

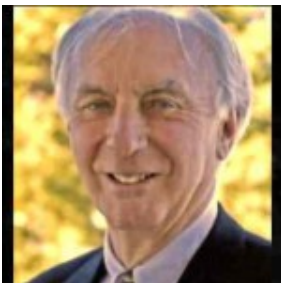
Internet – a tool for the good and bad guys

By Ted Long

This week's session was a two for one, with a combination of investigation and Internet safety. Both sessions were unique in that the presenters did not carry guns and in fact one said she had no shooting ability or interest.

The investigative session was in two parts. The first was a presentation of process of collecting and analyzing information to find patterns and behavior and similarities of actions. For example, in a series of house break-ins, is there anything in the way the crime was done or in the timing or similarity of the areas? The investigator uses things like Google maps, Facebook and other social media to gather information. It's amazing what some people will say on the Internet and to compare data.

If you saw the recent "Master Piece Theater" on PBS where four former code busters from World War II England join together to collect information and to find patterns in behavior to capture the bad guy, you saw exactly what this department does.



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The second aspect is gathering and presenting statistics to show crime patterns and trends. This information is published

annually and is available on the sheriff's website. It is used by the sheriff to schedule patrols and enforcement behavior. If crime goes down, it helps him in re-election, if it is up, his opponent no doubt will use it. Realtors for example show low crime rates in the neighborhood they are trying to sell you a house. You can pinpoint your house and see the kinds of crimes that go on around you.

The second half of the evening was about the Internet; again in two parts. The first detective told us of the types of cases they handle. From computer fraud to sex cases that use the Internet – mostly kiddie porn. The capture of child pornographers seemed to be a major part of the job. The detectives go online disguised as young girls and trap older men into setting up a meeting where they can be arrested. In other cases they are able to trace down addresses through Web addresses.

The police have many tools available that the public does not, and they have equipment to recover virtually everything from a computer or smart phone deleted or not. In addition to the police work, we were given advice on protecting ourselves from identity thieves and just good computer habits like password protection and the use of wireless connections. Did you know that a person can set up a station, capture your signal and use your address for illegal activity?

One of the scams that is difficult to believe actually works is the attempt of criminals to convince you that you won the Italian lottery when you have never even heard of it. You would be surprised about how many fall for it and send money, only to be ripped off. Any offer on the Internet to give you money, in any way should be ignored and reported. I personally have three checks on my wall from "secret shopper" schemes. They offer you at a great rate of pay to shop, send you a check for more than agreed and ask you to send them the difference. Of course their check bounces and you are out. Beware. The sheriffs' office has several booklets and other

information to aid the public. Check the website or call them.

Ted Long is a South Lake Tahoe resident participating in the El Dorado County Sheriff's Citizens Academy.