



Citizen's Arrest Academy camaraderie

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Officers Ryan Rezny and Josh Pudlowski did everything by the book. They presented a visible display of authority, used their superior communication skills to verbally persuade, and in the end, successfully stopped the threat—to themselves, the police station, and the community at large.

Last week's class on accident investigation was like an episode of Citizens Gone Wild. Most of it was caught on tape, and at one point, we discussed the possibility of broadcasting our antics on YouTube. We'll have to see what the Chief has to say about that one.

Let me just say that the old adage—"when the Chief's away, the citizens will play"—is definitely true. I think the stress finally got to all of us. You can't go around filling Joe Citizen's head full of police fantasies, and not expect to have a blow out eventually.

But before we get to the blow out part, though, now might be a good time to introduce my classmates. I'm withholding their last names to not only protect the innocent, but until their families (and co-workers) can put these people on a watch list.

In order of seating arrangements we have Jesse, Kevin, yours truly and Jennifer at the front table; and Barclay, Patrick, Sara and Greg at the back table. At first glance, you'd think this was a handful of normal folks. After five class sessions, however, I can attest to the fact that "normal" is a much-overused and misunderstood word.

I can also attest that the old adage about people sitting at the "back" table being up to no good is also true. All we hear non-stop from that back table is, "I want to be tazed...you can tazer me...I'll volunteer to be tazed...please, tazer me." If Barclay [Pollack, the WJFW reporter] has said it once, he has said it at least 100 times. We've decided to pool our money to pay the officers to tazer Barclay, just to get him to shut up.

And then there was last week's accident scene incident. Kevin, Greg, Patrick and I were waiting our turn to

enter the scenario, which had been set up at the Public Works Department garage, and included flashing squad car lights. There was a lot of shouting coming from the accident scene, compliments of Officer Pudlowski and Sergeant Miller, and we were pacing the floor, chomping at the bit for a piece of the action.

"I think we're all going to need therapy when this is over," said Jesse, who along with Kevin was casing the room we were in for sniper positions. Being in the National Guard, they both confidently proclaimed that the public works building is ripe with potential sniper positions. I'm thinking, "Oh, great."

Patrick interrupted my thoughts when he said, "Hey, look, I'm a walrus." And sure enough, Patrick had managed to stuff two long strips of caulking material into his nostrils giving him the definite look of a walrus. I'm thinking, "Where's a cop when you need one?"

Patrick assured all of us that he has no intentions of ever becoming a police officer, to which Jesse proclaimed, "At least with you in uniform we could keep track of you."

A strange thing happens when you put eight citizens together—a sense of camaraderie begins to develop. We've now spent 20 hours together, and in that time, we've worked as partners in a variety of scenarios, filled out paperwork and handcuffed each other.

This past week, our session was devoted to operating while under the influence. Officers Angela Mertz and Chad Brown took us through the legalities, and then we got down to the hands-on activity of administering field sobriety tests to two volunteers who had been drinking in a controlled environment. While each of us did the sobriety testing on our subjects, the others stood around and listened to the officers sharing their real life experiences with inebriated individuals. It was a sobering experience.

Then we got to try out the "beer goggles," which visually simulate intoxication. Dare I say that, in our scientifically controlled environment (the police station hallway), it was a scream watching my classmates stumble all over themselves. No one got hurt, but at one point we thought we were going to lose Patrick, who took a while to get his land legs back after removing the goggles.

In our next session, we'll be hitting the streets for patrol procedures. The Chief made it clear that Barclay will not, under any circumstances, be tazed.

(Editor's note: Columnist Laurie Lenten is participating in the first Rhinelander Citizens' Police Academy, and is filing weekly reports on her experience.)