

it at first, but they became supportive. I always wanted to be a cop in Omaha," he

Langan's tenure on the force started in 1978. "I had to mature very quickly," he says. Through the 1980s, Langan worked the streets on the "C" shift with OPD. Overnight is when most of the action happens, he says. From domestic disputes to car accidents -the more typical disturbances police officers are called to settle- Langan moved up to investigating gang-related crimes, drugs, prostitution and other more dark and dangerous aspects of our city. Eventually, and where his legacy lies, Langan became a sergeant in the narcotics unit. Undercover work, talking with informants, busting down doors with no-knock search warrants- he saw the worst side of things. Some things, like suffering children, violent encounters and dangerously-close calls, stick with Langan even after 10 years of retirement from the force. He's a happy guy- even lucky, he says, but he also admits "At times, I feel as though I have two personalities."

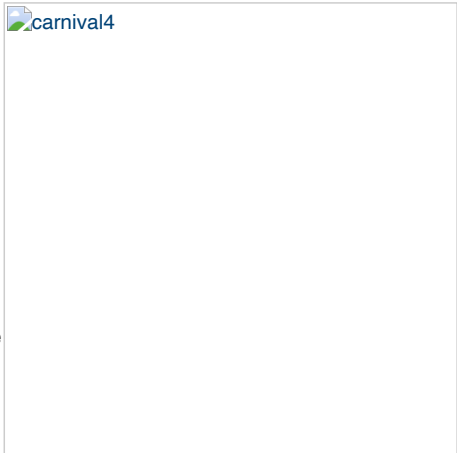
His book, *Busting Bad Guys- My True Crime Stories of Bookies, Drug Dealers, and Ladies of the Night*, says as much. He wrote his true-crime memoir with the intent of letting those close to him (and those who didn't know him as a cop) in on those days. The book has had a fair amount of success, even becoming the No. 1 seller on Amazon.com in the true crime and law enforcement genre. He lets readers in on the every day patrol, the highlights and lowlights of his career and experience, the relationships he built with fellow law enforcement and community officials and more. He's received much praise for his stories and the book is a truly unique perspective.

Close to the book's conclusion, there's a chapter entitled "From Busting Meth Labs to Chasing Black Labs." This section of the book details the transition Langan made from drug cop to canine control.

In 2004, Langan's police career was at a point in which his union contract allowed him to retire with full pension and benefits. He was, however, only in his mid-40s, so he had no real plan to call it quits. If he did, he would have to find another endeavor to embark upon as all he'd ever done was work. It so happened that retired OPD sergeant Dave Scholtman, who was the current Vice President of Field Operations at the *Nebraska Humane Society*, had something in mind for Langan knowing his standing with years served and the prospect of retirement ahead of him.

Langan was offered an opportunity to take over as Scholtman's replacement, but balked. Upon hearing the proposition, Langan had no interest in the job, but Scholtman convinced him to go to the NHS, tour the facilities and meet the staff. After he did, the decision was made to transition from a career of "busting meth labs" to one that had him "chasing black labs."

The plan was to spend five years at the NHS, but the plan changed once again. December of 2014 marks his tenth anniversary with the NHS. Although the first year was tough making the transition, and the adrenaline rush of busting bad guys with OPD would be left behind, Langan has now immersed himself in animal control and loves it.



The VP of Field Operations "runs the quasi-law enforcement branch of the Nebraska Humane Society," Langan says. Over 25,000 animals come in and out of the shelter each year and Langan deals with many of them. His department makes around 40,000 calls every year. Wow. He and his department handle the mundane tasks of

removing dead animals from around the community, capturing bats from homeowners' attics and responding to reports of stray animals, but also deals with more serious animal situations. His department can issue search warrants and citations, gets involved with animal hoarding cases, responds to dog bite calls, has broken up a dog fighting ring and exposes animal cruelty cases. The job is satisfying, but Langan says he wishes he could change the level of "animal owner stupidity" he sees across Omaha and its surrounding counties.

