George Aylward as Middletown Police Chief
Middletown Before Aylward

While George R. Aylward was appointed Middletown Police Chief in November 1982, the events and cultural trends of the previous decade made his selection a necessity. The community of Middletown is one that consists of various ethnic groups: Middletown is heavily populated with people of Sicilian, Polish, Irish, African American and Latin descent. Not only do various ethnic groups comprise of Middletown but these groups display coherence within their own communities. There are several organized ethnic societies in Middletown. The Garibaldi society, an Italian organization, has been in existence for nearly a century, while the Sons of Italy, the Knights of Columbus and a Polish Falcons chapter all have distinguished places within the city. Ethnic communities of Middletown to some extent can be distinguished geographically. At one point there were a large amount of Sicilian’s populating the North End of Middletown while today, this area is mostly inhabited by African Americans and Hispanics. Recently Middletown has seen a growth in cultural and ethnic interrelations yet prior to Aylward’s arrival Middletown was a community where ideological and geographic separation was prevalent. Being that there are such strong intra-ethnic ties among Middletown residents and since there are such a wide array of ethnicities in Middletown, disputes among communities are prone to occur.

Not only are there various ethnic communities in Middletown but, as is common in cities with less than 50,000 people, different communities have different institutionalized roles. Being such a small area with change occurring infrequently, the positions and roles that were in place half a century ago are more than likely being held by persons of the same ethnicity today. For example, a man with Sicilian descent has historically held the position of Middletown Police Chief while the deputy chief has been a person with Polish origins. In small cities, ethnic roles remain for generations and shape the way culture is institutionalized. By disrupting these roles
one is simultaneously disrupting the cultural institution of the city as well as the normalcy that role recurrence seeks to create. This essay will show that George Aylward did not simply disrupt the established ideas about culture in Middletown but he disrupted a lifestyle that residents had spent decades growing accustomed to. Aylward recently remarked, “We’ve impacted a lifestyle and did things they didn’t expect to be done and they’ll never forgive us for it”.  

During the mid-1970’s and early 1980’s Middletown was a town with moderate crime levels and few abnormalities for a city of this size. Yet there were several alarming occurrences in Middletown that were making crime more prevalent. Many of the city’s open areas of land that had been unoccupied many years before were now being used for project housing, mental institutions and correctional facilities. The project buildings were not merely signs of poverty but increasing crime as well – prior to Aylward’s arrival there was a highly publicized killing in a housing project near Main Street. In addition, there was a widespread urban narcotic revolution that made new drugs available and expensive drugs cheap. Crack and inexpensive forms of heroine were becoming the drugs of choice throughout much of urban America. While President Ronald Reagan and First Lady Nancy Regan’s mid 1980’s campaign against urban narcotics was highly publicized, Ronald Regan, in 1981, fought to ensure that foreign drug distributors were not crossing the border.  The emerging popularity of drugs in urban areas created new necessities in policing. This drug epidemic was not solely calling for an increase in manpower but rather more strategic policing techniques. Few cities in the United States were technologically and strategically prepared to fight crack, which at the time was a largely unknown drug. While Middletown was not necessarily becoming a town with a dramatic increase of crime, the combination of poverty and popularized drugs was making crime prevention in Middletown a far more strategic task.
As opportunity for crime was increasing, the unprofessional nature of the Middletown Police Department did not make policing any easier. Prior to Aylward’s arrival there was an underlying sentiment that police wrongdoing was being ignored and accepted. There were rampant rumors of political influence in the police department. Then-Mayor Michael J. Cubeta, in a 1994 Hartford Courant article addressed this issue stating that “for some people, being part of the inner circle counts for more than competence.” Cubeta later stated he was “confident the department was being run on politics.” In a recent interview (12.10.02) the ex-mayor stressed that promotions were being given based on who you knew rather than how qualified you were… promotions extending to the highest levels of policing. In addition, Cubeta stresses how this influence “affected who got business” (from the police department). For example, there was a certain automotive repair company that was receiving all of the police’s business because of internal ties. In addition, an officer who wanted to remain anonymous stated “an officer (at the time) who thought he had information about gambling or drugs would tell his superiors but no arrests would result.” In November 1981, Police Chief Eugene Rame resigned leaving the chief position vacant.

With a mass of politics and controversy surrounding the police force and the chief position, the vacated job of police chief was deemed undesirable. When the department confirmed a new chief and hoped that this selection would stabilize the position, Lt. William B. DiFedrico of Stratford withdrew at the last minute leaving the position vacant once again. The “23 year veteran gave a variety of reasons for changing his mind.” While he mainly “cited family and financial conditions” rumors of departmental misconduct may have pushed him away. There was no proof of another motive for his reversal aside from the reasons he gave himself, yet the timing of the withdrawal is curious. While being interviewed for the position,
DiFedrico had never shown “concerns about leaving Stratford”... and sounded “keen about moving into the local post.” 11 It is possible that DiFedrico became aware of some of the same resistance for being an outsider that Aylward would later face. Although he was Italian, DiFedrico was not from the Middletown Police Department, where applicants had to withstand stringent evaluation standards in competing for this position. Nearly six months had elapsed since Rame resigned (November 1981) and with DiFedrico’s withdrawal, it was obvious that even more time would be needed to fill this position. Middletown residents became increasingly dismayed by the lack of a police chief. One resident remarked, “it is a little startling and even a bit embarrassing that Middletown’s well publicized search for a police chief has resulted in his (DiFedrico) taking the job and then deciding to reject it... The job of police chief in Middletown is an honorable one, it pays well and it should be in demand for a career choice.” 12 Yet because of the alleged political influence in the department and the reports of poor morale, non-Middletown residents may have held a belief that the issues that an incoming chief would have to face were far too daunting. The position was vacated for months while Lt. James Genovese resided as interim chief. Genovese did not want to compete for the full time chief position.13 There was not only a public sentiment that no one desired this job, but also that the candidates were unqualified. There were several rounds of tests throughout the extensive selection process but no chief was named. The situation was extremely embarrassing for all parties involved since the public was just as aware of the situation as the ranking municipal officials and police. Mayor Cubeta stated that the pressures for filling this vacancy “were heavier or as heavy as any he had experienced.” 14 At this point, there seemed to be something that had to be done not only to get a full time chief into Middletown to head the department, but to renew vitality and prestige into the
police force and to reestablish the pride that one should take in being the Middletown Police Chief.

