

Perspective

TUSCOLA REVIEW EDITORIAL BOARD:

David Porter, Jennie Porter,
Mike Carroll, Bill Englehardt

— Email: publisher@tuscolareview.com

How I got into the FBI

I exchange emails with other retired FBI agents and recently the conversation has focused on how we got into the FBI. I sometimes wonder how a guy like me got into this exemplary organization.

My dad had been an agent from 1951 until 1956. In 1956, my mom announced she wasn't going to move again, which resulted in Dad leaving a job he loved. As a kid, my dad would comment to me that I would be a good agent when I grew up, but I never took him seriously as I figured this was just a dad telling his son nice things as dad's are known to do. It would be like telling your son he could grow up to be president.

In college, I was enrolled in ROTC, so after graduation I spent the next few years in the Army where I protected Ft. Bliss, Texas, and Ft. Ord, Calif., from all enemies, foreign and domestic. I like to remind my friends that neither Texas nor California were attacked dur-

ing my tenure in the Army, so I tell people that might not have been a coincidence.

Anyways, when I left the Army, my dad again brought up the subject of me applying to the Bureau. I thought, no way am I getting into the most prestigious law enforcement agency on earth. In my mind, FBI agents are like Superman, faster than a speeding bullet, more powerful than a locomotive, able to leap buildings in a single bound (you know the rest).

FBI agents attend prestigious universities, have 4.0 GPAs and are successful lawyers or accountants. On the other hand, my high school transcript revealed I never earned a single A. I later attended a state university that was known for accepting anybody with a pulse. I graduated college with a solid 2.4 GPA out of a possible 4.0. Despite these shortcomings, I respected my father so much that I took the initial FBI written test.

I recall that part of the test included 120 words printed in bold type and the applicant was required to choose one of four words located beneath the word in bold print that meant the opposite (antonym) of the word in bold.

The first 65 questions were a breeze. However, the final 55 words were words I had never seen before (or since) and I had no clue what they meant. Since the FBI subtracted points off your total score for every missed question, you were encouraged not to guess. But there was no way I was going to leave 55 questions blank, so I gulped and made my best guess.

Several weeks later, I was notified that I had passed the written test, but my score was not high enough to be offered an interview. I was not entitled to Veteran's points because the U.S. was not in conflict at the time of my service. I thought that was it; I had satisfied my dad's re-

So there I was

By Pete Buckley
pete.buckley@tuscolareview.com



quest by applying and so I went on with my life.

Six years later, I was enjoying life as a deputy sheriff, but now I had three kids and was working a series of off-duty jobs, like working security at a convenience store located next to a university where I arrested drunk students for retail theft when they stole everything from sub sandwiches to beer.

The FBI appeared on my radar once again when my dad was diagnosed with lung cancer. The prognosis was not

good and he pleaded with me to try to earn that little gold badge that agents possess. I couldn't do anything about his lung cancer, but I could brighten his day by applying.

This time, the test was different and there were no questions about word definitions. I passed the written exam and did well on the oral interview as I had plenty of examples of overcoming problems in both the Army and as a deputy sheriff. Although I had passed the entrance exams, I did not know when, or if, I would be hired.

One day, while on patrol, I received a radio transmission to call the FBI. I found a pay phone and spoke with the applicant coordinator who told me that I was being offered a position as a special agent.

By this time, my dad was in the final stages of his cancer and was lying in bed waiting for the end. I hung up with the FBI and immediately called my dad and told him that the Bureau must have lowered their standards because his son was about to join him as a member of an elite bunch of guys and gals known as FBI special agents.

He said something to me that I can't recall. He was on so much pain medication that he was difficult to understand, but I think he knew I was hired. He died a few days later.

It turned out that my dad's persistent faith in me is the reason I got into the FBI. For me, the FBI turned out to be the best job ever. I definitely had the best dad ever.

Decisions, decisions

I find myself in the frustrating position of being stuck between a rock and a hard place.

Last year, I received a phone call from a not-for-profit organization from Illinois asking for donations. At the time I didn't mind how they got my cell phone number because it was for law enforcement and I figured there were databases they had access to. I pledged \$35 and asked for a payment card to be sent to my home address, which they somehow also already had on file.

