

In February 1976, Dr. Stephen M. Passamaneck came across an article in the *Los Angeles Times* about the Chaplains Unit of the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department. "I wanted to be involved in something that was very much hands on and was unusual," said Passamaneck. "I have always gone after the unusual." The phone call that followed would forever change his life and lead him to rewarding accomplishments as a Chaplain and Reserve Deputy Sheriff

phone call in 1976 first led him to take and pass the rigorous departmental physical exam and subsequently found him assigned as a volunteer Chaplain at a Sheriff's substation in a high crime area. "Very few people understand the world of a police station and I had to learn it on the job, first-hand. It's another kind of a world, and a very fascinating one."

In addition to serving as a Chaplain with the largest Sheriff's Department in the

enforcement personnel; in fact, most of my law enforcement 'congregants' were non-Jewish," explained Passamaneck. "In addition to counseling, debriefing, and sick calls, I was always on hand to anyone who wanted to talk and certainly was available in case of serious incidents."

After serving as Chaplain for two years at his first station, he was assigned in 1978 to the Sheriff's West Hollywood station where he would continue until 1985.

"With law enforcement chaplaincy you really learn a great deal about the work as you perform it and much of that learning is done while riding alongside officers who are out on patrol," noted Passamaneck. It was in his position as Chaplain that he logged over 1500 hours as a ride-along, working in the field.

Early in 1986, Passamaneck concluded that he could better serve the deputies if he took police training. He applied to the Sheriff's Reserve Academy, took the physical and psychological examinations and survived the regular training course as a line

LAW AND ORDER: DR. STEPHEN M. PASSAMANECK

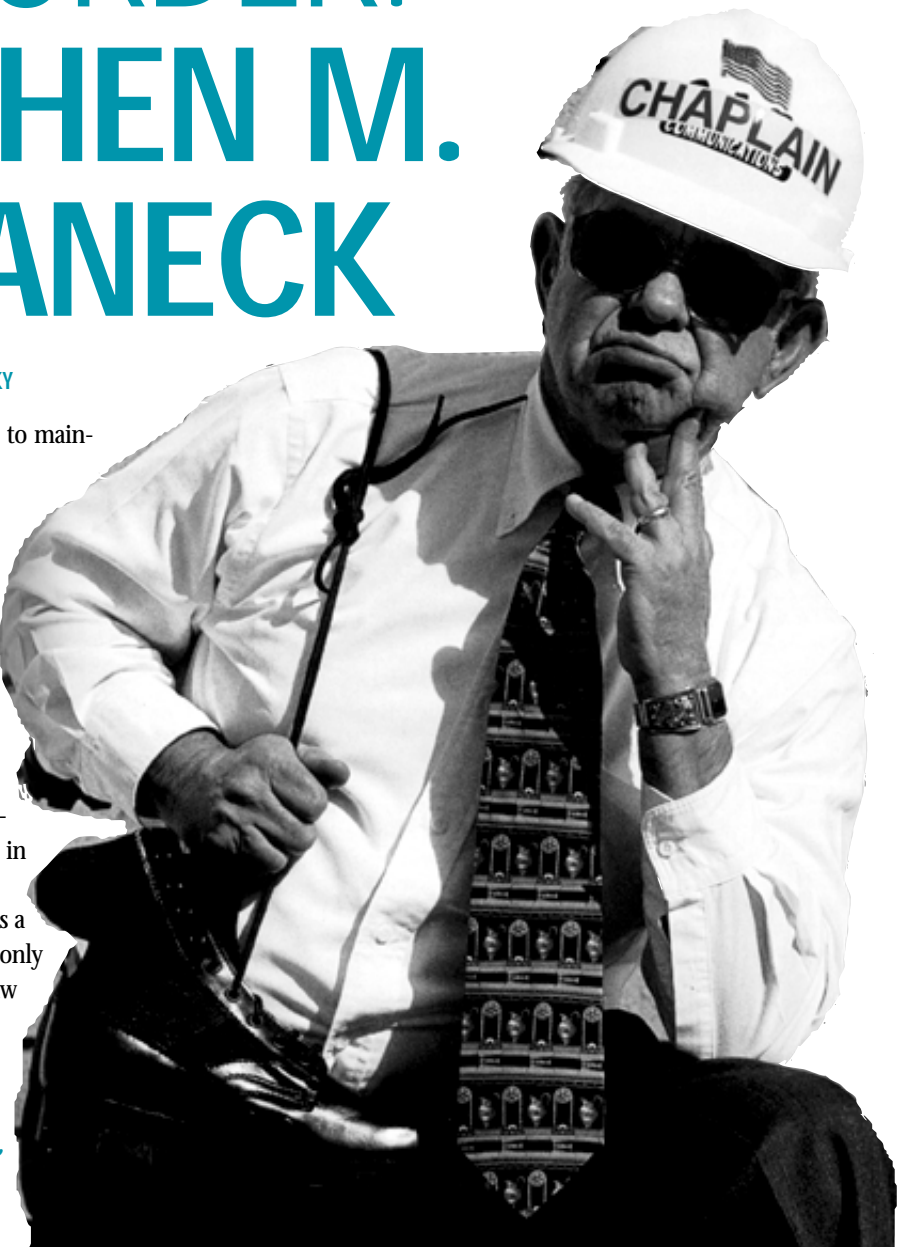
in the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department.

