So why, then, is the state of training so dismal in this country's cultural institutions? In my opinion, we have failed, almost totally, to meet our obligation to provide competent, trained individuals to protect our artistic and cultural heritage. While we agree with--no, make that "heartily endorse"-- the concept of security training almost universally, very few institutions provide any formal training, let alone develop a formal training program. To be blunt, we have given only lip service to the need for training.

I might expect that the museum director would fall short of providing optimum training for security personnel and museum staff. While he or she recognizes that training is important, there are other priorities and realities. Quite often, the problem of security is delegated to a security manager who is assumed to be on top of things. But the failure of the security professional to implement proper training is most disturbing.

I can state without doubt that there are so few museums in the U.S. which provide proper and adequate security training, I can count those programs that are acceptable on my hand-- and still have fingers left over! Of those museums who do offer security training, that training is most often limited to guards and rarely includes any non uniformed personnel. To date, there exists no "standard" for museum security training-- not even a "recommended practice" developed by a professional association or body of experts. Museum accreditation is not

denied to those who fail to train security personnel and even the most basic protection training-- use of a fire extinguisher-- is not a requirement for accreditation or loans of precious art. For those museums who do have a security training program, the program fails in one or more subtle ways that ultimately have a very dramatic effect. Like the detail overlooked by Harry when he pushed his outhouse-- and his father-- into the bayou, we frequently overlook important, "minor" details.

In my work with clients, I always ask if there is a training program in place. I am usually told that there is. But when I examine that program I almost always find that it consists entirely of turning a new guard loose with a senior officer for on-job-training (OJT). Rarely is the senior officer "certified" or otherwise tested or even trained as a trainer. In fact, it has been my observation that we regularly reinforce bad habits practiced by the senior officer and discourage good habits brought in by new personnel. Our OJT system institutionalizes bad habits more often than not. I'm not saying that OJT must institutionalize bad habits, it's just that the way we currently set up our training programs, this is what usually happens.

A properly controlled OJT program can be effective. New, young officers can become good, skilled practitioners. Their eagerness can be properly channeled. From the seasoned old timer-- their senior partner who often spent his first career in a hot factory or at a boring desk-- they can learn the



old-time values of the American/ Canadian work ethic; while sharing their eagerness and enthusiasm with their senior partner. Unfortunately, the only training, instruction and supervision that most museums give to the senior partner charged with the important responsibility of molding this new officer is: "Show this guy how we do things here and have him back by lunch time."

Hand-in-hand with the lack of training which I observe, is the lack of any written basis for training. While most museums claim to have a guard policy manual, in truth, I have seen few manuals that are worthy of inclusion in a security program. Few security units have an operational manual, let alone a training manual. Even fewer--maybe two or three--use an acceptable workbook. Written tests of knowledge or skill are equally rare. And the number of museums which actually document their training program by recording in a permanent file who was trained and the content of the training sessions, is practically non-existent!

Think about our failure. How can we expose to theft and damage millions--even billions-- of dollars of irreplaceable art and artifacts by placing them in the custody of minimum wage men and women whose only training is on how-- not necessarily when-- to dial 911?

Why have we failed? How can we fail when we all agree that training is so critical? The lack of training or failure to train is one of the few reasons that

a museum director or security manager can be effectively sued for acts or omissions of his guards. Even with this serious threat of personal financial loss in a time of growing litigation, we still fall short of our goal to provide even minimal training.

We have failed for two reasons. First, we, as security professionals, are intimidated by the complicated and complex task of developing, funding, implementing, and, above all, maintaining an effective security training program. Second, we have failed because before we can implement training, we must have something to train, and this is often a very big management problem.

There can be little that is more dangerous to your security program and the career of a security manager than a training program that is not based on written policy and a formal training program. To simply say to a security officer-- "Go enforce parcel control."-- without having specific policies and written interpretations of those policies is folly. You will produce an apathetic officer who, at best, knows what to do but can't quite figure out how to do it. Or, at worst, you will produce an enthusiastic officer who has just enough knowledge of security to be dangerous--to your collection, to himself and others, and to your career.

I'm reminded of a security director who asked one of his new officers if he had ever heard the phrase "a little knowledge is a dangerous thing." The



officer replied that he certainly had heard that. To which the security director added, "then you should know that at this point in your career you are a potential threat to all mankind!"