The Choice

The stage in Middletown was now set for a change of radical proportions... a change that many had not imagined. After eight long months of interviews and tests, complaints and controversies, Mayor Cubeta chose George R. Aylward, a former New York City Lieutenant, to head the department. Aylward's credentials included 19 years with the NYPD, "serving as detective squad commander in the street crimes unit as well as commanding officer of the 60-officer criminal apprehension unit." He then served a 22-month stint as police chief in Wilkes-Barre Township, PA. On November 22 1982, Aylward walked through the doors of police headquarters. With a history of strategic organization and modernized, aggressive policing, Aylward, from the outside, appeared to be the right selection. In a town that had several impending criminal concerns, Aylward appeared to be the correct choice. And in a town where stability, integrity and public perception of the chief position were at an all time low, Aylward seemed to be a perfect fit since he had a strong track record of heading police departments and working in far more contentious environments. But these assertions of fit could only come from an outsider, as the cultural and ideological make-up of Middletown would prevent this from being a harmonious union.

George Aylward's introduction ominously suggested the events that would shape his tenure. In a twenty-minute ceremony Aylward was sworn in as chief and presented with a key to the city. Although nothing out of the ordinary occurred, Lucas Held, a Middletown Press journalist who covered police operations, noted how some officers joked that they could not tell if "it was a coronation or a funeral". The mood was already tense as factions of Middletown
already were miffed by this New Yorker’s appointment. The general sentiment amongst Middletown locals was that an officer from within the department should have been selected. Held’s article downplayed the comment as being merely “sarcasm”. Based on the antagonistic fifteen years that would follow it is now quite evident that this sentiment was far beyond sarcasm.

Members of the Middletown Police Department heavily scrutinized the actual testing process. Mayor Cubeta had the final say in the chief’s selection and the testing procedure. Cubeta is not a native of Middletown and his foreignness made some local residents suspicious of his motives in selecting a chief. In the extensive testing process scores were set so high for members of the department that it made it difficult to achieve a score high enough to qualify. In addition, there were many stipulations that weeded out high-ranking Middletown police officials. Longtime Captain David Knapp did not qualify because of education requirements. Others faced particular requirements for years served at varying positions. What was even more distressing to some was that “local officers (were not given) additional credits for time on the job.” And “after a civil service test failed to qualify anyone within the department” and as rumors of Middletown’s courtship of Aylward began to materialize, it was becoming apparent that Cubeta had little intention on hiring from within. With already many high-ranking officers upset by their being passed over by an outsider, their sentiment did indeed begin to resemble the “funeral” that the joking officers alluded to. Shortly after selecting Aylward, Mayor Cubeta was summoned by members of the community to meet at the Garibaldi Society where they expressed their displeasure. Cubeta would later lose his bid for re-election and this appeared to be a central reason.
Cubeta's contention was that someone should be chosen based solely on his qualifications. He expressed how tradition should not be a determining factor in choosing a chief. While politics were becoming heavily enmeshed within the police force, Cubeta emphasized the need to separate the two. This was one of his central concerns when interviewing prospective chiefs. He stated that Middletown has many politicians but only one police chief. He wanted a police chief who would solely handle police operations and not involve himself or his departments in any relations that would compromise their ability to police. In the interviewing process and in his background, Aylward had shown a disdain for this sort of political influence in police departments. This sentiment was a vital reason why he was selected. Yet, Thomas J. Serra, who was then a member of the City Council, in a recent interview contended that this external selection was an attempt to create a new power base in order to 'clean-up' something that was not dirty. Serra, who to this day favors residency, abstained from approving Aylward's selection (and did not attend Aylward's introduction ceremony) on the basis that he was not selected internally. Serra contended that more pride is created when city residents are appointed to Middletown positions. Still, Cubeta does not believe that a local resident could have addressed Middletown's pressing issues, as he comments "It was a change in policy to get out and recruit, to get the best person for the job." His concern was that the influence of 'who one knew' would be too disruptive for a home grown chief. The failure to make a selection internally implied that someone born and raised in Middletown could not perform this task as well as one born elsewhere.

George Aylward was born in New York and was the epitome of an outsider. His experiences revolved around environments far different from Middletown. Equally as important, Aylward is Irish while past chiefs have historically been Sicilian, putting in contrast two cultures
that have a history of animosity. The city’s structure, which had been institutionalized, was being reconstructed to a point where tradition was deemed secondary. Aylward’s background also included a high level of education and a history of implementing aggressive and progressive policing techniques. Because of his past, the fear of the outsider was multiplied because Aylward was not only an outsider in terms of origin but in that he had ideas that were foreign to Middletown. The thought of change bound up in this officer from out of town then grew into fear of change when residents began realizing that change was indeed what Aylward intended to do.

Small Town Resistance

If Aylward’s appointment occurred in a large city local policemen and politicians might not have been as upset. In most modern U.S. cities occupational positions are taken and retaken by people with diverse backgrounds. In a time that had started to become more accepting of the cultural, ethnical and ideological other, change had become more prone to occur. In addition, being that most populated, urban U.S. cities then consisted of various ethnic groups—groups which sought to ensure they are represented at the highest levels in society—progress was occurring frequently. But Middletown, Connecticut, like other such small cities, has a history of upholding tradition and concretizing links to the past. The general desire of small town residents is to have distinctive roles in society reserved for specific groups of people. This designed role inheritance, in theory, will create character and definition in an outside world demarcated by constant, impersonal change.

