



THE BLUE FAMILY TREE

Newsletter article May, 2022

Spring is in the air. With spring comes new life. Flowers blooming, chicks hatching, and baby cops graduating their academies and filling our ranks.

If your job is to train them, you have a tremendous responsibility and the phrase, "drinking from a fire hose" does not begin to do justice to the learning curve they will experience while they're in your car. We have to prioritize our lessons, which can be difficult to do because they cannot leave us without being prepared for everything! But keep in mind that much like how our actual children are nowhere near prepared for the world when we kick them from the nest, our recruits will not be either. It's just not practical. 30 year cops still haven't seen it all, but it's safe to say that somewhere between the three to five year mark, most cops have seen a variation of it all. Then it's just recognizing it when it's packaged slightly different. Remember that our recruits are doing this on the most basic of levels. For instance, we've taught them how to approach a car, but maybe we never planted in their brains that the car might be a motorcycle. Everything is the same, it just looks a little different.

Patience for those of you taking this task on, is a virtue. You have a civilian with a civilian brain and civilian understanding of police work and civilian driving skills, operating your rig, making your contacts, and making your policing decisions. It can be frustrating and wear on those patience quickly. Many would argue about what our greatest priority should be. Is it making them safe? Is it making them not a liability? Is it making them knowledgeable? Is it teaching them the area? I would argue it is making them think like police. Turning that civilian brain that has strained to see the police perspective for the last year they have applied for jobs and

gone to the academy, and making it realize that it no longer needs to strain to see the perspective. They just need to view the world from their own eyes now because, they are there. As such they need to understand what they are seeing. No longer should they see, the family going camping that weaved out of their lane because dad was tired. Instead they should see the hunting gear in back and be cautious of what else that might mean. They should note the flask in dad's driver's door and be inquisitive about its contents. They should do all these things and not become cynical and jaded to the world around them. If you discover how to do that, please let me know. But teaching them cynics should not be part of our job. They will develop that unhealthy habit all on their own.

Much of the policing culture tends to stick to tradition. "This is how I learned so it is how my trainee will learn too." A right of passage. This kind of thinking contributes to the mess we are in as a profession across the nation today. We need to learn in all aspects of policing to change with the times, and while there are great examples of police adapting to the times on a much larger scale, our training of new recruits is an area we still hold to the standard of our own experiences. You may not have noticed, but your recruit was not raised the same way you were. They are not mentally and emotionally equipped to be handled the way you were handled by your FTO. It's a generational difference, even though they may feel they brake the mold, they are still part of an era that handles people differently and has adopted much different learning styles. We need to adapt to that. Today's trainees need encouragement. They need to be put in their place and have it made clear when they are wrong, but they also need to believe they are in the right place until they absolutely prove otherwise. We used to be hard on recruits because there was another one right behind them if they couldn't cut it. That's not the case today. We cannot lower our standard for success from the training program, but we can raise the rate of success through changes in how we choose to develop new recruits.

Consider your recruit like your child who is in the waning months of living in your home before adventuring off to college. We want to pack as many lessons in their head as we can before we send them off on their own, but the most important tool we can send them into the world with is how to learn and adapt on their own as they continue to grow, the knowledge that they don't know everything, and the courage to continue to access resources. Your kid calls home from college every week. Eventually he stops calling. Send our trainees into the world with the same security blanket until they figure it out for themselves.

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