

SELECTION OF GAME, FISH AND BOATING ENFORCEMENT PERSONNEL

D. E. CURTIS

Assistant Chief Division of Protection
N. C. Wildlife Resources Commission

Probably the most important duty performed by the administrator of any game, fish and boating law enforcement agency is the selection of applicants who are to be employed as enforcement officers. The public, the ultimate employer of the administrator and those whom he will select for employment, justly expects that he will provide the best qualified, most highly motivated men whom he can recruit and employ for the salary which the public provides, and anything less than his best effort to provide such men would make him as unconscionably guilty of misfeasance as the purchasing agent who would provide inferior materials at full price; in either case, the public would have been deprived of a part of the service which their money was expected to provide. In addition to his moral responsibility, if the administrator is to leave behind him any monument to remind future generations that he once passed this way, the monument will be the product of the work he did while here, and this product will be the organization which he developed and left to his successor. This organization will be the new employees who are selected today, and who will have a decisive, continuous impact on his agency's program for the next thirty-five years.

In North Carolina we receive from 400 to 700 applications for employment as wildlife protector per year. With a normal attrition rate we expect to replace approximately 12 men per year. This is analogous to a situation in which one receives the following order: "Here are 700 completely heterogeneous persons; hidden among them are 12 good wildlife protectors. Find them." Obviously, when faced with a problem of such magnitude one must devise a systematic procedure for selection. No one would fail to agree that we want "good" men to place in our organization as vacancies occur. The term "good" man, however, depicts too vague and nebulous a concept to allow its use as the basis of an effective selection process. What is needed is an identification of the specific characteristics which comprise the "good" man, and a determination of methods and tests to be used to determine if applicants have those characteristics to the extent necessary to make a good wildlife protector. An enumeration of some of the qualities which we think are necessary in a good candidate for employment as a wildlife protector is set forth in the succeeding paragraphs.

The applicant should be old enough to be mature, so that he will be taken seriously by the public whom he serves. He should be young enough that his most productive years will be spent in the service of the public and that if he has supervisory capabilities they will be detected, developed and exploited while he is still in his prime, with many years of service remaining.

He should be of such size that he can attain physical control of violators who might wish to resist arrest, and that few of those who were so inclined would have the lack of judgment to attempt such resistance. His weight should be commensurate with his height, giving an over-all appearance of a man who has pride in his person and who is physically fit. In addition to his size, he should be well enough coordinated and in such physical condition that his size does not work to his disadvantage; the large man who is physically weak, or who is so poorly coordinated that he cannot use his size effectively, is only a liability to his brother officers in the field.

The health of the desirable applicant must be excellent, with no existing condition which would indicate to the medical examiner that his health would deteriorate abnormally during the remainder of his working life. As the average new enforcement officer should have an expected working life of 35 years, his health must be such that he may reasonably be expected to cope with a field job 35 years hence. Particular attention

should be given his eyesight, hearing and cardiovascular system. The field officer's sight and hearing are the senses by which he detects possible violations of the laws which he enforces, and good sight and hearing are as necessary just prior to retirement as they are at the time of employment. Accordingly, an existing condition which could be expected to reduce visual or aural acuity in excess of that deterioration associated with the normal aging process should be disqualifying. The demands of this type of enforcement work, in which the officer may have periods of several weeks of relatively inactive patrol followed by the sudden occurrence of a situation which demands that he run at full tilt for a mile or more, requires the healthiest of cardiovascular systems, and any evidence of hypertension or other abnormal condition should make him ineligible for employment. Because of the nature of the work he will be expected to perform and the type of training which any good enforcement officer must have, he should be free of any history of skull fracture, concussion, "football" knee or back trouble. Of course, he should have no history of any nervous disorder.

It is imperative that the applicant be of above average intelligence. The difficulties of enforcing today's complex laws, complicated by the restrictions placed on enforcement officers in order to protect the constitutional rights of the citizen, make it necessary that the officer be capable of detecting violations of those laws, and of obtaining and presenting in court evidence which was lawfully obtained and lawfully presented. For administrative purposes it is highly desirable that he be sufficiently intelligent to receive, understand and act on instructions and of making intelligent decisions based on them, and to do this without constant supervision and reinstruction. He will constantly be called on to "outthink" violators. He must appear to be of superior intelligence in order to retain their respect.