Change is a word that can be used to characterize the United States more than a century earlier when the railroad and monopoly were uprooting tradition. While the emergence of the
railroad in the 1890's is a far cry from this small-scale appointment the two display alarmingly similar characteristics. Robert Wiebe’s *The Search for Order* explains the resistance that small cities in America felt towards the rapidly changing world of the railroad and large-scale monopolies. Small city residents reaped the benefits of increased trade and efficient transportation from new railroads built at the end of the nineteenth century. Nevertheless, there was the lingering fear that the railroad and what it symbolized would depersonalize small communities by striping away their distinctiveness. The railroad would also represent the constant, intrusive presence of the outside world as it would instill the corporate impersonality of the larger cities that it was attached to into the smaller, more resistant towns.

Along the same lines, George Aylward was not merely foreign; he represented to Middletown residents the tone and attitude of New York City, the nation’s largest metropolis. Immediately after his appointment, the new chief sought to implement the practices, techniques, and methods native to the New York Police Department. Unlike the railroad, Aylward would have a supreme position of authority; Once he had office, the residents of Middletown had no choice but to change and adapt to whatever policies he sought to implement. According to Wiebe, small town Americans saw trains from the outside as driverless objects of metal and steam: instruments created by faceless, big city executives. There was something so soulless and so lacking of humanity that made townspeople cringe at the thought of them. While this initial reaction is more overstated than the one Middletown residents had, it does indicate where Middletown residents’ misgivings emanated from. Anybody with such-strong resemblance to the foreign world of business, technology and dense population was bound to face resistance in this sort of environment.
While this perception of Aylward was enough to bring about moderate levels of disapproval and ill will his actions performed immediately preceding his selection would increase societal displeasure. Up until this point the public’s fears were based mainly on unfounded preconceptions and a fear of the outsider’s unknown agenda. Before Aylward had uttered a word in Middletown or made one decision as chief he was already viewed negatively. This worsened when, before making plans for the city, Aylward publicly and repeatedly stated that he would not announce plans for the department until he “asks some questions.” Shortly before arriving Aylward stated, “I have some questions I’m going to ask when I get there but I don’t know what the answers are yet”. This comment had an accusatory undertone and possibly was addressing some sort of wrongdoing. While in the same statement Aylward declared, “I’m ready for a change,” it is not clear whether he was referring to his changing positions or changing a city, or both. Prior to Aylward’s arrival there was a highly publicized suspension of seven officers for not meeting specified weight requirements. This action was more of an embarrassment to the department than anything else: the move garnered national attention including an article in the New York Times. Aylward made further strides to control departmental weight issues but was met with resistance as many officers felt that weight was not wholly indicative of physical condition. This was only the beginning of what would be fifteen years of controversy, change and resistance.

Even though Aylward’s appointment and his 1988 allegations of police misconduct are the most controversial of his fifteen-year tenure (1982-1997), his time in Middletown included myriad issues, more than a few of which were controversial as well. Relations between Aylward and the police union became quite strained. The MPD’s internal dissatisfaction with Aylward was repeatedly qualified in police votes of no confidence. In 1995 a resounding sixty-one to
one vote revealed that Middletown police officers thought the chief did not take responsibility for morale problems. During the 1990’s, Aylward was involved in an ongoing dispute with the mayor’s office as consecutive mayors sought to take power away from the New York-born chief, while Aylward publicly criticized the mayor’s conduct. Controversy followed Aylward to his last days in office. Near the end of his tenure it was rumored that he agreed to allow allegedly corrupt officers to retire as part of a ‘golden handshake’ deal, ridding the force of corruption. And for almost ten years Aylward publicly applied for positions elsewhere but was repeatedly turned down until his eventual resignation. While all of these issues are controversial in their own right, Aylward’s initial appointment and his accusation that the MPD had internal connections to organized crime were the most disruptive and impacted various Middletown communities.

Aylward’s Allegations

George Aylward’s allegations of internal ties to organized crime outraged a large group of residents. Edmund Mahony’s November 1991, Hartford Courant article characterized Middletown, during the 1970’s and 1980’s as being home to a lucrative illegal sports-betting operation. Mahoney contends that there were several figures in Middletown that were perceived to be involved in wrongdoing. This same article described how organized crime had been running rampant in New England and that some of these unsavory fellows in Middletown were said to be apart of a much larger collectives of criminals. Many reports, including Suzanne Sataline’s July 1991 Hartford Courant article described the most visible of these alleged organized crime figures in being Middletown to being local storeowner Salvatore D’Aquilla, nicknamed “Butch” or “Fat Butch.” Sataline’s article contends that D’Aquilla was known among much of Middletown as the town bookie. Yet, the article states that his numbers
operation was part of the much larger Patriarca crime family’s illegal business dealings. Upon arriving in Middletown, Mayor Cubeta alerted the chief to this criminal element of Middletown.\textsuperscript{53} Cubeta asked Aylward to speak to the state police about how to counter organized crime.\textsuperscript{54} Cubeta also intended such a meeting would function to reestablish the relationship the Middletown Police Department had with the state police, trying to ensure the fullest cooperation in handling this serious problem.\textsuperscript{55} After Aylward had been alerted to the problem of organized crime and several of these alleged criminals, he began to construct a Street Crimes Unit, aimed at identifying and convicting these criminals.

