

## THE NEED FOR SUPERVISORY TRAINING IN WILDLIFE LAW ENFORCEMENT

By LT. J. B. BARBAREE

*Assistant Supervisor*

Alabama Department of Conservation

Each year industry and the military spend thousands of dollars training their supervisors. The importance of this training has been recognized by them and given top priority. Industry has found that poor supervision affects it vitally and causes a serious breakdown within the organization. The military, which has always stressed leadership training, knows that the "true leader" will be followed when it counts the most — under fire. Everyone knows this is important in law enforcement.

Employees of Conservation Departments throughout the nation are part of an enormous public business. Each year we note an annual increase in the sale of hunting and fishing licenses. This is true in revenues derived from other sources. The way this money is spent is the public's business. We owe it to them to see that it is wisely spent and that they receive the maximum benefits from it. We can accomplish this only by training in all fields. Surely business management courses could benefit us. Training employees in a supervisory capacity is a must.

Top law enforcement agencies have recognized this need and have a continuous training program in this area. They have learned that it is stimulating to the old and experienced men who know that new ideas and suggestions can make their work easier and more pleasant. To the new man it gives the confidence so badly needed when he is given the position. It is important for us to stay abreast with other agencies and benefit from them. Inquiring from other agencies, we could learn which schools they consider best.

Administrators expect their policies to be properly distributed and complied with throughout an organization. These policies should be distributed only by well qualified men. We can best meet these qualifications through adequate training in the fields of management. It is also an obligation from the administrative to the operational level to know that supervisors are competent. How can an employee get justice and do his best work when he has a bad boss? This is especially true when he is about to be dismissed or brought up for disciplinary action. There should be no doubt in anyone's mind that the man above him has failed in his job.

Some of the best supervisors in the field today are men who had to learn the "pit falls" by practical experience. We agree that this valuable experience is important but it is too time consuming and costly, and if these men were asked if training would have prevented a lot of hardships most all would certainly answer yes. They know that conditions affecting people's work and actions are important and worth knowing.

Training teaches us that selection of supervisors is important. In the past it has been a practice to give special consideration to a wildlife officer's arrest record before considering him for this important post. We all know that the "man hunter" or "case maker" is not necessarily the best officer. This should not be the most important requirement in one's favor for this position. It has been pointed out that it is more important to be able to teach some one to do a certain task than to do it yourself. This makes sense, since you can't be everywhere at the same time. A good supervisor has to be a good teacher.

There are many fine courses offered by supervisory training schools. Some of the better ones offer training in planning, elements of supervision, directing, improving personnel, evaluation, reporting, human relations in supervision, effective communications and many more. Any good administrator will recognize the importance of knowledge in these fields.

These courses taught by authorities and fine instructors bring out

thoughts and ideas that give inspiration to those attending the classes. One tells us, "that the mark of a true leader has always been in his special ability to bring out the best in men. The best in good men — the best in weak men. The best where other men have failed. In some men it is a tiny best. But all they have to offer. In others it is a big best. The real leader brings out the best in all men."

He defines supervision as, "the technique of directing the energies and abilities of a given group toward the common accomplishments of planned objectives, of improving the abilities of the group, of evaluating the people directed and the progress being made and of keeping all levels informed by reporting."

He defines a Supervisor as, "one who is responsible for on the job conduct of the assignment of work to and the quantity and quality of work produced by one or more employees."

Such fine definitions relating to different phases of supervision serve as a guide and create a job awareness in many areas. They tend to spotlight what is expected of us. They open new avenues of thought that should tend to make us more qualified.

Many books could be written regarding the human element involved in supervision. After all, we are dealing with people, not machines. Getting along with people in everyday life presents many problems but not as many when you depend on it to get the best job done. According to the Bible, Solomon prayed to the Lord to give him wisdom in the ruling of his people. Only a few have such a gift; others have to acquire such knowledge. To accept and be accepted by fellow employees requires much thought and know-how. Training teaches us that we are all different and we cannot compare one employee with another since we all possess little differences that are difficult to detect. How many times have we heard someone say, "I know what his trouble is." Knowing your men and their capabilities is one of the goals of a supervisor. An understanding of human behavior and factors affecting it can be helpful. Authorities tell us that there are no experts in this field. Recognizing this, we have to treat each case individually. To use a slang expression, we should strive to find out "what makes folk tick."

Morale, something the military is always mindful of and attaches much importance to, can be directly affected by good or bad supervision. Inability to recognize frustrations that cause aggression definitely causes bad morale. Ways of motivating personnel, especially through praise, results in good morale. Knowing that you as a supervisor create the atmosphere the people around you work under certainly is worth noting. Knowing your responsibilities to your subordinates can make a difference.

Getting our thoughts conveyed to others where there will be no misunderstanding is of great importance. Courses in this will enable us to give good, clear orders. Quite often too many are given at one time and are misunderstood. We all know of instances where this happened and caused serious results.

Planning is necessary for any organization to progress and operate effectively. It is generally thought of as administrative function. Being aware that it is present at all levels of management and using it to better conditions in the future can be helpful. Although some authorities argue that it is a barrier to freedom of action, most all agree that it is an everyday necessity. It is present when the supervisor is riding with another employee. Knowing the steps in planning and the results of unwise planning are pointed out in training.

As we all know, the supervisor is the go-between of the administrative and the operational levels. Reporting to those up and down the ladder is necessary. Keeping both levels informed of the total operation is one of his primary duties. Good and bad results are registered by this. Effective reporting by a smooth flow of information should exist at all levels. Confusion exists when this is not present.

Rating employees periodically is one of the important and sometimes distasteful tasks of a supervisor. This is what we all know as evaluation. It definitely is used to guide and improve personnel. Proper forms relating to a specific type of work and being aware of the

relationship from the rater to the ratee is necessary for administration to get a true picture of an employee's work. A rating sheet is a permanent record of an employee that could mean the difference in getting a pay raise or a promotion. Misuse of this function through unsound practices defeats the purpose and can have damaging effects on all employees.

We are all human beings and make mistakes. To correct these and not cause recurrence we apply discipline and punishment. There is a close relationship between these two. There is much misunderstanding in both. Discipline has been defined as mental or moral training. A smart supervisor knows the difference between positive discipline and negative discipline. He also knows when and how to apply it. Punishment, above all, should be administered by qualified people knowing that the accused has not been misjudged and it fits the crime or situation. Too many departments use the old cure-all remedy — fire. Many dictators who have ruled by fear found out the hard way that it won't work.

Simple courses in how to be a good supervisor, and how not to be a good supervisor, will certainly be beneficial. To be taught how to recognize poor supervision will also make us mindful of its ill effects and guide our actions. There are many more areas in which training would help us. I have attempted to mention the ones that I personally consider to be important.

To elevate and maintain high standards in wildlife law enforcement, we must recognize and capitalize on this needed training. There are many good supervisors in the field. There are many who could be better supervisors if they were properly trained.

#### SUMMARY

Wildlife law enforcement agencies need to recognize the need for supervisory training. It is a must since other agencies are benefiting from it and have continuous training programs in this area. Principles of business management apply to any agency or organization. Training supervisors who are caught in the middle of administration and the operational levels certainly is important. Having the knowledge of management and being taught ways of improving personnel would prevent a lot of confusion and misunderstanding for all concerned. Ways of making the supervisor more acceptable to his men should not be overlooked. Instructions in planning, reporting, and evaluating can be beneficial. Last, but not least, to be able to know when and how to discipline can certainly prove beneficial.