Training, to be effective, includes many elements. Not unimportant are the operational procedures and policies to be taught. Before you can tell a guard what to do and how to react, someone-- you-- must establish policies. This is no small task. The development of policies and procedures requires that decisions be made, and security policy development usually involves difficult decisions. Shall we search parcels or not? Must everyone wear an ID card or do we make exceptions? Will access be controlled at night or can employees enter and leave as they see fit? If the basis for a sound security training program is an established body of policies and procedures-- in writing-- then tough decisions are the basis of the policy manual. We have failed, in part, because museum administrators are not good administrative decision-makers. This has been compounded by the fact that our institutions are the last bastions of academic freedom. We have a long tradition of resistance to the common sense policies of security which are viewed as inhibiting the academic freedom so ingrained in our institutional heritage.

To establish a training program, one must not only be a good decision-maker but a good leader. The development of training materials requires the skills of someone who can not only communicate effectively,

orally and in writing, but also sense the pulse of the institution, determine its security needs, then sell those policies to a resistant management and staff. But the development of a program is a wasted effort without the development of a system to implement the communication of those policies, and that can be a formidable task.

Let's face it. Museum security officers are not brain surgeons. You simply cannot turn them loose on the patient and expect everyone to come out alive. You must, actually, TEACH. I'm reminded of the story of the brand new football coach who was hired to try to revive a team that had not won a single game in over three years. He told them, "We're going to go back to the basics. We're going to start at the very beginning. I want you guys to forget everything that you've ever learned about the game of football." Having said that, the coach held up a football and said, "Guys, this is a football." At that time, one of the players in the back of the room called out, "Not so fast, coach."

Normally, an effective training program in a museum, if one can be found, consists of three types of training. Basic, or primary training, is conducted for an extended period of time-- at least one week-- before the new guard even sees the gallery. Continuing training, such as the roll call training used by most major police organizations, consists of a 30 minute roll call period prior to the opening of the museum. During this time, a maximum of 15 minutes of training can be provided. The third type of training



is specialized training which meets the needs of non-security staff, managers, and those individuals at all levels who must undertake special tasks or possess special knowledge or skill. Specialized security training includes training directed toward non-security personnel.

To implement an effective training program, one must have a training officer--no, make that a "training professional"-- on staff. One simply does not train adults as one trains kids. The museum training officer must have special skills in communication. He/she must be able to do research and write effective training materials. He/she must know how to transfer that knowledge to other adults.

Such special talent costs money and herein lies the first major financial hurdle for the institution.

Even when a "Training Officer" position is funded, I've too often seen museums place an individual in the position who is ill prepared for the role. While there is a strong argument for selecting a good security practitioner for the position of training officer, we assume that he/she can carry out the duties of the job without any knowledge of the training/learning process. We make no effort to train the trainer in the art of adult education, and we rarely provide suitable facilities in which to work. All too often, we think that if we provide a training officer with enough knowledge and skill to turn on a VCR or projector, we've got an adequately trained and properly skilled training professional.

We think that the training officer, in order to train guards who will stand at a post like a potted palm, has to be a potted palm himself.

I recall a story about the little girl who liked to have her father read to her before she went to sleep at night. Her favorite story was Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs, and she had her father read it to her over and over for about three weeks. After reading the story repeatedly, the father recorded it on tape and told the little girl that she no longer needed him for the task. "Just turn on the tape recorder," he said. She tried it one night, but the next night she was tearful in her request that her father read her the story. "Can't turn on the tape recorder?" he asked. "I can," she replied as she gave him a big hug, "but it can't hold me on its lap." It would seem that there must be a lesson in here for those museums whose training officer's skills are limited to machine operator and whose schedule does not permit him to "hold hands," so to speak, with those he is charged to train.

The second financial hurdle we face is the need to pay people to undertake training. If we are to hire guards and not benefit from their presence on post, we will have to hire extra guards to staff our galleries when new people are being trained or when ongoing training occurs. Museums rarely have enough people to staff their galleries as it is, let alone when part of the staff is in training. When we try to provide training after hours, too many of our low paid guards must be excused so



they can report to their second jobs, jobs they need to keep in order to make ends meet.

And what about the training officer? Heaven forbid! Didn't we plan on using him on post as a relief supervisor, when he's not training? But museums complain that he's always training! How can training be so critical, yet prioritized so low that no matter how large the museum, the training officer post seems always to be a de facto part-time position?

Then, there is the cost of the manual-- operations and training-- and the cost of workbooks and training materials. And what about those proficiency tests? What if we find someone who can't pass the test? We would have to actually terminate him and start the training process over. Can we afford to do this? Add to this, the cost of videotapes, films, and training equipment, and the cost of training becomes prohibitive.