While Aylward took steps to address organize crime ever since he became chief, organized crime figures and drug dealers viewed Sgt. Frank Violoissi Jr. as “the most feared cop in the city.”\textsuperscript{56} Violoissi made a 1987 statement voicing his suspicions that “some of his officers were ignoring criminal activity, and that organized crime was active in the city.”\textsuperscript{57} Specifically he claimed that “Italian civil orders were notorious for drug activity.”\textsuperscript{58} This comment outraged much of the community. Councilman William A. Pillarella recounted how in 1987 Aylward made a similar allegation of “trouble in the ranks” yet he never revealed details of the investigation or if the problem had been settled.\textsuperscript{59} Aylward admitted that the Chief State’s Attorney’s office had investigated these allegations but there was a lack of evidence to proceed criminally. Councilman Vincente J. Loffredo commented “People better be prepared to be accountable for their actions and their behavior.”\textsuperscript{60} These claims drew scorn from members of the police department and were aware of Aylward and Violoissi’s claims. The general public was unaware of the widespread attempt to identify and admonish these officers allegedly involved in wrongdoing. A year later Aylward’s allegations would be voiced explicitly and publicly, and emotional sentiment would reach a climax.
In late November and early December 1988, rumors surfaced that Aylward would take a position as the Cape Coral Police Chief in Florida. At the time relations between the chief and the police union were heavily strained and many officers and city officials felt that Aylward was concealing too much about his plans for the department. Patrolman David Beauchemin who had recently become president of the police local was vehemently opposed to Aylward. On December 16, 1988, he, Aylward and Mayor Sebastian Garafolo met to discuss morale problems and the lack of communication between Aylward and the union. Garafolo stated “The meeting was frank, it couldn’t get much franker.” It appeared that the most practical option for Aylward was to relocate to Florida as it seemed he had worn out his welcome in Middletown. He had already received votes of no-confidence from the police union and his adversaries were continually growing in number. Aylward admitted “the past few years have been difficult ones for my family and me.” Yet on December 17th he announced plans to stay in Middletown and vowed to be more frank. The chief conceded that “the city can’t know what I’m doing unless I talk to them,” and two days later that is just what he did. In a December 19th written statement Aylward expounded on a recent proclamation that four officers were facing disciplinary charges serious enough to lead to their dismissal and that he was in the midst of a discrete internal investigation aimed at cleansing the police department. The chief’s December 19th written statement asserted that members of his department and city officials had “strong ties” to organized crime figures. He added that these ties may have compromised investigations and may have been a reason for the department’s desire to see him depart. Aylward’s statement did not include suspects’ names as he felt that their inclusion might compromise his investigation. The most serious of the charges was an arrest warrant “sought for a supervisory officer who put a gun to the head of an officer he suspected of being a spy for the Street Crime’s Unit, the
department’s drug investigation arm.” Another officer was accused of “threatening an officer with a blackjack and telling him not to cooperate with the street crimes unit.” In addition Aylward reported that “pressure from within the department for the chief and the street crime unit to be more open about their investigations was motivated by a desire to compromise drug probes” and that “two such probes conducted in the last 14 months have resulted in the arrest of 100 suspects.” After these arrests “a high-ranking officer asked a court and city officials if he was going to be arrested.” Aylward’s claims depicted the police department as being an aid and a party to the operations of drug dealers and organized criminals. One major drug dealer was “quoted by informants as boasting of being able to stop investigations of his activities.” This drug dealer was later reported to be “Butch” D’Aquila. Journalist Suzanne Sataline reported in a 1991 Hartford Courant article that Aylward had declared “a number of officers and high ranking police officials met secretly with friends of D’Aquila.” Initially, the chief received some positive feedback for his pointed claims. Days after issuing the statement Aylward stated “I’ve had phone calls from residents, people in government, even some anonymous calls” all expressing their approval of his actions. Yet as time progressed more and more people grew incensed by the lack of names specified in his allegations. Even though these accusations appeared to stem from Aylward’s desire to purify the department many were irate because he was failing to reveal specifically who he was accusing. Even Mayor Garafolo, who supported the chief’s investigation, admitted that Aylward’s “remarks about an ethical problem within the force raised as many questions as it answered.” Aylward’s accusation outraged much of the community, but specifically aggrieved three groups: the police force, Italian Americans and city officials.
Police officers who were already openly displeased with Aylward’s selection as police chief, were now the target of his pointed allegations. Officers stuck by one another and Aylward was still not saying who he was accusing. Chief Aylward, an outsider, seemed to be slandering the Middletown Police Department as a whole. The chief’s allegations created a distinct amount of distance between himself and the people who he would work with for the next nine years. Aylward never regained the support of a majority of his co-workers and later in his tenure was reduced to relying on a small amount of people in his department. Union Executive Board member Jeffery Artikes thought Aylward’s public declaration was too hasty stating that it should have stayed in house until a final decision was made. Artikes added that the entire department was now viewed negatively and that “officers are now suspicious of their fellow officers.” With little being said of exactly who he was accusing, Aylward’s comments insulted the department as a whole and relations between the police chief and the department would never be the same again.

Aylward’s claims had an equally negative effect on Middletown’s Italian community. Ever since the 1950’s when organized crime investigations and allegations were rampant, Italian-American communities have had a bitter distaste for unfounded allegations of their linkage to organized crime. There was a widespread opinion that certain factions of American society wanted to depict the entire Italian American community as mobsters, constantly involved in underhanded operations. This stereotype is still prevalent today and portions of the Italian-American community protest the entertainment world’s use of this stereotype and the negative implications that this it contains. In a city where roughly half of the population were Italian-Americans, Aylward’s unfounded allegation could be and was considered a form of ‘ethnic bigotry’- this from their own police chief. I stress ‘their’ because while Aylward was the head
of their city's police department, a majority of Italians in the community did not want him appointed to begin with. While he was supposed to fight for the entire city, all communities inclusive, his actions were perceived to be insensitive to a specific group of people. Coming from an Irish man who had, at this point, been in Middletown for only half of a decade, this accusation drew outrage from this largely Sicilian, Middletown community. While Aylward and his advocates may argue that this was simply a form of aggressive policing, Aylward unquestionably made claims that specifically debased Middletown's Italian community concerning an issue that had a history of volatility. While the chief freely contends that he 'impacted a lifestyle' in Middletown, he upset not only what he perceived to be the illegal activities of unsavory citizens but he also disrupted the Middletown Italian community that was hoping to live without this stereotypical moniker.  