The card came, donation sent, I felt better about myself, they got funds, and my world moved on.

A few months ago, I receive another call from the same organization. They were starting up their fundraising efforts and wanted to know if they could count on me again. This time, I felt a little more pressure to do the transaction over the phone. "Don't worry, we never ask for the 3-digit code

Margie's Mess

By Margie Carter
margie@tuscolareview.com



on the back of your card," she said. But seeing as I was weeks fresh from having my card hacked and a stranger ordering random pet supplies and health supplements under my name, I asked for a payment card again. Surely, an organization that helps law enforcement would get that. Reluctantly, they send me the payment card.

Now I'll admit, the letter went into the land of lost junk on the counter for over a week due to our busy schedule. At this point, I get another call.

"Can you help us put the funds to immediate use by doing the donation over the phone?" Again, I simply could not put myself at risk again. With my full apologies and embarrassment, I explain that I still have the last payment card and that I'll get to it.

Maybe the universe saw right through me, because I knew I wasn't going to get right to it just yet. Later that day I receive a phone call from another organization; this one's name had an equally worthy cause for assistance.

However, this time, I'm a little confused on how my phone number ended up on their list.

Personally, I'm already on the line for one donation that I was sitting on for no reason except forgetfulness. Ethically, I couldn't put another one on my plate. "I'm not in the position to make a donation right now." I wasn't lying. But the universe had to have known.

Since then, I receive a handful of calls a week, sometimes back to back, from various organizations. Fire Fighter assistance funds, Law Enforcement aid, Veteran's waiting on disability claims. The callers always ask for me by full name. At the start of the calls I tested their validity by having them confirm that they already had my address on file; they do.

As concerning as this all is, I'm not naïve about the lack of security to our personal information. Frankly, anyone can find your home address if you own a home.

My issue is the increase in phone calls. I'm a texting kind of person. Always, always, ask yourself "can this be a text?" The reason I urge my friends and family to text me is because I value actual phone calls. If I see the school calling, I know there's an issue with my children. The pharmacy calls, my medication is delayed. The doctor's office calls to reschedule or with lab results that need discussed. An unexpected call from family usually mean there's a crisis.

Between the things I volunteer for, youth activities for my girls, or daily life appointments, I can't afford to not answer a call, even when I don't have the number saved. So, when the phone rings and the person on the other side isn't important to the many things I actually need to be doing... annoyed is an understatement.

I've resolved that I need to change my phone number. Again, I'm not naïve. The minute

I get a new number it will be put on some call list somewhere. I'll get the dealer service center for my car's extended warranty calling in no time. But, maybe, the next time someone asks me for a donation it'll be for local sports or scouting instead.

The phone calls are the rock in my expression. I don't see a way around that rock. My number is on a very public list and the calls won't stop. The hard place? Changing my number would mean having to notify all the places that require it, along with family and friends. My phone number also feels like a unique part of the last 11 years of my life. It would almost be like changing my name; which is also a topic that I've explored but as a story for another time.

Endless spam calls or me making endless calls for weeks, possibly months, to notify everyone, and literally their mothers, that my number has changed?

Possible repercussions of not taking the shot

Watching my grandsons play biddy basketball this past weekend took me back to my youth. It's hard to think that I was ever that small or played at that level.

Adam is 5 and about the size and build of a fire hydrant. Ben is whip-thin and almost as tall as his mother, which isn't that tall for an adult but giant for a 7-year-old.

Kids at that age don't ex-

actly follow all the rules. There is a lot of traveling and double dribbling and quite a few ball hogs.

Proudly, my grandsons are good about sharing, so they pass the ball and try to help their teammates. When Adam had to sit out part of the game so someone else could play, he sat quietly by himself on the floor and watched the game. I guess I've never seen him sit

still before.

It's interesting how kids act differently at home than when they're out. They seem to get it that society has rules and expectations. I noticed it when Ben was maybe 3 and visited my wife's Kindergarten classroom. He sat with the other kids and raised his hand when he wanted to speak.

