

Out of the Darkness and into the Blue: Surprising Secrets, Tactics, and Training Concepts: A Memoir from one of Kalamazoo's Top Cops

Robert T. Christensen

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After facing near death on the job, a rookie policeman changes tactics and goes on to a distinguished career in law enforcement.

From a young age, Robert T. Christensen planned for a long career as a police officer, but those plans were nearly derailed when a suspect he was attempting to arrest viciously attacked him. The Michigan native had been on the job for only two years, but almost quit before he decided to make some changes, both personally and professionally.

What he learned he's now sharing in this memoir, which offers a glimpse into the twenty-five years he spent as "one of Kalamazoo's top cops." Christensen speaks candidly about the places and people he's worked with, the routine and not-so-routine assignments he's handled, and his determination and enjoyment in doing his job well.

While the book's content appears to be aimed at others in the law enforcement field—what's worked for Officer Christensen while serving as a policeman—it will also appeal to those who enjoy a behind-the-scenes look at a profession that deals with humanity's highs and lows.

For example, in one early chapter, the author explains how he calms someone he's just brought in. If the suspect has resisted arrest, Christensen says he takes the opportunity to tell him or her, "Look, I doubt you woke up today and said to yourself, 'I'm going to fight with a cop.' So these things just happen...I know you're probably a decent person, right?"

He offers tips and personal insight based on his time serving in numerous capacities: as a patrol officer covering all the "zones" of Kalamazoo, a field-training officer charged with teaching novices, and a background investigator. He was a member of both the SWAT team and the honor guard, which assisted at funerals of fellow police officers.

Christensen also served as a community policing officer stationed in one of the city's roughest neighborhoods. His account of how everyone pitched in to make things better for the area is inspiring, although he later discovered the actual results were rather disappointing.

Scattered throughout the book are real calls that the author felt had an impact on him. He precedes these with the dispatch codes in italics: "*Radio Baker Twenty-eight, show me out at the Radisson. Reference the Rescue call.*" This memorable event involves delivering a baby.

Writing in a personable and self-assured tone, Christensen shows his human and humorous sides in the titles of his chapters, such as "Honor Guard: The Tears Behind Our Glasses" and "Stupid Shit I Did at Work."

Photographs showing the author in uniform, receiving honors, with citizens of the community, and also while he served in the US Army helping “to establish basic training for the Afghanistan National Army” add to the story; captions would have added even more perspective.

Christensen is not afraid to tell it like it is. These are his truths that he would like to share with others that chose his profession, and he makes no apologies: “I was there to work and my job was to be a cop or a soldier and to serve my community and my country.”

ROBIN FARRELL EDMUNDS (September 16, 2014)

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