Since a large break-up of a dog fighting ring in 2006 and 2007, those types of issues are rare, but many other animal owners cause him headaches. "People leave dogs in cars when it's extremely hot or cold. People leave dogs outside in the middle of winter so long that we've got to literally scrape them from the frozen ground. Folks rent a house or apartment, get a pet and, upon leaving, abandon the pet so that days later, the superintendent finds them dead," he says. "And then there's the people who we constantly tell to keep their dogs in their own yards over and over until one day

NHS MORE

ly remember a couple of pups that were left in a cellar in South Omaha a few weeks ago- Langan calls dogs like these “dungeon dogs.” Fleas, other bugs, dirty conditions and more had left the animals emaciated and in rough shape. Langan and his animal control officers responded to the complaints made by neighbors and just last week, those two dogs walked out of the shelter with a foster family. “That’s the best part of my job,” he says. “Those dogs were brought in, cleaned up, given rehabilitation and will continue to receive treatment while they’re with their foster.” What a great way to help cancel out all the bad stuff he and his officers see.

The Field Operations Department has changed over the years and especially during the tenure of Langan and many of his staff members. “Things are much more professionalized now,” he says. This is a result of the animal cop shows we all see on television and the increased training animal control officers are given. The NHS has the only two equine cruelty officers in the state, too, so the NHS is on the cutting edge of things. The Field Operations department has done well under Langan. In fact, in 2013, Langan’s department was named the National Animal Control Association’s Agency of the Year. What that means is that “the years of hard work paid off” for him and his staff. “We’ve done a lot of networking with police departments and the community. Through dog bite education classes, for example, kids from aged 5 to 14 get to work with animal control officers and gain awareness.”

“We’re are full service agency that doesn’t stop with animals,” he says. “We work with Lutheran Family Services, city and state organizations and others to help people and their animals.”

The impact is seen all over the community and Langan has done pets and owners proud since 2004. Long before that, his love for animals was formed. As a child, he and his family had a Basset Hound named “Gus.” Langan currently has a black lab named Laci. “She’s part of the family...she’s our pride and joy,” he says. “My three-year-old grandson uses her as a pillow and just loves her.” Langan has seen some pretty hairy stuff go down over the years, but is very sensitive to bad situations for animals. “I’m the type of guy that when I know something bad is going to happen to an animal in a movie (think of a recent film called “8 Below” in which sled dogs suffer through their work in the Arctic) I’ve got to leave the theater. I just don’t want to see that stuff.” Even without a love for animals, Langan would be a great leader, but it certainly helps. He’s even built a relationship through his love for dogs with an old adversary, State Senator Ernie Chambers.

“We have a bit of a bizarre relationship,” he says. “We’ve gone from him filing federal investigations on me back when I was a cop to now working together on animal issues.” Chambers has a soft spot in his heart for dogs and even displayed a copy of Langan’s book on the Unicameral floor to illustrate how anyone can work together to make a difference.

Even as Langan approaches his 10th anniversary at the NHS after 26 years as a cop, there are no plans for retirement. I asked him what we’d find him doing once he retired and it was obvious that he hadn’t given it any thought. I imagine he’d be lost without work, much like he described the transition from being a cop to working at the NHS in his book. “This job is so rewarding,” he says. “I’ve had two very challenging and rewarding careers and consider myself extremely lucky. I don’t have any hobbies outside of work, so I’m not thinking about stopping anytime soon.”



Mark’s pup, Laci

Given his track record as VP of Field Operations at the Nebraska Humane Society, I suppose we should all be grateful that he’ll be around a while longer. Whether it’s another year or ten, he’ll work hard each day to continue to make Omaha and its surrounding communities a better place for animals, neighbors and pet lovers- and that’s a good feeling for all of us.

I’ve got a signed copy of his book. On the inside cover, he wrote: “To Eric- crime doesn’t pay, unless you write a book!” If you’d like an autographed copy, I’m fairly sure Mark will be pleased to meet you and happy you want to read his stories. They were surely cathartic for him to write and are entertaining for any reader who loves Omaha and pets. To follow Mark and grab a copy of his book, use the information below.

Find Mark and his book on the Web by visiting bustingbadguys.com

available in the Nebraska Humane Society store (89th and Fort) and also on Ingram, and Baker & Taylor. Read the hard copy or read it electronically on your

Kindle, iPad, and other devices, too.

To meet Mark, check the events schedule and "press room" pages on his Web site above.

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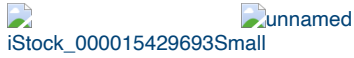
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About Eric Forrest

Eric is a pet lover, teaches literature classes at Metropolitan Community College and enjoys writing fiction. He's had 5 family dogs, 4 cats, a cottontail rabbit he nursed back to health, and two ducks. Cats are his preference, but Eric loves all little critters.

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