

William Marshak

ROOKIE LOG

Rookie Log: The personal thoughts and experiences of three rookie Fremont, California police officers during field training
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Who They Are and Why They Do It

Follow the lives of three rookie police officers as they begin to work the streets under the guidance of Field Training Officers, veterans who will help them make the transition from student/observers to highly skilled seasoned patrol officers. The process is not easy nor success assured.

Dedication

Rookie Log is dedicated to Robert (Bob) Wasserman whose long and illustrious career in law enforcement culminated as Fremont, California Chief of Police from 1976-1992. A Korean War veteran and law enforcement officer since 1953, Wasserman rose through the ranks in several law enforcement agencies and served as president of the California Peace Officers' Association. Following retirement from law enforcement, Bob's dedication to community safety and tranquility continued when elected to Fremont City Council in 1992 and mayor in 2004. Wasserman died December 29, 2011 while serving his second term as mayor.

The short version of Bob Wasserman's legacy might read as the motto: fortitude, honesty and integrity. His life partner and wife of over 50 years, Linda remembers Bob as a guy who "never hardened" and "had a genuine respect for people." His stability, willingness to listen to others and commitment to community continue to serve as an inspiration to all who follow in his footsteps as guardians of the public.

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**Sgt. Matt Bocage, Sgt. Ramin Mahboobi
and Lt. Matt Snelson - August 2017**

Foreword

The success and effectiveness of a law enforcement agency is determined to an extraordinary extent by the character and personal depth of the people who serve as part of the organization. Lieutenant Snelson, Sergeant Mahboobi, and Sergeant Bocage, in the period that has elapsed since these articles were first published, have proven this principle through their personal commitment and dedication. The contributions they have and will make are essential components of our department and of the strength of the relationship we have with the community we serve.

During the period of time spanned by their careers, law enforcement as a profession has been called upon to confront very critical and consequential demands. Of great significance, terrorism has evolved very regrettably as a persistent threat. As another demonstration, policing has strived to develop better methods for resolving volatile situations involving subjects suffering from severe mental illness. The profession has also grown in seeking a greater understanding of the principles of implicit bias and the correlation to key issues of fundamental fairness. Of note, the progress that has occurred is in a setting of constraint with the erosion of public entity resources. Across all of what has taken place, law enforcement officers

themselves have endured purposeful and focused violence of horrendous scope.

With Matt, Ramin, and Matt as representatives, our community can be proud of the way the members of our department have worked to achieve real and positive impacts for the people we serve. We can also take from their example a cognizance of the value our department places on the relationship we have with our community. Their work has included high risk operations, crisis intervention and mitigation, significant criminal investigations, use of intelligence based policing methods, applying advanced technology to public safety, facilitating peaceable assembly, working in close concert with education providers and other community entities, and helping present a spectrum of special events. As we look at what they have accomplished, we can see the way they track how policing has sought to advance across so many dimensions.

One essential aspect of most of what is achieved in law enforcement is the role of training. For our department, it has and continues to be a central aspect of our functioning and beliefs. This holds true from the perspective of the department being committed to delivering the highest levels of available training. Similarly, it reaches to individual members and leadership in terms of being dedicated

to and applying training concepts. As we look at our department and California law enforcement, we can see the importance of entities such as the California Peace Officer Standards and Training and how what it provides represents an investment in our communities. It is a part of governance we absolutely must fully maintain.

At a personal level, I greatly appreciate everything Matt, Ramin, and Matt have accomplished and their influence on our department. I also really value seeing them in their role and hearing their perspective. As we

look back across their careers, it is an occasion for all of us to be reminded of the dedication of the peace officers serving our respective communities and their criticality in assuring the continuity of our democracy.

Thank you for your interest in these exemplary public servants.

Richard Lucero
CHIEF OF POLICE
FREMONT POLICE DEPARTMENT

Preface

I am not sure how the idea came to me. But, the more I thought about it, the more interesting the concept became. Who are the men and women in uniform, separating and protecting most of us from the seamy side of our society? The so-called “thin blue line” of police is intriguing, frightening and essential to the establishment and maintenance of order in our lives. How are prospective police officers trained to face a daily mix of challenges from mundane to potentially lethal?