When considering the applicant's personality, we must look for an almost ideal man. He must like people; he must possess self-confidence; he must be capable of associating harmoniously with the public and his fellow officers; he must be friendly, courageous, aggressive, ambitious, scrupulously truthful and honest, and he must be highly motivated toward this particular work.

As a brief summation of the desirable characteristics, we may say that he must be a real man, and he must be at his prime.

In North Carolina, the selection system which has been developed begins with the establishment of a realistic set of minimum requirements which must be met before any applicant may be given any further consideration for employment. These minimums may seem rather liberal, but they were established as true minimums, designed to eliminate only those applicants who had very little potential for this type of employment. They were not designed as a set of optimum standards which would be so restrictive as to eliminate many potentially good officers who did not meet the popular concept of the "ideal man," as we rather seldom meet the ideal man.

Review of the applicant's original application for employment reveals whether he meets the following minimums: age, 21-35; height, 66"-78"; weight, 140 lbs.-235 lbs.; high school education; no reported criminal history; no reported physical handicap; has been a resident of the State for one year; is willing to accept employment anywhere in the State.

Those who meet these standards are referred to their local Employment Security Commission offices, where they are given a set of aptitude tests which have been carefully standardized against the present staff of the Division of Protection to assure their validity for application to this type of employment. Each one who meets the cutting score on these tests is given a Physical Standards for Employment information sheet, a Report of Physical Examination, and two copies of an Arrest Record Report. He is instructed to undergo a physical examination by a physician of his choice, and at his own expense, with the Physical Standards for Employment sheet as a guide to the examining physician, the results to be reported to the Division office. The Arrest Record forms are to be completed by the Sheriff and Chief of Police where he resides, and forwarded to the Division office with the report of physical exami-

nation. All these forms are reviewed in the Division office to determine that the applicant meets our standards.

From ninety to one hundred applicants per year successfully complete the selection process to this point. The Division of Protection schedules four days annually at the Institute of Government of the University of North Carolina for competitive testing of these applicants, so that only 25 or fewer are tested on any one day. The first test administered is the Army General Classification Test for determination of intelligence quotient, and an IQ of 112 as determined by that test has been empirically established as the minimum acceptable. Next the applicants are given a test on knowledge of wildlife matters, followed by the California Psychological Inventory test, both of which are used in making a final selection of applicants and not for elimination purposes at this point. They are then given strength and agility tests to determine that they are physically in condition to do the job for which they have applied, and that they are well coordinated. A requisite of this test is the examiner's opportunity to observe the applicants and their clothing while they are stripped for the tests, to determine that each applicant's person and clothing is clean, and that the applicant is free of any obscene or offensive tattoos or any deformity which might not have been reported on his physical examination form.

After completing these tests each candidate who has survived them meets with a four-man interview board, consisting of the Chief or Assistant Chief of the Division, a representative of the Division of Game, a District Supervisor and a representative of the Institute of Government. This board evaluates and reports on his appearance, speech, responsiveness, aggressiveness, temper, ability in oral expression, self-control, maturity, motivation and general suitability for employment.

Of these applicants some 30 to 35 applicants are still being considered at this point, and the Division's district supervisors then make intensive background investigations on each. They interview all law-enforcement officers who might have any knowledge of the applicant; his former school teachers, local banks, credit agencies, local merchants, his neighbors, pastor, parents, wife; present and former employers; in short, anyone who might have knowledge of him. As a result, the Division attains a knowledge of the applicant which probably is more complete and accurate than his mother's.