As the police force and Italian American community in Middletown became incensed by these allegations, Aylward's relationship with local politicians deteriorated. The chief was claiming that criminals were influencing city officials - people who were supposed to set the standard for establishing and upholding laws. City officials felt that Aylward was trying to reconstruct the standard of what relations one should have and who one should associate with. As his allegations touched such a large number of people, they in effect served to taint much of the city. Aylward was labeling the city and it's most prestigious, dignified offices, as a city that needed rectifying. Middletown citizens had grown accustomed to this way of life and were not prepared to have their city defamed.

As time passed evidence was still lacking in support of Aylward's claims. On Oct 30 1989, in an attempt to find out more about D'Aquila and organized crime in the city a meeting was arranged between Mayor Sebastian Garafolo and Sal "Butch" D'Aquila. The police chief
equipped the mayor with a wire, hoping the conversation would substantiate his earlier claims. D’Aquila’s associate Sal Mazzota (who at the time was facing trial on cocaine charges) accompanied him to this meeting. 84 The meeting took place in the mayor’s office and the recorded tapes from it were later played in D’Aquila’s federal racketeering trial. 85 Yet, after reporters from the Hartford Courant and Middletown Press heard these recording - therefore declaring them public information - City Councilman William Corvo, speaking on behalf of the Middletown Bulletin, asked for Aylward and his department to hand the tapes over. 86 After failing to expediently deliver the tapes, Corvo placed a suit against Aylward for not obliging. 87 The court ruled against Aylward and the Freedom of Information Commission fined him $500 reflecting the commission’s belief that Aylward purposefully withheld the tapes. 88 Suspicions of the tape’s content rose as Corvo stated, “I’d rather have the right to listen to the tapes than have the chief pay the fine.” 89 After the tapes were eventually handed over to Corvo all that was revealed to be recorded were conversations about a recent debate, Mazzota’s asking Garafolo for a letter of credibility and D’Aquila’s boasting of his ability to influence local police and city officials. 90 D’Aquila’s boasts weren’t nearly enough to try him on any charges and little came out of this recording. The negativity among the Middletown community increased, as the allegations appeared to be unfounded. While D’Aquila had a reputation as a town bookie, Middletown residents were somewhat unaware of the more serious illegal activity that he was allegedly involved in and the wiring did little to help bring D’Aquila to justice. Part of the public’s outrage stemmed from the general awareness that this secret wiring took place as well as Aylward’s continual inability to substantiate any of his earlier claims.

Years later, in 1995, officer Michael Davis claimed that Sgt. Violissi made statements linking him to organized crime. 91 There was never any evidence or trial that proved that Davis
had such involvement. Serra claims that Aylward and his top detective were smearing the names of people and then striking these accusations from the record (since there was no case) even though these statements were in the jury’s, that is, the public’s minds already. Both Aylward and Violissi received death threats because of their claims. Violissi comments, “my biggest enemy is not the bad guys, it’s the politically connected people. My problem is I’ve never slept with the whores and I tell it like it is.” The same could be said for Aylward and his aggressive pursuit of organized crime. The chief claimed that “We’ve impacted a lifestyle and did things they didn’t expect to be done and they’ll never forgive us for it.” In a December, 2002 interview former mayor Serra asserted that ex-mayor Cubeta’s statements- prior to Aylward’s arrival, officers in the department would ignore drug dealing and gambling- were unsubstantiated and in effect smeared the names of large groups of people without there being first the presence of sufficient evidence. Serra mentioned the democratic principle of the U.S. where all men are innocent until proven guilty and he explained that Aylward as well as Cubeta were publicly placing guilt without proof or what Serra perceived to be ‘truth’. These allegations incensed much of the community.

In fact none of these allegations of police ties to organized crime in Middletown were ever substantiated. U.S. attorney Richard Palmer looked into the matter at length but all that was founded was that D’Aquila thought he could influence police and elected Middletown officials. Yet, what must not be obscured in all of the ill will is that Aylward’s original contention was that he was trying to rid Middletown of one of its criminal elements. While the chief was unable to prove the Middletown Police Department suffered from internal corruption, he did allegedly contribute to the arrest of D’Aquila on charges originating outside of his jurisdiction. While Aylward’s involvement is purely alleged since only a select few people knew of what operations
were being undertaken, even Aylward’s detractors believe that his (Aylward’s) involvement was very possible. Thomas Serra stated that in 1992 Senator Dodd and President Bill Clinton signed a bill attempting to actively curtail organized crime. 99 In Connecticut and Middletown specifically, a point was made to curtail gang activity and drugs dealing. In a December 2002 interview Serra agreed that it is possible that Aylward played an active role in convicting a large group of New England criminals. 100 Aylward allegedly provided the state police with information and evidence necessary to secure D’Aquila’s conviction. Aylward is also is rumored to have played a vital role in taking down the Patriarca crime family’s Connecticut branch— the regions most powerful criminal organization, in which D’Aquila allegedly played a part. 101 The charges brought against these figures contained “a variety of racketeering offenses, including murder, gambling, extortion and burying the body of a murder victim they presumed had trifled with the affections of a Patriarca soldier’s wife.” 102 When inducted into this crime family, members “swore to leave their dying mother’s death beds and murder their own families if it were necessary to protect the crime family’s interest.” 103 D’Aquila was also accused of “threatening to bury a debtor under a parking lot unless he paid up.” 104 When sentencing D’Aquila to 15 years and two months in prison U.S. District Court Judge Alan H. Nevas remarked “people are judged on the company they keep…The friends you kept, the company you kept, were the scum of the earth. Terrible, terrible people.” 105 The conviction of these seven co-defendants “decimated the leadership of the Patriarca family’s Connecticut faction.” 106 Aylward’s much grander involvement in convicting this family did not publicly surface until years after he made the allegations. This is one reason why much of Middletown was extremely angered by these “baseless” accusations.