Referred to by his students and colleagues as "Dr. P.," Passamaneck is Professor of Rabbinics at HUC-JIR/Los Angeles and an esteemed senior member of the HUC-JIR faculty and campus community since 1963. His career is full of many noteworthy achievements, including the publication of several books and numerous articles and distinguished positions with the Jewish Law Association and the International Conference of Police Chaplains. That newspaper article and initial

BY RACHEL LITCOFSKY

world, he continued to maintain a full academic schedule. A typical week would include teaching and faculty responsibilities at HUC-JIR, scholarly research and writing for a new book or article, and serving as the Chaplain to approximately 150 deputies in patrol, traffic, and detective bureaus. "As a Chaplain, I was not only serving the Jewish law

Dr. Passamaneck's years of service as a chaplain and scholar were recently captured when he was featured as one of the subjects in photographer George Kalinsky's book, *Rabbis: The Many Faces of Judaism, 100 Unexpected Photographs of Rabbis With Essays in Their Own Words* (Universal, 2002).



Reserve. Later that year a classmate from the Academy started a Reserve Company with a surveillance and apprehension group, a specialized detective unit. As part of this special unit, Passamaneck participated in warrant service and surveillance of some rather dangerous criminals. During this time, while still maintaining his teaching responsibilities and academic writing, he was promoted to Supervising Chaplain in the Department. He even became an expert pistol shot. Although he retired in 1992 from the surveillance and apprehension unit with the rank of Reserve Captain, he remained active as a Chaplain. His years of distinguished service were recognized when he was awarded the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department Exemplary Service Medal in 1991.

It was his work as a Chaplain with the Sheriff's Department that led him to focus his writing on law enforcement and criminal justice in Jewish sources. His earlier academic work was in the field of maritime law related to Jewish sources and texts; from the early 1980s on he wrote on such topics as the use of excessive force, reasonable cause arrest, and entry and seizure.

His writing in this area of law enforcement propelled Passamaneck to focus on the administration of justice in Jewish law and to probe traditional Jewish sources to see if there were any concepts that might be useful in the context of police ethics. In 2003 he published *Police Ethics and the Jewish Tradition*, a work of commentary and theory that is not intended by Passamaneck to be a scholarly study. Rather, it takes a first look at the idea that Jewish tradition may offer some per-

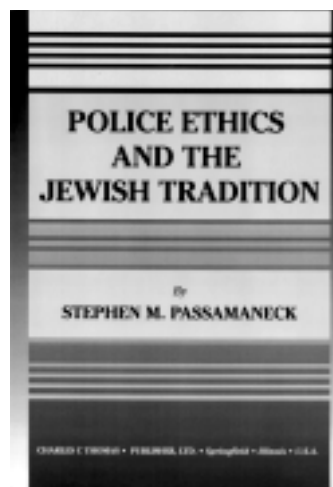
spective on the evolving world of police ethics and explores several areas of interest: loyalty, bribery and gratuities, and deception.

