

## Good Cops' Lives Matter

By [Rich Holt](#)

Be polite. Be respectful. De-escalate. These are the priorities of the sheriff's deputies I accompanied on a recent ride-along.

These three phrases are the mantra of a capable, competent and professional police department. Fortunately, and despite protestors' claims, many police departments look like this.

The Clark County Sheriff's Office in Central Ohio fits the profile of an average-sized law enforcement operation. Most Americans aren't served by big-city departments like those in Minneapolis or St. Louis. Mid-sized American cities have police departments that are community-centered, community-involved and committed to service.

I did this after having had bad experiences with law enforcement in the past – “driving while black.” For example, I was stopped for a crooked license plate. I was also thrown on the hood of my car and handcuffed after I passed a state trooper who was going 45 in a 65 mile-an-hour zone. He pulled me over and searched my car for non-existent drugs.

But my ride-along showed me the values of local police. It revealed both the challenges they face and their philosophy of community engagement. I quickly learned it isn't all about cops and robbers.

For example, one early call was a “welfare check.” This is about something odd in a neighborhood. In this case, police followed up on a call from an elderly woman, concerned about her friend's home next door.

Another call came from an elderly gentleman whose electric wheelchair battery died. Passersby left him in the middle of a busy road, not offering to help him for the 30 minutes he was stranded there. To my utter disgust, not even his neighbors bothered to check on him. As we waited with him for the properly-equipped EMTs, the man entertained us with stories about working at the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame.

More serious calls came later. One was from a woman whose abusive ex-boyfriend had reportedly threatened her, her family and a few small children at her home. The accused had been a force of chaos in her life even after ending the relationship. Bruises on her arms marked the physical struggles she'd faced in getting away from the abusive relationship. The officer did his best to console her, advised her to file for a protection order, and left his card in case she needed help again.

Once back in the cruiser, the officer explained that “it’s all about being understanding and being good to people.” He added that it’s also “about being respectful and a decent human being.”

He said that cops who mistreat civilians are “basically just bad people,” and noted that every industry has them. “We have them too,” he admitted, acknowledging the viral videos that have rightfully angered Americans.

On our next call, a disturbed young man who was high on drugs had attacked his mother while she was driving, causing a minor car accident. When the first officer arrived, the man was still screaming and kicking outside of the vehicle. We took him to jail.

Another welfare check involved a woman who had survived an overdose of sleeping pills. Police weren’t needed; this was a job for EMTs.

The last call of the night was arguably the most interesting and most frightening. We heard chatter on the radio about a stopped drunk driver who was running from state troopers as they tried to arrest him. We were asked to help. On arrival, we saw seven troopers trying to wrestle a guy into their car. This guy was a fighter, that’s for sure.

What struck me was that, despite the resistance, no trooper pulled his gun. No one got shot. Even though the guy ran at them, kicked them, spit on them, and threatened to kill them, they were determined not to use tasers or firearms.

Why were these officers eager to either de-escalate or expend extra energy to avoid using their weapons? “Better judged by 12 than 1,” I was told when I asked.

After the arrest, I asked an officer why they didn’t just shoot the guy. After all the cops I’ve seen on social media using force with no apparent good reason, why didn’t they act similarly when the drunk guy actually wanted to kill them?

It was probably the toughest question I’d asked all night. And it’s the crux of the situation with law enforcement right now. Most police officers are doing a fantastic job, but there are enough rotten apples to feed into the “all cops are bastards” narrative being pushed by the Marxist Black Lives Matter movement.

The officer – and his colleagues – didn’t skip a beat in answering.

“When I’m out there, I’m all alone. I’m 20 to 30 minutes from backup. I have to de-escalate or people die. If people die, people won’t trust the police. De-escalating is what we do and killing that guy wasn’t the right thing to do. It’s my job to handle it.”

I was surprised by his answer. And other troopers chimed in: “We can’t treat people like that. It’s wrong. These guys out here treating people like garbage doesn’t do nobody no good.”

One of them added: “When your backup is 5 minutes away, you can go out there and treat people like shit [like some of these city cops do]. If someone gives you problems you can call for help. But why do that to begin with? There’s just bad people out there.”

I went into my ride-along genuinely unsure what a day in the life of a police officer looked like. These are really dedicated – and really good – people who we desperately need doing this work. We need them to face down the criminals, help the guy stranded in the street and serve the protection order against the abusive spouse.

The officers I rode with are an accurate sample of the culture of the police nationwide. Unfortunately, there are enough isolated officers out there who don’t share in this altruistic philosophy of community service. And oftentimes union contracts prevent bad officers from being fired, force departments to rehire disciplined officers, or prevent previous disciplinary records from being known.

While the media has amplified the unfortunate problem of “bad apple” officers, police violence is far from the nationwide epidemic it’s portrayed to be. Most police departments are filled with the kind of officers with which I rode. They’re the best and most dedicated among us. They, and not the BLM rioters, are the ones we should be defending.

These are the ones we invite to our kids’ classrooms to say: These are police officers, and they’re the good guys.

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