When all this information is compiled, 20 men are selected to attend the pre-service training school, which is conducted at the Institute of Government by the Institute staff and Division personnel. The school lasts for three weeks. The applicant is not an employee while attending the school, nor does he receive any remuneration for his attendance, although the costs of the school and his living expenses while there are borne by the Division. The school consists of 180 hours of intensive instruction in subjects basic to a good enforcement officer, with emphasis on subjects of primary interest to wildlife protectors. Standards are maintained at a high level, enforced by a friendly, helpful but hard-nosed District Supervisor who is the Division's training officer. While at the school each trainee is graded on his classroom work by the Institute of Government teaching staff and the training officer, and his athletic ability, physical condition, aggressiveness, leadership qualities, compatibility with other trainees, willingness to take instruction, promptness in following orders and firearms proficiency are evaluated by the training officer. At the end of the three weeks 12 to 14 of the 20 applicants invited have survived.

The top men in class standing are appointed to fill any existing vacancies in the Division, and the remainder are placed on an eligible list for employment, and are employed in order of class standing as vacancies occur. As the applicants are aware of this policy, and come to school without pay and with no guarantee of immediate employment—indeed, on the gamble that they will be the ones who will complete the school—only the most highly motivated applicants appear at the school, and competition among them for a high place in the class standing is extremely keen.

Once such a selection system is operative it tends to become pro-

gressively beneficial to the agency in that the placement of healthy, vigorous, intelligent and forceful young men in field positions attracts more men of the same caliber. In a case such as this like attracts like; deliberate and careful selection, coupled with adequate salaries, extensive law-enforcement training, good equipment and proper uniforms, becomes in itself an almost effortless and self-perpetuating recruiting program, leading to ever better quality of personnel.

Admittedly, the selection described here is cold-blooded, but it is effective, which was the purpose in its development. When there is vociferous public opposition to the relocation of a new trainee who has been in an area only a few months, because his ability is appreciated and the public wants him located there permanently; when a District Supervisor, speaking of a newly assigned trainee, says, "Send me as many young men like him as you can," you may relax and feel comfortable in the fact that again you have fulfilled successfully your responsibility to supply the best possible young men for your ranks. Such gratifying responses from the public and from your own staff makes worth while all the time and effort expended in their selection.

SOUTHEASTERN ASSOCIATION OF GAME AND FISH COMMISSIONERS

"College Credit for Agents' Training"

Members of the Association:

In our state, and across the nation, we are indeed fortunate to have individuals associated with the business of informing the public on resource-use who understand our problems and are willing to stand up and be counted.

Such an individual is Robert Clayton, publisher of the *BRUNSWICKER*, an outspoken newspaper in the state of Missouri. I would like to quote from Mr. Clayton's editorial. "It seems to me that wildlife law enforcement is a lonely life" (and it is especially when an officer sits all night on a river bank trying to apprehend one of our less desirable members of this great society). "Consider the Conservation Agents — and the unsung 'game wardens'." He has this in quotations because the political game warden went off the stage in our state in 1936. "Out in the woods their judgment must be sound and it must be absolutely fair because they represent the entire Conservation Department." (A jury may take hours to decide whether an Agent made the right decision — a decision the officer had to make in 10 seconds or less.) And he continues — "During the hunting seasons, when violations are most common, a Conservation Officer seldom confronts an unarmed man. The hunter may be angry, excited, intoxicated or all three — and totally unpredictable. Some hunters consider an agent an enemy rather than a friend, it makes his job in the 'great out-of-doors' considerably less enviable."

Since the Conservation Agent is the official representative for the Conservation Department's entire program in his assigned area, his position is one of significant community status. Since the success of most jobs is at least 85% public relations, he must excel here and also obtain the required job information. He must know that resource-use is more vital to our future and more important than the shifting trends of international politics. He must know that ignorance and apathy are the major obstacles of conservation: people ignorant of the problem and indifferent toward its solution. Although the voting citizen decides what the conservationist, planners and administrators shall do, how can they make intelligent choices unless they have been sufficiently aroused and adequately informed.

The Conservation officer is called upon by every media of mass communications for information and advice. Last year the Missouri Agents provided 2,240 Radio or Television programs and made 3,475 newspaper contacts.

"Common stumbling-blocks in wildlife conservation may be regula-