"Jewish tradition has a great deal to say about morals and ethics in various modern fields of public concern, including police ethics," he notes. "Loyalty will always be a part of police culture, and administrators are faced with the task of minimizing its abuses. Jewish tradition encourages the support of the whistleblower who exposes wrongdoing for the sake of the public good."

In the area of bribery and gratuities, Passamaneck explains, "Jewish law prohibits bribery, but modest gratuities may be accepted. Tradition allows a given class of persons to enjoy preferential treatment. In police culture, limits must be imposed on any gratuities. Any expression of respect and appreciation must have no relation to the manner in which a police officer performs his or her duties."

In the area of deception, he says, "From the point of view of the three-fold typology of deceptive tactics in law enforcement, the Jewish tradition suggests that forms of pre-trial deception would generally be acceptable, although deceit as a feature of ordinary human intercourse and certainly where innocence would come to harm would be unacceptable."

During his service as a Chaplain and Reserve Deputy, Passamaneck has also held the offices of both Chairman and later Honorary President of the Jewish Law Association, where he is still an active member of the board.



Dr. Passamaneck's experiences in law enforcement chaplaincy inspired his study of Jewish law and police ethics.

Passamaneck joined the International Conference of Police Chaplains (ICPC) in the late 1980s. The ICPC has an international membership of 2,500 Chaplains of every conceivable denomination. In 1994, Passamaneck was awarded the John Price Award "For Excellence in Chaplaincy as a Volunteer Chaplain in a Larger Department," the first Rabbi ever to receive the ICPC's highest honor.

It was his membership with ICPC, an organization dedicated to maintaining professionalism in law enforcement chaplaincy, that would bring his years of training and commitment as a Chaplain to another community faced with crisis and tragedy. The ICPC was contacted on September 12, 2001 with a request for Chaplains to help the Port Authority Police Department (PAPD) in New York City. Passamaneck heeded the PAPD's call and flew to New York, where he spent thirteen-hour days at Ground Zero, alongside emergency crews, police officers, firemen, construction workers, and other Chaplains in the days immediately following the terrorist attacks of 9/11.

Even though he retired in 1997 from the Sheriff's Department, Passamaneck was not prepared to retire completely from law enforcement. He became a volunteer Chaplain with the United States Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATFE), and was the recipient last June of the ATFE Director's Honors Award in Washington D.C., presented to him by the Director of the ATFE (since retired), Brad Buckles. In April he was honored by the Shomrim Society, the association of Jewish men and women in the fields of federal, state, and local law enforcement, public safety and administration of justice. Passamaneck is currently on sabbatical from HUC-JIR and working on his next project concerning fire and public safety in *halakhah*.

Ordained at HUC-JIR in Cincinnati in 1960, Passamaneck's graduate studies in the legal traditions of the Talmud and post-Talmudic masters culminated in a Ph.D. in Talmud and Medieval Jewish Law from HUC-JIR in 1964. His published works include *Police Ethics and the Jewish Tradition* (2003), the series *Jewish Law and Jewish Life* with J. Bazak (1977-1998), *An Introduction to the History and Sources of Jewish Law* with N. Hecht, B. Jackson, D. Piattelli, and M. Rabello (1996), *The Traditional Jewish Law of Sale*, published by HUC Press (1983), *Insurance in Rabbinic Law* (1974), and 36 major published articles and lectures.

As a sustainer of law and order through rabbinical pastoral care and counseling and scholarly research and publication, Dr. Passamaneck serves as a unique teacher and mentor to the students of HUC-JIR in Los Angeles.