An additional reason for Aylward’s probe of D’Aquila was the level of celebrity that he had attained in this small community. One of Aylward’s primary agendas was to reform and
create a positive public image for Middletown. But this positive image could not be constructed when one of the city’s most popular and recognizable figures was a convicted criminal and alleged mobster. In a recent interview former Hartford Courant reporter, Suzanne Sataline recounted an episode where at Xavier High School in Middletown “Butch” D’Aquila’s son was to graduate.\textsuperscript{107} Attention from the graduates was momentarily altered as several people approached a large figure sitting, receiving handshakes from old and new acquaintances. With men presumed to be police mining the back of the auditorium with wires in their ears it became apparent that this larger-than-life local figure was Sal “Butch” D’Aquila.\textsuperscript{108} As it turned out, he had been giving a temporary release from prison to attend his son’s graduation and was being admired at by Middletown residents in attendance.\textsuperscript{109} This sort of respect and admiration is exactly what George Aylward wanted for his police force, not a criminal. D’Aquila at the time owned Central News, a newsstand on Main Street. He was allegedly running a half million dollar a week numbers operation from this shop.\textsuperscript{110} Yet most Middletown residents viewed him as simply “Butch”- a Middletown local. He was perceived as being part of Middletown’s local community above all else. Many residents claimed that the “Butch” D’Aquila they read about in the papers was far different from the one they knew. While Middletown residents failed to see him as the criminal that the federal conviction later proved he was, Aylward remarked that it seemed “that we (he and Violissi) were the only people that could see the 300-pound organized crime figure in Middletown.”\textsuperscript{111} D’Aquila’s father, Sal Sr., was a recognizable figure in Middletown as well, and some family members with the D’Aquila name still reside in Middletown today. If a man stops in a certain Middletown barbershop he is likely to see a picture of Sal D’Aquila Sr.\textsuperscript{112} Most people that recognized “Butch” D’Aquila recognized him as the neighborhood bookie. While being a bookie is certainly illegal, this sort of wrongdoing has a
long history in Middletown and most other cities. Such behavior is often viewed merely as part of the local way of life. Aylward’s warranted concern was that D’Aquila’s combination of criminality and popularity would lead him to become too involved in Middletown’s legitimate dealings. In the October 30, 1989 conversation with the mayor, D’Aquila bragged of his influence with city officials proving that Aylward's concerns of D’Aquila’s influence were justified.

Aylward’s prying into the affairs of Butch D’Aquila and can be viewed from his standpoint not as an attempt to ruffle the feathers of any particular culture, but rather an attempt to reestablish the values and public perception of his police force by aggressively pursuing all who may be actively undermining the law. In understanding small cities one should note that the faces that one sees frequently become the key monument like attractions that come to symbolize the city. While in larger locales, businesses and historic landmarks come to symbolize the city, actual living, prominent figures such as D’Aquila come to be the most recognizable figures in smaller areas. Aylward was an aggressive police chief who attempted to restore the morale of a department that had been considered less than professional. Accordingly he would do whatever it took to identify and halt whatever criminal activity had been institutionalized within the city... even if it meant the risk of his being ostracized from factions of Middletown.

Aylward could have gone the less controversial route and taken the position as Cape Coral Police Chief. On December 19 1988, the chief could have announced plans to resign as opposed to his announcing intentions to stay and his claim of police misconduct. But Aylward chose what would be the much more arduous route of cleaning his department’s dirty laundry. When deciding to stay and voice his accusations, Aylward knew that he would never have the trust of much of his department again. The chief’s accusations were declaring that members of
his department were working as much, if not more so, against him as they were for him. It must be noted that Middletown’s institutionalized form of crime may have remained if Aylward would have simply left when it seemed like that would please many people in Middletown. Regardless, former President of the Police officer’s union John Marshall stated Aylward’s unfounded allegations “had a disastrous effect,” continuing, “this will never go away.” 113 Perhaps this probe and its ramifications never will be forgotten.

**Aylward’s Policing Style**

Police Chief, George Aylward implemented several modern strategies that would help deter crime in Middletown. He used computers as a tool for tracking and mapping crime. Since crime was more prevalent in certain areas of the city Aylward decided to map out these locales in order to disperse more officers into those areas (not contending that previous chiefs did not do this but it is well documented that Aylward took extensive measures to employ this technique). Less than a year into his stay Aylward announced “patrol officers on a particular beat will carry folders showing recent crimes in the area, with notes about any patterns.” 114

Aylward’s implementation of a “big city” style of policing in Middletown bears documentation as well. New York is a city greater than Middletown in terms of surface area, population and crime. Being an area (New York) so widely dispersed, while holding a large population, it is not only helpful but necessary to strategically map out where and how many officers to disperse. While some may relish it as being overly cautious, treating a smaller city with the same specificity and detail that one would treat a larger one only emphasizes the level of effort that Aylward extended towards crime’s preventative measures.
While this connection to New York City has to be sought out, there are several direct examples of his implementation of a New York style of policing. Aylward's own past in New York includes work in the street crime unit and the career criminal apprehension unit. Months after becoming Middletown chief, thirty of Aylward's officers applied to get New York training. 