When I produced "Museum Security: The Guard's Role," we spent \$54,000 in grant money to have a professional production company film and do post production work on the film and tape. Taxpayers actually paid \$54,000 so that a film that might normally have cost users \$295 or more, could be made available for \$35 to any museum needing it. But in the first year it was available, fewer than 100 copies were sold! Why? To many museums, the \$35 was too expensive! To many more, they didn't own a projector or VCR and many who did would not lend it to the security department!

I recall one museum security manager telling me that he wished that he could use my videotape but that the education department had the only VCR, and they wouldn't loan it, even for a single play of the tape. The director of the museum would not intercede and require that the departmental VCR be loaned. While the director agreed that training was critical and that guards were sub standard and needed training, he would not relent. He told me that the guards were incompetent and couldn't be trusted to run the machine without damaging it.

Can you imagine! Here, in a museum with irreplaceable art and artifacts, the entire facility is entrusted day and night to the guards. While it is recognized that they are badly in need of training, it is denied to them. They are too incompetent to run a VCR, yet they are left alone in the building at night to guard its precious contents.

I can see it now. In a lawsuit against the museum and its director for failure to train, predicated by an error committed by a guard, the director testifies that his guards are so incompetent that they can't run a VCR, yet he denied them training! Boy, are we asking for trouble!

Continuing and specialized training is also a problem in most museums. To train non-security personnel on protection matters is not only considered unnecessary by many staff members but inappropriate. Never mind the fact that most museum employees do not know how to shut



off the sprinkler flow or use a fire extinguisher. It is too much trouble to have to deal with museum employees who have prioritized protection below their specialized task. The museum director and the security manager would simply rather not face the problem and undertake the battle.

Quite often I see another failure. The security director unable, unwilling, or just too darn busy, to write a policy manual, prepare a formal training program, outline each training session, prepare training aids and handouts, and implement the real important basic "nitty gritty" items, opts, instead, to send his troops for first aid training. Citing an incident in 1958 where Mrs. Smith suffered a fall and needed surgery, the security director convinces himself and his superiors that his limited resources should be spent on a pre-packaged first aid course rather than on developing patrol procedures or fire extinguisher training or in preparing and implementing an evacuation plan. All too often, the real reason for this decision is the fact that a Red Cross course can be taught by someone else or is already prepared, requiring no talent or effort from the security director for implementation.

While I, as their security advisor, cannot take issue with the importance of first aid training, the role of the security department in a museum is no different from the role of a security department in an office building or similar facility. Protection of assets realistically come first. People are protected by those police and

firefighters who are really trained and equipped to do it right. That's what city paramedics are for. Teach your officers to do their primary job first and worry about implementing a good CPR program when everyone knows what to do when someone yells "Fire!" When you've completed the training regarding the skills needed for implementation of those duties the officer was hired to perform, then and only then should you concern yourself with the exotic. It is not uncommon for me to see officers in small museums trained in basic first aid but who were never taught how or when to dial 911 or what to do to direct responding services in a proper and effective manner. Often, I see or hear them in action and learn that they were never given basic radio instruction, were never given actual drills for various emergencies, or that they fall apart when called to action. Believe it or not, some know how to use a fire extinguisher but were never told where to find one.

So, it has been my observation that the reasons for failure of museums to offer a suitable training program are that the security manager lacks leadership needed to take the bull by the horns and simply do it. He lacks the ambition and perseverance to undertake the massive task of putting the program together. And he lacks the skill to do the volumes of written memorandums justifying the program and its funding. In the battle for limited resources, we simply don't measure up to the skilled wordmonger in the curatorial department whose smooth



memorandums always seem to be more convincing than ours. And we often think of the battle to win approval for our program as being only a temporary one. Write a memo and then give up. But in truth, it is necessary to fight continuously for our program, even after it has been approved and implemented. Among those few acceptable museum security training programs that exist, most are not nearly as good as they could be because they lose momentum and are allowed to become stale. We become lazy. All too often, programs are developed, then fall by the wayside or fall to the budget cutting ax.

I'm often asked how the museum security manager can win not just the battle but the entire war. How can we approach this problem of not having enough resources, of competing with the curatorial, educational, and exhibition programs for those limited resources? How can we develop those necessary skills to beat the wordmonger at his own game? General George S. Patton was asked about the skills needed to obtain the competitive edge, and he replied:

"I've studied the enemy all my life. I've read the memoirs of his generals and his leaders. I have even read his philosophers and listened to his music. I have studied in detail the account of every damned one of his battles. I know exactly how he will react under any given set of circumstances. And he hasn't the slightest idea of what I am going to do. So when the time comes, I'm going to whip the hell out of him."

