

and penalties meted out to hunters and dealers in this lucrative, illegal business generally are not stiff enough to slow them down.

I am pleased to tell you that our problems in Florida are under serious consideration by our Game and Fish Commissions who may seek an early remedy from the Florida Legislature, which reserves to itself the right and power of setting fees for possible licenses and permits to take specified alligators, and providing penalties for violators.

Thank you.

JOB:jb

Southeastern Association of Game and Fish Commissioners
Clearwater, Florida
October 18-21, 1964

FLORIDA GAME AND FRESH WATER FISH COMMISSION PUBLIC RELATIONS FOR THE WILDLIFE OFFICER

CARLOS REYNOLDS, *Wildlife Officer*

South Florida Region

Public relations are nothing more than a wildlife officer's conduct and demeanor during his daily life and while performing his duty as a wildlife officer.

When he leaves his training school he is assigned to an area somewhere in the state. When he arrives at his assigned area, he will no doubt be a total stranger. Most people are not going to accept him immediately, but will take a "wait and see" attitude. His conduct during his first six months will be the most critical. During this period of time, his every action will be carefully analyzed.

He must present himself in an acceptable manner, taking care to accept his new surroundings cheerfully. He must avoid taking the attitude that a transfer back to his home county or parish is foremost in his mind. Most people are proud of their community and will resent any unkind or disparaging remarks concerning it, particularly from a newcomer. It is easy to build up a "Yankee, go home" atmosphere, but exceedingly difficult to dissipate this attitude once it has developed.

If he is accepted his job will be made much easier. You can readily see how important it is for him to win the confidence of the local citizens. If he is not accepted and fails to win the confidence of the local citizens, his job becomes an almost overwhelming task. The purpose of this very brief talk is to point out some of the pit falls that he should avoid.

Public relations is inseparably linked with the efficient and effective performance of your assigned task. Public Relations alone may carry you for a while, but sooner or later, the public that you serve will begin to look a little closer into your activities. If you don't have a sound efficient program, the smoke screen that you have thrown up will be of little service to you. It's like a gift. It would be foolish to giftwrap an empty package with the thought in mind that the person to whom you gave the gift would fail to notice that the very nicely wrapped package was empty.

You have no doubt noticed that the trend in examinations to qualify for the eligible list to become a wildlife officer are stressing more and more aptitude and common sense. We are concerned least

with how "woody" he is. However, if he has a good knowledge of the outdoors coupled with intelligence and common sense, so much the better. The very nature of the work of a wildlife officer requires that he work alone a good deal of the time. Often he is out of touch with his supervisor and consequently must rely on his own judgment. Good sound judgment is the mark of a good wildlife officer.

Good sound judgment also means good public relations. Good public relations means success in his everyday work. Hard work apprehending a violator is of little value if by chance he has aroused the ire of his judge, prosecutor or the local citizens who may sit as the jury during the trial.

It is absolutely imperative that the newly assigned wildlife officer go to work immediately to cement a good sound working relationship with his judge and prosecutor. In some of the larger communities, the judge and prosecutor have limited knowledge of the functions, efforts, and goals of the Game Commission. In many instances this brings about the impression that the court officials are indifferent. I think this is a false impression. This is usually an example of lack of information. I think the local wildlife officer should take the time and effort to keep the court officials fully informed, not only of our efforts and goals, but particularly of our law enforcement problems. They in turn will take a keener interest and will no doubt deal more adequately with apprehended game law violators.

Your attitude during a court trial is of paramount importance. Arrogance on a witness stand can turn the tide of sentiment against you just as effectively as can telling a falsehood. Neither should the officer take an indifferent attitude. He should appear to be interested only in presenting the relevant facts and avoid giving the impression that he has a personal interest in the outcome of the trial.

Personal appearance is of equal importance. While appearing as a witness the wildlife officer should be immaculately dressed and by all means wear a necktie.