If selected, they would "spend up to four days with three special crime units designed to apprehend career criminals and tap street criminals." Aylward said the training "compresses the amount of experience that they have to certain situations into a short period of time...Those certain situations include muggings, burglaries, drug sales and larcenies from cars." All of these problems were prevalent to varying degrees in Middletown and by immersing oneself in an environment heavily frequented by these problems the officers would become better equipped at dealing with these types of crime in Middletown. The street crimes unit, which Aylward would construct for his Middletown Department, focuses on "tailing potential victims and what appear to be potential assailants in high crime areas." The career criminal apprehension is based on logging repeated offenders and their method of operation. Finally, the street enforcement unit focuses on making on sight drug arrests. If selected, these Middletown officers would be placed in Midtown Manhattan and the theater district, areas densely populated with a high potential for crime. What was being taught was how to detect these criminal potentialities and how to react once detected. One negative result that came from this training was that certain people that had been in Middletown prior to Aylward's arrival felt that this was a criticism of the force's methods of policing. Some felt that Aylward, through this seminar, was saying, you haven't learned the possible methods for policing and New York is where you will learn how to police properly. Still, other officers thought that training in New York would only help their
policing in Middletown. Captain Richard Uliano remarked “there is no way you can attach any dollar value on four days training in New York City.”  

While Aylward was successful in creating a crisper police force and modernizing the department certain aspects of his policing came under heavy scrutiny. On January 21 1983, in one of his first significant moves as chief, Aylward announced a “major personnel shuffle involving 14 officers.”  

In a later move to “better use of information about crimes... he assigned officer Phil Pessina to track incident of crime on maps.”  

Yet Aylward’s constant personnel shifts were viewed negatively. These gave officers a feeling of instability. Thomas J. Serra, an outspoken opponent of Aylward’s transfer policies, remarked, “people are being moved every three months, every six months... In my opinion, “everyone has to look over his shoulder” and say “where am I going to be tomorrow.”  

Former police union secretary William Clayton notes how departmental transfers are “like a game of musical chairs” and “we used to say as a joke, can you hear the music playing...Because when the music stops, you will be out of a job.”  

Former Police Union President David Christina recounts how “one morning about five years ago, (Lt.) Bibisi was abruptly moved from the department’s patrol division to the youth division...By late afternoon, Bibisi was pack in patrol.”  

Both “Clayton and Christina say transfeerees are left wondering whether their move is punishment or reward because there are no warnings or explanations.”  

One proponent of Aylward’s transfers was former Mayor Cubeta who in 1997 stated, “transfers are a classic way to cross train, and open new opportunities for people.”  

This pursuit of effectiveness despite threat of public condemnation is a theme that was prevalent throughout much of Aylward’s tenure.  

Another controversial tactic taken by Aylward was his reducing the amount of officers reporting directly to him. This would come of later significance, as it appeared that Aylward only
had a select few members in his circle of trust. Aylward’s 1988 claims explained how he could trust a select few in his department because many were said to have a conflict of interest: specifically he believed that several officers were compromising investigations and working as much for and with criminals as they were the MPD. Former Councilman and Mayor, Edward Dzialo Jr. contends that most people including those who Aylward worked with knew little of his plans until they were announced publicly in the media. 130 It is of no coincidence that a vast majority of his officers declared their lack of confidence in him as a police chief.

Aylward did go to many external venues to help learn about crime and prevent it in Middletown. In April of 1994 Aylward sought a review of his department by Community Research Association of Nashville. He sought the review even though it was likely that it would reveal management faults- and it did. 131 He was solely attempting to find the departments shortcomings in order to find solutions. In keeping with his ideas of progressive policing Aylward did extensive work for PERF (Police Executive Research Forum), a non-profit organization designed to improve policing techniques. The organization, in a way, is a compendium of police voices where officers can learn from each other. And in an attempt to ensure that he was getting the most productivity out of his officers Aylward issued constant evaluations of his squad members. In one of his first moves as chief Aylward required written evaluations of officers every six months or a year. In small cities like Middletown, productivity (in several genres: not limited to policing) is often compromised in favor of stability and duration of one’s tenure. Aylward was attempting to prevent this, making an effort to let nothing go ignored and to increase the overall performance of the department. Aylward stated “The more information we have the better an analysis and the better our assignments will be.” 132 Mayor
Cubeta believed that prior to Aylward coming to Middletown “assignments were made pretty much of an arbitrary basis... (and he believed) the chief wanted to erase that perception.”

The Consequences

Despite the eminence of all of these cultural and social implications, one issue that must come at the forefront is whether this man performed his job effectively, and whether he did what he was brought in to do. Yet it would be rather presumptuous to think that these are two parts to the same question. While a chief’s job is to successfully run a police department and deter crime in the locale that he oversees, what Aylward was brought in to do was not limited to purely formulaic occupational requirements. Aylward was being asked to restructure a department and to do something about the crime and wrongdoing that was plaguing the department. While it is common for a chief to be asked to lessen internal turmoil, the amount of actions undertaken by Aylward to simply create cohesion in his own department go beyond what is printed in any policing handbook.

If I were to conclude that the state of the police and the city were far worse than when he had arrived, in addition to all of the enemies that he made throughout his tenure, Aylward would be viewed in an extremely negative light. There would be a level of failure and hypocrisy if Aylward went to these already stated extremes to prevent crime when crime was what remained. Yet, as it turns out, Aylward’s successes in lessening crime, cleaning up the city and modernizing and computerizing the police department are too great to fully detail within this essay. Crime statistics prove that the same city with rising crime inherited by Aylward became a city under control. Aylward’s modernizing policing techniques, which have been detailed as the “big city” approach towards preventing crime, helped stop crime before it was committed.
Aylward’s success in fulfilling his goals for the police force compromise this essay’s ability to claim whether his stay in Middletown was purely a success or failure. While Aylward was extremely productive in the fight against crime, there was a large majority of people, both Middletown residents and officers, who shared a disdain for him, his actions and philosophies. Many people to this day feel that his selection should never have occurred. Many protest that he lacked sensitivity and tolerance for people with whom he worked. In addition, his highly publicized allegations debased and incensed a large amount of people within the community…people who would never forgive him for it. There are contrary views as to what he accomplished for the department’s public perception. While many believe that Aylward’s updated mode of policing deterred criminality over the years, most Middletown residents were aware of the police department’s internal dissension. How can the perception of a department be positive when it is known that internal congruity is at a minimum? This ambiguity is conflated with the opposing ways that one can look at his force’s morale. Here again, the general perception was that Aylward helped restore pride in the department. Fifteen years after Aylward took over a force that no one wanted, long-time Hartford Courant beat writer Carolyn Moreau describes, “patrol officers who loudly complain of low morale display a fierce pride in wearing their blues.” This comment seems to accurately convey this dichotomy of performance despite dissension. Aylward’s officers did not have to agree with him or even like him but he was able to extract a high amount of efficiency and professionalism from his officers, which is a victory in its own right. The public’s perception of Aylward is a bit more problematic. While he may all along have been solely concerned with preventing crime, he made allegations and never supplied proof. While he apparently was largely involved in helping convict criminals outside of Middletown, the claims that he made about local residents could only be considered dishonoring.
rumors since there was a lack of concrete evidence. Public outrage was valid, as no matter what evidence Aylward might have possessed, the public was only aware of the allegations. The negativity that Aylward's claims created must be heavily weighed when attempting to evaluate his tenure.

