

Their beats go on

Ex-New York cop finds peace in private work

By AUDREY PARENTE
Staff Writer

John Gaspar was an ordinary New York Police Department detective until an incident at a St. Patrick's Day riot changed his life to the kind that makes for great crime novels.

"In 1978, on St. Patrick's Day, I was paralyzed for 48 hours. During a riot, I was arresting someone and became the bottom of a pile-on. Part of the recovery process was a progressive relaxation program which involved self-hypnosis," Gaspar said.

He found hypnosis so interesting that he began to study it under experts and, before long, brought what he learned to his work.

Today the retired detective operates an expansive private investigative agency, with 10 offices around the country, from his home in Ormond Beach.

He has contracted with Dutton publishers to write his first novel, "Detective Houdini," based on his life experiences.

Recently he was called back to New York to be recognized with an award for his career accomplishments by the national Society of Private Investigators, presented by NYPD First Deputy Commissioner Patrick Kelleher.

During his years with NYPD, Gaspar's hypnosis skills were put to use to solve many cases, including kidnappings and serial rape cases.

"They (NYPD) put me on a major case schedule and called me in when they needed me. I went all over, to wherever they needed a forensic hypnotist, which is the art of doing hypnosis for the police department to recover memory that seems to be lost but actually isn't," Gaspar said.

In one case, an elderly man followed a bank robber out to the sidewalk. But the sidewalk was icy and the man slipped and fell. He only caught a quick glance at the license plate on the getaway car but didn't remember the numbers. Gaspar hypnotized the man.

"He was a good subject and went back in time to the incident. He was talking like he was actually there. I said, 'Just look up and read the license plate.' He rattled off the numbers, and they ran the plates. We got the robber," Gaspar said.



Neighbors/Roger Simm

Above: John Gaspar in his office at his home in Ormond Beach with awards and new clips on the wall after 14 years with the New York Police Department. He now has a private investigation company. **Below:** Former Daytona Beach police officer Dan Livingston, an ordained minister, established Halifax Worship Center in 1998 through affiliation with the Pentecostal Holiness denomination.