Personal manner is very important. Nobody likes a show-off or a smart-alec, not even his fellow officers. A conservative officer is usually a well-liked officer.

To be a good wildlife officer and to have a good sound relationship with the public for whom he is serving, he must first win the confidence and respect of the personnel with whom he is associated. This confidence and respect will come much easier if first he shows his confidence and respect for his fellow officers and for the task which they have before them. By doing this first, his relations with the public will then come much easier.

Loyalty, too, is a virtue. Gossiping about his fellow employees in the Commission and criticizing the Commission or any of its programs is not only in poor taste, it is also poor judgment. How can he expect the public to support Commission programs if he, an employee, does not have confidence in Commission activities and support them to the fullest.

When he speaks of a fellow employee, he should speak well of him or say nothing. Here again, if he makes detrimental remarks about another employee, he is doing a great injustice to the Commission as well as to a fellow employee by denying him and the Commission the confidence and support of the local citizens. I have found that when a person criticizes another it is often because he is trying to bring the other person down to his level. How much better it is to raise oneself to a higher standard through hard work and greater effort. This does not mean that when he knows the actions of a fellow employee are causing harm to the Commission that it should not be brought to the attention of his supervisor. Matters such as these can and should be discretely handled, but are not subject for discussion with the public.

He should at all times conduct himself in a conservative manner. Avoid foul language or a boisterous attitude. Nothing that I can think of gives a worse impression to the general public than a man in uniform, a public servant, lounging around some restaurant or truck stop, running his mouth or trying to impress people with his importance.

The officer may justify "taking a break" by saying that he has been working twelve hours or have some other ready explanation but the general public has no way of knowing this and will no doubt consider him to be goofing off at public expense. To avoid public criticism, stop if necessary for coffee, lunch or whatever, but when he is through, he should not hang around the establishment but continue on with his duties. The majority of citizens resent any waste of public funds.

He should stay as neat and clean as circumstances will permit. The occasion will arise when he may be required to wade a ditch, walk in heavy undergrowth or even swim a canal, however, this is the exception rather than the rule. There is no excuse for an officer to have his shirt pockets unbuttoned, his shoes or leatherwork unshined, to be in need of a shave or haircut, or to wear a dirty or wrinkled uniform during the course of his everyday work. The picture that he presents to the public represents the Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission. HE IS THE GAME AND FRESH WATER FISH COMMISSION.

The Game Commission spends enormous amounts of money each year disseminating information about our programs, regulations and hopes for the future. It is much better for the public to receive this information from a representative of the Commission personally, rather than by chance. Before speaking for the Commission, acquaint yourself with policies, procedures and etc. Many new officers think that as soon as they put on the uniform of a wildlife officer, they automatically become authorities on every phase of the Game Commission activities. How wrong they are. It takes many years and a lot of study to become thoroughly familiar with the many operations of the Commission. I know of no quicker way to break down public confidence than to give out erroneous or false information. Imagine the thoughts that go through a person's mind when they discover that a personal representative of the Commission has misled them, particularly, if acting on the basis of this information, they inadvertently run afoul of some regulation and are arrested. He should be certain that any information that he gives out is accurate. He should never be ashamed to say "I don't know, but I will be happy to find out and forward this information to you." Almost as bad as giving bad information is to leave a person confused who has come to him for information. If he does not know the reason for a particular regulation or program, he should find out.

When he can do so without interfering with other duties, it is a good policy for a wildlife officer to attend gatherings of sportsmen. Often he will be called upon to make a talk. Such speeches, whether made to sportsmen's groups, service clubs or schools, should, like newspaper stories, be confined to facts relating to fish and game problems and activities rather than to statements that might be construed as outlining the policy of the Commission itself.

Employees making statements to the press or appearing on radio or television programs are entitled to present, in their own words or actions, an expression of Commission and Department policies, or to present their personal explanation of Department projects or plans. However, all statements or actions must be based on accurate facts and be essentially correct interpretations of policy involved. Especially on controversial matters, when facts of policies are not clear, the necessary information should be secured from the regional manager or headquarters before any release or broadcast.