His tenure was replete with contentious issues and evoked emotional reactions from the Middletown community. Because of this volatility most people are unlikely to give an accurate account of the chief’s performance while taking into account all aspects (positive and negative) of his tenure. Most Aylward opponents tend to emotionally describe the chief’s faults while not taking into consideration the positive effect that he had on crime. Conversely, most Aylward advocates judge his tenure positively without considering the disruption that he created. Emotional sentiments often cause people to conclude that Aylward’s tenure was either a success or failure- two polar opposites/ two all ending claims. Yet these types of assertions should be avoided as they are far too broad and have a tendency of obscuring exactly what was and was not accomplished. If one truly desires to critically evaluate Aylward’s tenure, it must first be established that nobody could spend fifteen years heading a department and perform absolutely flawlessly or absolutely atrociously. In addition, many of the issues have opposing ways of analyzing them, both being legitimate. While there are different aspects of policing and heading a police force, Aylward should be judged on these aspects individually. Conflating all of the judgmental ways of looking at the chief’s tenure mixes policing with social skills, aggressiveness (in fighting crime) with intolerance, issues that can, in combination, corrupt and taint each other. Did George Aylward succeed in the sole act of policing- criminal statistics and departmental actions would lead one to believe so. Did Aylward at times cross the boundary between
aggressive policing and unsubstantiated probing—many Middletown residents and police officials seem to think yes.

George R. Aylward's tenure as Middletown Police Chief should be remembered as much for his actions as for the cultural and ideological issues that were reflected. While one may try to judge his appointment and his probes positively or negatively, these issues opened up controversies surrounding appointment, ethnicity, corruption, and policing. While cultural historians can endlessly attempt to prove and refute opinions on whether or not Aylward was in the wrong on a number of issues, the enormous number of social, ideological and American cultural ideals that were rehashed is unquestionable.
Appendix

- For more information on small towns and their natural resistance to progress consult with Wiebe’s *The Search for Order* which goes further in supporting this analogy of the railroad.

- For information about other issues during Aylward’s tenure consult with *The Middletown Press* and the *Hartford Courant*. Both newspapers contain not only accounts of these issues but also opinionated pieces and editorials. These two papers, especially the *Middletown Press*, go to lengths to reveal the public’s opinion of the issues at hand.

- PERF has several articles available that detail computerized modes of policing, policing in small locales and tips for tradition bound chiefs. It also includes an advice guide for commanding police officers. Many of these articles have been discontinued but I suggest contacting Martha Plotkin and the publications department for further inquiry.

- Time restraints and this essay’s sensitive subject matter prevented me from including all that I would have hoped to. While this essay is factual, I learned of several provocative pieces of information that I could not include because of their solely rumored nature. Also, George Aylward departed from Middletown in 1997 and these sensitive issues are very fresh on the minds of many of the parties involved. Naturally, as the years pass, parties involved will have less of a reluctance to share the information that they possess.

- In conducting further research I suggest directly contacting the people involved in these events. While reporters and journalist are privy to much information, their memories may have faded being that Aylward’s appointment was over twenty years ago. Also, be aware- since Aylward was chief for such a long period of time, most reporters only covered him for selected stints and they have a somewhat limited scope on the man’s tenure as a whole. I suggest trying to contact George Aylward himself. He did not respond to my inquiries for an interview and has declined comment on many of these issues since he resigned but he is the most knowledgeable person involved. Former mayor Michael Cubeta and long time captain David Knapp still have fresh memories of these issues.
- Finally, always remember that many of these issues have two sides to them and nearly all parties involved have a vested interest in retelling their side of the story even though there are other sides out there.

- A copy of a complaint brought up against Aylward for purposefully failing to disseminate tapes of the Mayor Garafolo's conversation with D'Aquila is available online and at:
Footnotes


2.


6. ibid

7. ibid


10. ibid

11. ibid


14. ibid


17. ibid

18. ibid


21. ibid

22. ibid
23. ibid
24. ibid
25. ibid
27. ibid
28. ibid
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33. ibid
34. ibid
35. ibid
36. ibid
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55. ibid
57. ibid
58. ibid
60. Andrew Julien “City Officials Rally Behind Police Chief” The Middletown Press.
62. ibid
64. The Full Text of Chief Aylward’s Statement The Middletown Press. 21 December 1988.
67. ibid
68. ibid
69. ibid
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71. ibid
72. ibid
73. ibid
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76. Bill Daley “Chief Refuses to Name Names” The Middletown Press. 22 December 1988
79. ibid
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85. ibid
87. ibid
89. Matthew Daly “Police chief fined $500 for withholding tapes,” The Hartford Courant. 3 June 1992.
94. ibid
95. ibid
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118. ibid

119. ibid

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121. ibid
123. ibid
124. ibid
126. ibid
127. ibid
128. ibid
129. ibid
133. ibid