Often taken for granted and usually newsworthy in negative situations, police share an exclusive bond of camaraderie that only those who serve in the face of danger can fully appreciate and understand. Training is demanding and comprehensive for when rookies are released for solo service, they are expected to perform as veterans. Teamwork is essential, but often a single officer, first on the scene of a major incident, is expected to quickly assess and begin to control the situation while waiting for reinforcements.

When I contacted the Fremont Police Department with the idea of interviewing rookies through their field training - a steep, difficult and demanding learning curve for all new candidates - a polite “no” was a definite probability. After conferring with Sergeant Clarisse Lew, I was assured

that my request would be considered by Chief Craig Steckler and shortly thereafter, was given permission to speak with three prospective Fremont Police officers following their graduation from Police Academy in Sacramento, California.

From our first introductory meeting and throughout subsequent discussions during field training and finally toward the end of their probationary period, I was able to peek into a world of tension, hard work and dedication of three extraordinary men. They gave me confidence in our police force and pride in the men and women who serve our community. I hope the following diary of thoughts by Matt Bocage, Ramin Mahboobi and Matt Snelson can give readers a sense of what it is like to put it all on the line to become a law enforcement officer. I would like to thank the Fremont Police Department and especially the three, I affectionately called “my officers” for the opportunity to listen to and record their words.

William Marshak

PUBLISHER

TRI-CITY VOICE NEWSPAPER

Introduction

I would be remiss if I didn't first take the opportunity to thank Mr. William Marshak, Publisher, of the Tri-City Voice for his on-going reporting of the hiring and training of three Fremont Police Department officers.

Officer's Ramin Mahboobi, Matt Snelson and Matt Bocage were all hired together as entry level police officers in December of 2003. The articles follow these three officers as they progress and graduate from the Sacramento Police Department Basic Academy which runs for just over twenty-seven weeks. The purpose of the basic academy is just that, to give the officers the basic skills and knowledge they will need to continue their training and education and be successful.

The officers return from the Basic Academy and are assigned to a primary Field Training Officer (FTO) as well as several other seasoned, experienced police officers who will act as their personal trainers during the eighteen week Field Training Program. We have to help the officers "unlearn" some things that they are taught in the Basic Academy and learn how we do things in Fremont. Felony traffic stops, automated report writing, criminal investigations, arrest and search warrant preparation are just some of the issues that we have to re-teach to the officers.

As you will see by the following articles, there is a strong emphasis on learning the right way to do things. The concept of teamwork which is paramount in the Fremont Police Department also comes through in the articles. You will read of the daily trials and tribulations that a new officer goes through as they mature into the job of being a Fremont Police Officer. This is a wonderful and very detailed account of the training a police officer needs to assimilate to become successful.

I would like to point out that all three officers are indicative of the high quality personnel the Fremont Police Department strives to hire as police employees for our community. These men all show through the interviews their intelligence, dedication, loyalty to Fremont citizens and sense of teamwork that all of our officers and civilian employees must have to be successful with the Fremont Police Department.

Again, my thanks to Ramin, Matt and Matt and to Mr. William Marshak for an outstanding series of articles on what it is like to become a Fremont Police Officer.

Craig T. Steckler
CHIEF OF POLICE (RET.)
FREMONT POLICE DEPARTMENT

Post Academy Interview

Three Fremont Police Officers recently joined the department's ranks after completing a rigorous six month training course in Sacramento. TCV listened to Officers Ramin Mahboobi, Matthew Bocage and Matthew Snelson as they discussed their experiences and feelings while completing their in-house training and anticipate patrol activities. TCV will ask for comments and reactions from these officers as they move through their probationary year with the Fremont Police Department.

TCV: The standard question that comes to mind is why you decided to become a policeman.

Mahboobi: I went to school in Fremont. As a young adult, deciding on a career, I had a lot of role models from the police department - family, friends, School Resource Officer. I always wanted to work with and help people. I did a lot of research into the career and spent a few years working here as a citizen employee to get a first-hand look. The positives far outweighed any danger or negatives.

