

Snitches

They've been around forever

Rat, snitch, fink, stool pigeon, squealer, and source—just some of the slang terms used to describe someone that provides inside information to the authorities that they themselves are unable to otherwise obtain. In New York they've coined their own unique term for them, “ratfink bastards.” Regardless of what name you use for them, they are invaluable; some of our biggest cases might never have been solved were it not for the use of informants. Without the ability to cultivate sources, an investigator's career will be probably short lived. They are the heart and soul of police work, at least in the investigative genre.



Ironically, informants are generally despised by the rest of the criminal population, even though each of them is only one “squeeze” or arrest away by the cops before they themselves rat somebody out. Most thugs have squealed on their fellow transgressors. Their code of silence however, is nowhere as strict as the infamous “Omerta,” practiced by those in organized crime. Adopted in the 16th Century by the Sicilians, it became standard practice by Mafia types both in Italy and the United States. When the unwritten code was violated, swift

and deadly retribution was guaranteed. Though not as deadly and as quick as the Italians, the common knuckle draggers on our streets still seek revenge whenever one of their own squeals.

How important are informants in solving crimes, and to gaining information on criminals, terrorists, subversives, intellectual espionage, and even political insider intelligence? The FBI thinks so highly of the agent's ability to create informants that it makes it a critical element of the agent's performance review. A street agent without at least one open source, or better yet, a stable of informants, can't expect to receive a very high performance rating. It makes sense, and there are many folks such as myself that preach to the newbies on the job that you cannot solve crimes sitting in the office behind a computer. To get solid, useful, real-time information, you need to be on the street talking with people. A computer never solved a case. It will help you to organize the facts and the names, but YOU have to get down and dirty with the players to get all the info you need. When you're unable to do that is when the informant becomes your eyes and ears.

But is it all good working with informants? Are they the answer to your prayers in terms of solving cases? On the contrary, working with these types is sometimes akin to working with the devil himself. They will lie, cheat, steal, and betray you. Your own ethics will be tested to the max, and sometimes you'll be lucky if you get through 20 years on the job without one of these stool pigeons dragging you down into the sewer where they live.

Think that this is all new, that you're on the cutting edge of police work by using informants? Think again. Let me tell you a little story about a big case that happened many years ago, in fact it was around 33 A.D. and it occurred in the Garden of Gethsemane....

In the Gospel of John (18:3) he tells us that, "Judas came there with a group of soldiers and some guards from the leading priests and Pharisees." It's unclear exactly what the word group represents—it could mean a cohort of three hundred men, or possibly the cavalry and infantry amounting to about nineteen hundred men. It may even mean that the soldiers were two hundred men strong, which would be a maniple. In any case, think of our present day SWAT tactics—we go after an offender with an overwhelming show of force and manpower. Back then they had the same mindset. Just look at the numbers with which they went after a simple carpenter and his eleven followers—all based on informant information!

If you were always under the impression that a handful of soldiers arrested Jesus you were wrong. So afraid were they of this wanted subject that even the temple guards assisted. Yes, the best of the best—those that were assigned to guard the holiest of places—Israel's finest! All based on one of the most infamous informants of all time.

I don't know what the authorities expected. Our experience with informants is pretty much universal. They will tell us what we want to hear; they will embellish, make things up, and downright lie to us. I guess that Judas must have told them about the power of Christ—the miracles that he had performed. They had to prepare for the worst.

What did they find when they confronted this alleged outlaw? They found not a coward or a criminal, not someone who posed any threat to anyone. What they found was a simple, humble man who inquired of them, "Who is it you are looking for?"

They answered, "Jesus of Nazareth."

Jesus responded, "I am he. So if you are looking for me, let the others go."

With that answer this conglomeration of the finest soldiers in the world fell down in a heap, in awe to be in Christ's presence. Our informant, Judas (undoubtedly recruited by Satan), had been induced by a few gold coins to betray the only person in the world that loved him. Realizing what he had done, he tried to return the bounty. When he was unable to do that he took his own life. Sound familiar...an informant that regrets his actions after the fact? It's reality; it's been happening this way long before you or I ever pinned on a badge.

Ever hear this phrase, "Women, can't live with 'em; can't live without 'em?" Substitute the word informants for women. If you want to be successful you need to develop sources. You may not ever work a case as historical as the one that I just described, but without getting in bed with the devil you may be running into a brick wall more often than not. Be careful around these people, they're treacherous and conniving. The paradox that exists with informants is that as much as they can help your case, they can also do just as much harm. Be careful brothers and sisters...Stay Safe!