But at home, it's a different story. I'm not saying they're ill-

behaved. They're just rambunctious when they're on their home court.

Anyway, back to my biddy basketball days. I was arguably the worst player on the floor. I was that kid who was still twiddling his thumbs at one end of the court while everyone else had run to the other end. I couldn't shoot. I couldn't rebound. I couldn't defend anyone.

But I could steal the ball. Being small and quick, I could get underneath the others and grab the ball. Apparently, Ben and Adam's league has outlawed stealing. If I couldn't have done that, I would have had no purpose on the team.

I remember one game when I had stolen the ball and raced downcourt toward our basket. My brother, Greg, was on the same team, and he was the only one who caught up with me.

I can still hear him yelling, "Pass me the ball. You'll miss it!" So I passed him the ball and he missed it.

I wonder if I had kept the ball and taken the shot and actually made it, how different would my life have been?

Maybe I would have had the confidence to take more shots



Ramblin' Man

By David Porter
porter@ramblinman.us

and start playing better. Probably would have become a star athlete. The girls would have noticed me and my popularity would have skyrocketed. I would have scored records and dates. Probably would have become a lawyer or a doctor and made lots of money. The newspaper would have taken my picture and I'd have been the talk of the town.

I continued to play biddy basketball and then two years of junior high ball, but in 7 years of playing competitive basketball, I never made a basket. It's all because of that one fateful game when I didn't take the shot. Or maybe I just sucked at basketball.

I got to see both my grandsons score baskets, so they're both ahead of me in the sport.

They'll be famous undoubtedly.

Of course, when I was that age, the hoops were higher, the balls were heavier and we had to wear shorts that hampered our ability to run and jump. At least that's what I'm telling them. Plus, we had to walk uphill in the snow to the gym. Life was tough back then.

Well, you can't dwell on the past and the what might've beens. I didn't take the shot so I didn't make a basket, but I eventually scored some pretty cool grandkids. I can't complain.

© Copyright 2022 by David Porter who can be reached at porter@ramblinman.us. I remember that my biddy basketball jersey bore the number 0. Seems a little harsh in retrospect.

HOROSCOPES

ARIES – Mar 21/Apr 20

A sense of adventure compels you to travel to a new destination, Aries. You may have something in mind or you can throw a dart at the map and enjoy the trip.

TAURUS – Apr 21/May 21

Don't be surprised if relationships seem a little more intense than normal, Taurus. Everyone is a little keyed up and the extra energy is on display in daily interactions.

GEMINI – May 22/June 21

People could play important roles in your life right now, Gemini. Partnerships are especially fortuitous. After all, two minds are better than one for problem-solving.

CANCER – Jun 22/Jul 22

Cancer, there's much productivity this week as you find yourself thrust into yet another project. Once you sail through it, things will calm down.

LEO – Jul 23/Aug 23

Leo, this week you are invited to enjoy yourself. Feel free to live life as much as you can for as long as you can. Plan a retreat with a special someone.

VIRGO – Aug 24/Sept 22

Try to be as efficient as possible to save time and money in the days ahead, Virgo. See where you can streamline things and find ways to conserve your resources.

LIBRA – Sept 23/Oct 23

Libra, this may be a busy week for you, so take a few moments each morning to center yourself and focus your energy before you dive in to your list of tasks.

SCORPIO – Oct 24/Nov 22

Money has been on your mind for some time, Scorpio. Figure out ways that you can increase your income — if only temporarily. Once you catch up on bills, you can relax.

SAGITTARIUS – Nov 23/Dec 21

Sagittarius, you will likely be deep in your feelings this week, exploring many different emotions. It can be tiring, so find some activities to give your brain a break.

CAPRICORN – Dec 22/Jan 20

Life may seem surreal this week as your subconscious seems to be guiding many of your decisions, Capricorn. Go with the flow for the time being.

AQUARIUS – Jan 21/Feb 18

It is a good idea to connect with your friends while you can, Aquarius. You may not have an opportunity for some time, so reach out and make a plan to get together.

PISCES – Feb 19/Mar 20

Pisces, certain personal goals may need your attention at this time. Rearrange your priorities for the next few days.