Bocage: A standard response of wanting to work with and help people while making a difference certainly applies to me. I have a background in public service - four years with the Air Force in Communications, out of high school. I just graduated from college last fall. What has played a big role was September 11th. At a time of crisis, we had a chance to see public service - fire, police, EMS - at its best. These are the type of people I want to work with. I

had an interest prior to that, but September 11th solidified my career goals and aspirations.

Snelson: I grew up in Fremont and had a good appreciation for the city and how safe it was. I majored in Psychology in college and debated whether to enter the police force or go for a Masters degree and work in family counseling. My last year in college, I started working at the church I grew up with and attend. I worked at the church full time and about a year ago, my wife and I talked about long term career goals. I did a "ride along" and decided to put in my application. Fremont and most other cities were not hiring at that time, but last October, I saw an opening on the Fremont website and applied. Fremont is one of only a few cities that I would consider for employment.

TCV: How do your families feel about your career choice?

Bocage: I have a very close relationship with my family. They and

my fiancée were initially apprehensive about my decision. Everyone recognized that I had characteristics to make a good police officer, but there is always an element of danger. They adjusted very quickly and support me 100%.

Mahboobi: My family and friends have always been on the right side of the law. My family has been extremely supportive. During the process of deciding whether to pursue this career, my family said that my personality really fit and they could see me in the role. They were all supportive and encouraging.

Snelson: My family, too, has been very supportive.

TCV: Did the training program you just completed in Sacramento meet your expectations?

Bocage: With my military background, I had an idea of what to expect. It was a wonderful experience and exceeded my expectations in terms of professionalism and some of the things we heard about police academies. The academy was a fantastic training experience - tough, rigid and “hard core” - but I think we all left with a very good impression.

Mahboobi: Thankfully, Fremont took a lot of time to prepare us. Prior to going into the academy, we spent a couple of weeks in a “pre-academy.” We went in prepared and knowing what to expect. I felt prepared for academy life. Right away, we were introduced to a high stress environment, received a lot of

information and were quickly tested on it, knowing that our career was on the line with each test. We spent long nights studying, memorizing and preparing for the next day including a lot of detail work preparing our uniforms for inspections.

Snelson: From the moment we walked into “pre-academy,” every person we saw, bar none, would stop us and say, “If you ever need anything at the academy, call us because we have somebody who specializes in whatever you may be struggling with, whether it is physical training, arrest control baton techniques, testing materials or anything else. Every person we talked to would tell us this so I felt very supported when we were in training. We had the backing of a good department.

Mahboobi: I went in expecting a paramilitary and stressful environment. This demonstrates to yourself that you can function under stress because that is what you are going to deal with on the streets. At the same time, I was shocked and impressed by the accountability that police officers have to be under on a daily basis. Everything that you do has to be legal - you are constantly thinking about multiple things and trying to multitask. That was eye opening for me! I came out with a huge appreciation for what police are able to do. We walked out of the academy with some great training but knowing how much more I need to learn. When watching police shows, you may see the action, but not understand what is going through the officer’s mind - can I

search this person? Can I get in that car and search for drugs? Is this a detention, a consensual encounter or an arrest?

TCV: Not everyone completes the Police Academy. All of you were successful. What helped you complete the course successfully?

Bocage: You need a commitment to succeed. The great thing about the Fremont Police Department is they are very selective about who can become part of the organization. The camaraderie between the three of us played a huge role. There was never a doubt that we would make it. Quitting was never an option.

Mahboobi: The possibility of injury is on everyone's mind. You can be injured on week 23 and unable to pass a test, therefore out of the academy and have to start all over.

Snelson: The camaraderie is very important. Throughout the six month process, every one of us had good days and bad days. Being able to help and challenge each other made a huge difference. Out of a class of 48 candidates, the 31 who graduated had a "never quit" attitude. That is what you want in an officer because if you are in a situation where your life is at stake, you can't quit physically or mentally.