Most outdoorsmen feel as positively about their pet sports, their pet peeves, as they do about their religions. Arguments will not change a viewpoint. Hence an officer should not allow himself to be drawn into argument that is likely to grow acrimonious. The man who wins the argument usually loses a friend without having convinced the other fellow that the latter is wrong.

It is most desirable for an officer to establish and maintain friendly relationships with the public news media. General information concerning game and fish laws, regulations, seasons and bag limits changes should be presented to all news media in all areas, and where possible should have local information and application supplied by personal contact by the officer. By keeping the news media informed, and being a source of contact for the news media, the officer can help greatly in informing the public about Commission activities.

Arrests and convictions serve two conservation purposes; first, in punishing the guilty and deterring him from further offenses; secondly, deterring others from law violations through fear of publicity. Because of the last, it is important that fish and game cases be reported to the news media at the conclusion of the cases by the courts. Whenever possible, the officer should see that this information does reach the news media. But as a matter of practical knowledge, one should realize that a headline writer or rewrite man has as one of his principle tasks the stressing of a particular phase of any given story. This is simply a matter of maintaining reader interest. You can help him by letting him understand what you consider to be of primary significance about the story you report to him thus giving him a clue for his lead or head. He may still ignore your hint, but if he doesn't he may tend to rely on your desire to help. Exaggeration isn't necessary. Stick only to the facts. Whenever possible he should not have his name mentioned too regularly by the news media, but rather have it reported as "Officials of the Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission." However, whether or not the name of a particular wild-life officer is used, is apt to vary widely with individual newspapers. Different publishers and managing editors vary greatly in their demand for identification of attributable sources. There may be many instances in which "officials of the Game Commission" simply won't do.

Press relations are important for other reasons too. For example, suppose your Game Commission advocates a change in a status, or legislation has been introduced that affects the Commission. Here the aid of the news media is invaluable. A hostile reporter could do much harm. On the other hand, if your news media have always been treated fairly, they will be much more inclined to come to your rescue.

The appearance of his vehicle is very important. There may be short periods of time when his equipment is dirty or unpolished, but it should not remain so any longer than is necessary for him to complete a more pressing assignment and put his equipment in ship-shape. The equipment assigned to him will be under his personal care and be his responsibility for a considerable period of time. He should take care of it and keep vehicles free from bent fenders and other appearances that would lessen his chances of having good public acceptance. Neat, clean, well-kept gear makes a favorable impression upon the public.

Courtesy on the highways is another form of valuable public relations. It not only involves how he drives and how he considers the rights of other drivers, but even involves stopping to help a motorist in trouble. He will be a welcome sight to a person who is broke down on the roadside, many miles away from help. He should never pass him by. His assistance long will be remembered and appreciated. Yet, the way he drives day after day and his manner and attitude toward others under all traffic conditions is the important thing to remember.

Safe, courteous operation of boats is public relations of the highest order. More complaints are received by the Commission from irate fishermen who have been bounced around by some inconsiderate boat operator than from any other source. When approaching a boater or fishermen, be considerate. Don't bump into his boat and above all, he should watch his wake. He is responsible for any damage done as well as any bad public relations.

His manner of making arrests is his trade-mark. He should be polite but firm and always retain control of the situation. Once control is lost, it is not always easy to regain. Never approach a suspect in an apologetic manner. This can easily be interpreted as a sign of weakness which will encourage problems and possibly lead to a charge of resisting arrest. He should never apologize for making an arrest. An apology does little to alleviate the ill-will caused by an unjust arrest. If an arrest is in order, make it. If not, don't make it; and there will be no need later for a apology. He should approach the violator openly at all times where possible. Use a less open manner only when necessary. He should inform the violator that he is under arrest and never let a circumstance build up until he has added offense to cope with. When making an arrest never lecture the violator, as it serves no good purpose. It only makes the violator think that he is being persecuted instead of being prosecuted. Above all never belittle a man, particularly in the presence of his wife or family. Any man with any pride is going to thoroughly resent this, and will make every effort to "save face" under this humiliating circumstance. Remember that an arrest is impersonal. Be as polite as possible under every circumstance.

