

## **Everything You Do!**

*by Lt. Charles Briley, IMPD - 4/13/10*

With 32 years of law enforcement experience under my belt, this career still manages to amaze me. Some of the amazement is “how could you be so stupid?” to the old adage of “what was he/she thinking?” I must also admit that a lot of the amazement revolves around the new recruits.

Because of the war on terror, we in the law enforcement training field are seeing more military veterans transition to this career. This transition is, in my mind, a good thing. For so long law enforcement has failed to recognize this potential recruiting pool. As the recruit classes fill with both young non-military recruits and military veterans, the differences could not be more striking.

As I think back to my early years in law enforcement, it is now not hard to recognize that some of the former military police recruits fresh out of Vietnam were suffering from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. Although I still see PSDT, it does not appear to be as prevalent. This could be because of the support and general acceptance of their cause. It is amazing what support and understanding can do. Shame on us as a nation for not supporting our young military veterans of the Vietnam era!

Another amazement is how new recruits “imprint.” I did not have the opportunity to witness this until I had to work a shooting involving one of my former probationary officers. While working as a homicide detective, I was called to the scene of a fatal police action shooting. During my time as a Field Training Officer and prior to working in the academy setting, I had instructed the officer who was involved. During the interview the officer stated that she had remembered that I had repeatedly told her “to never give up!”

Even after being assaulted three times and suffering a beating each time while trying to arrest the suspect, she never gave up. Now, while on my second tour at the academy as Assistant Training Commander and being responsible for the training of recruits, I constantly remind my staff that recruits as well as new officers watch everything you do, from the way you talk to the way you say it. It carries over to the attitude you display as well as the equipment you carry. Every word, inflection, emphasis, and mannerism is communicated and imitated.

To prove my point, over the years I have conducted several “tests.” One involved the wearing of a chemical spray holder on one side of my duty belt. After several weeks I unexpectedly changed it to the other side. Within days, over half of the recruits had made this change. In 2004 I referred to protesters as “nut and berry eaters” during training for dealing with protesters. Imagine how surprised I was to hear a former recruit who is now an FTO use the same term six years later.

Yes, it does carry over and it will stick with us. Remember that as trainers, everything you say or do does have an effect. Trainers should always remember to keep it positive and present themselves as positive role models.

Lieutenant Briley has been a line officer, FTO, homicide detective and an IMPD academy instructor. He is currently the Assistant Training Commander at the IMPD academy. Lieutenant Briley's observation about the influence instructors have on new recruits is very persuasive. It is easy for us who work in this niche to lose sight of this important fact.