General Patton knew the criticality of preparation. He knew the importance of developing his skills to meet the challenge of competition and personal achievement. Above all, Patton knew that he couldn't just bluff his way to excellence.

Christopher Columbus was stranded in Jamaica and needed supplies. He knew that an eclipse was to occur the next day. He told the chief, "The God who protects me will punish you. Unless you give me supplies this night, a vengeance will fall upon you and the moon will lose its light!" When the eclipse darkened the sky, Columbus got all the supplies he needed.

In the early 1900's, an Englishman tried the same trick on a Sudanese chieftain. "If you don't follow my order," he warned, "vengeance will fall upon you and the moon will lose its light."

"If you are referring to the lunar eclipse," the Sudanese chieftain replied, "that doesn't happen until the day after tomorrow."

It has been said that you can fool some of the people some of the time. But who are you fooling when your security staff fails to meet the test of an emergency or fumbles when the fire extinguisher must be deployed? And who can you fool when the jury subpoenas your training records and asks you to prove what training a specific guard received, the date it was carried out, and details of that training?

When we fail in our effort to train our staff on protective matters, we



lose an opportunity to impress upon everyone involved that museum protection is everybody's business. We lose that opportunity for an important first impression with our museum's professional staff whom we must recruit in our fight for protection. The collection goes unprotected, and we actually increase the risk to the well-being of our institution. If our institution contains a million dollars in collection materials, and we fail to protect it by failing to provide trained security officers, we put a million dollar collection at risk. But we also put at risk the non-collection assets of the institution, including those which can be taken from us by large judgments against us for errors or omissions of our security staff. We put at risk the personal assets of our security director and our museum administrators who can be, and often are, included in law suits. So, while the mission of the security director is to protect the museum's assets, he is actually creating a greater risk for the institutional assets than might otherwise be present when he fails to train his staff fully.

You, ladies and gentlemen of the museum security community, must assume full responsibility for your failure to train your staff. You must face the fact that your training program is simply not adequate. You can argue your effectiveness to me all you want, but the real test comes when that dreaded incident occurs or that subpoena is served on you for your training program's failure. You can tell me that the reason you have not provided adequate training is that your

superiors have not responded to your requests for financial and other support. But can you convince those who will ultimately scrutinize your training program's failure?

The time to assume responsibility for your program is now. Say to yourself, "If it is to be, it is up to me!" The time to become the leader is today. Start by resolving that you will learn what a policy and operational manual should consist of, and pursue completion of such a manual. Develop a master plan and budget for implementation of a security training program, and then make your pitch for proper funding.

In the meantime, make do with what you've got. Stop kidding yourself about the value and effectiveness of your on-job training program. Use the resources available to you. There is no excuse not to use the above mentioned film that has been provided for you at virtually no cost. There is no excuse for not getting the fire department to train your entire staff on use of a fire extinguisher. It would probably cost nothing. Use a little creative thinking. You'd be surprised how far you can go with what you've got.

Every day of his coaching career, "Bear" Bryant had a sign hanging on his locker room which said: "Cause something to happen." The failure of the American cultural institution community to implement an effective training program rests ultimately with failure in your leadership.



In his book "The Making of an Achiever," Allan Cox made the following statement worth noting:

"Washington Irving once wrote, 'Great minds have true purpose: others have wishes.' His insight leads to the realization that without expectancy, we lack purpose. Achievers, in particular, exhibit this attitude toward expectancy. This shows itself most forcefully in the way they minimize their losses. They do not grieve over failures or what might have been. Rather, the achiever looks around the corner in anticipation of the good things that await him. All he has to do, he believes, is show the determination to get there. He rejects the notion of 'can't.' As a result, he is able to open more doors than others, strike better deals and attract more energetic and resourceful people to work for him. He sets higher standards and gets others to help him meet them. He wins confidence and nurtures vitality in others. He expects to succeed. When combined with desire, expectancy produces hope. And hope makes all things possible. Living the expectant life is simply an act of good judgment."

Yes, until today, we have failed in our efforts to achieve a good museum security training program. We lacked direction in our quest. We lacked the knowledge of where to start and what course to continue on. We had no recipe for success. And, we lacked confidence in our ability to provide leadership sufficient enough to be successful. In fact, many of us thought we had been a success. With our sights set too low, we were blinded by

our own lack of expectancy and vision. We were mere mincemeat to the skilled warriors in the fight for funding and support.

But that was until today! I challenge you, as the leaders of the world's cultural security community, to rectify this failure.