Give the appearance of having always supported game and fish laws as sound measures. If in his past he has violater game and fish laws, it is best for him not to talk about it. I don't think that anyone is going to be very favorably impressed by his recounting a past violation or adventure. In fact, disclosures such as this will result in a loss of respect for himself and the Game Commission.

Don't carry any firearms other than your service pistol except on special occasions. There are some people that will be more than happy to link this with a wildlife officer's opportunities and accuse him of hunting illegally or hunting while on duty.

His personal life should be an example to his community. Remember that he is the Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission to many people. He should avoid neighborhood squabbles. Keep his personal problems at home. Pay bills on time. Keep appointments and be on time. He should take part in community affairs. Work with Boy Scouts or other youth groups whenever possible. Remember the youth of today are the hunters of tomorrow. The impression that you make on them now will very likely be lasting and may well win a supporter of conservation.

His working with the other law enforcement agencies in his area will help build a sound public relationship. Working with the area Civil Defense and assisting during times of floods, storms and other periods of natural disaster will be of great value. When the people of his community see that he is taking an active part in community affairs, he will be more readily accepted as a member of the community thereby cementing his relationship with the public. Above all, be a credit to your community.

When he receives a complaint, he should look into it promptly and when possible report to the person complaining as to what action he has taken. Never betray a confidence. Any time a person takes the time and effort to come to him to report a violation confidentially it is absolutely essential that this be treated as such. Betrayal of an informant can bring serious consequences as well as shutting off future information. He should remember that the information he gets

from an informant could lead to the apprehension and arrest of a violator that might otherwise go undetected. He should check out all information to the fullest extent and have all his ducks in a row, so to speak, before acting on the information.

If his personal public relations are good with individual after individual, it stands to reason that his success on his job will be easier and that the results will be better in every way. Be thorough in all these things. A breakdown in any of these important fields can lead to loss of public support.

To rely on the wildlife officer to carry out all of the public relations, information and education assignments would impose a burden. The work of career officers in public relations fills a vital need, and appears necessary in reaching the greatest number of people. Yet, acceptance of public relations literature, announcements and other communications cannot be taken for granted. Many hours of hard work and personal contact must be added to all statements, and the final decision by the public of the truth of such material is whether or not the officer at the local level does a good job of creating the right kind of image with the public and his news media.

It would appear to me that wildlife conservation agencies may have overlooked an opportunity for improving the public image of their activities. A case in point is the use of "Smokey the Bear" as the nation's greatest firefighter. The challenge to help catch the illegal alligator hunter might well feature the alligator hunter skinning "Alley" the alligator.

We learn little from preachments, but much from something that we can see and feel. Good public relations comes from seeing and feeling or sensing the neat appearance, good manners, the efficient work, the sincere interest of the wildlife officer in his individual community. When he does a good job, in an acceptable manner, the Commission—in whatever state he may work—gains in public acceptance and favor.

A REPORT ON FLORIDA'S BOATING LAW AFTER TWO YEARS OPERATION

By

LT. JAMES WHITE, Safety Officer
Florida Board of Conservation

Most boatmen are safety-conscious and law-abiding citizens who are considerate of the rights of others. There is a small minority, however, who are reckless in their craft's operation and negligent when it comes to the safety of themselves and others. Florida laws and regulations have been established with the dual aims of increasing safety afloat and enhancing the pleasure of all who use our waters for recreational purposes.

June 8, 1964

The Florida Boating Council is dedicated to building safety consciousness and responsibility among boating enthusiasts.

The Florida Boating Council, originally set up as an advisory group on boating safety by executive order of the governor, was created as a state agency by the 1963 legislature.