



MAKING SERGEANT

The Biggest Leap in Law Enforcement

GERALD W. GARNER

MAKING SERGEANT

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Gerald W. Garner, a veteran of over 50 years in law enforcement, is currently chief of police for the City of Corinth, Texas. Previously he served for over 12 years as police chief for the City of Greeley, Colorado, a community of over 100,000 residents. Before becoming a law enforcement CEO Chief Garner retired as a division chief from the nationally renowned Lakewood, Colorado Police Department following a 30-year career. At Lakewood he served in virtually every assignment available to a municipal law enforcement leader, including 15 years spent as a sergeant, most of that time assigned to Patrol. Prior to Lakewood he led a regional police school in Kansas and served as a patrol officer for the Victoria and San Marcos, Texas police departments.

The holder of a Master's degree in Administration of Justice, Chief Garner has instructed widely on law enforcement topics, including appearances for the International Association of Chiefs of Police, the National Park Service, and the FBI's National Academy at Quantico, Virginia. He has authored over 200 magazine articles and 12 books on policing issues.

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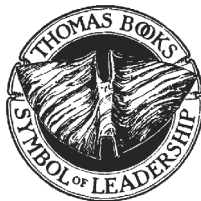
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By

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Dedicated to

Kathy

PREFACE

It's alright to admit it. If you are a law enforcement officer and your current rank is below that of sergeant, you likely have at least thought about what it would be like to wear the chevrons. You would right the wrongs, address neglected personnel and policy issues, and otherwise straighten out your law enforcement organization. Beyond just thinking about it, you may be intent upon attaining that rank (and beyond) as soon as possible. That's OK, too.

Whether you are just pondering if you should go for the gold or are already radar-locked on getting there, this book is for you. Written by a veteran police chief with over 50 years of law enforcement experience, 15 of them spent as a sergeant, it contains practical advice for (1) deciding on whether or not you are ready for the job and (2) getting it and succeeding at it if you are. Short on theory and long on pragmatic advice, the text also will help the already-promoted supervisor successfully meet the challenges of this complex but vital position.

As most law enforcement agency CEOs will acknowledge, first-line supervisor or sergeant is often the single most important position in the police organization. Without the best efforts of the highly-competent man or woman wearing the stripes, the organization is destined to flounder in relative ineffectiveness. In the worst-case scenario, the agency may fail. In other words, the sergeant has got to get it right.

This book will help you decide if you want to be that sergeant. If you do, it will help you be him or her. If, at least at this stage of your career, you decide that the answer is no, that's fine, too. There is not a law enforcement agency anywhere that has enough talented first-line officers. Your goals may change later. But if you choose to go for it, the tips contained here will help you get there. If you are already a supervisor, **MAKING SERGEANT** will help you get better at what you are already doing.

It's time to begin the journey.

G.W.G.

CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
<i>Preface</i>	vii

Part One: Are You Sure You Want to Do It?

Chapter 1: Do You Know the Positives and the Negatives?	5
A. The Good Part	5
B. The Maybe Not So Good	6
C. It's Your Call	9
D. Summary	9
Chapter 2: Are You Mentally and Emotionally Prepared to Make the Leap?	11
A. It's the Biggest Jump in Policing	11
B. There Will Be Challenges	12
C. There Will Be Difficult Moments	12
D. Peer Pressure is Huge	13
E. What Is Your Motivation?	14
F. Your Source of Pride Will Change	15
G. Delegation Required	16
H. A New Attitude	16
I. Summary	17
Chapter 3: Are You Willing to Do the Work Required to Get There? ..	19
A. Personal Time Is Required	20
B. It May Mean Back to School	21
C. Being Bashful Won't Work	21
D. The Process Will Be Tough	23
E. Don't Sell Yourself Short	24
F. There Are No Guarantees	25

G. Make an Honest Self-Assessment	26
H. Summary	26
Chapter 4: There's No Shame Attached to "No"	28
A. Great Cops Are Needed, Too	28
B. Identify Your Reasons for "No"	29
C. Be Comfortable in Your Decision	30
D. Undoing a Bad Call	31
E. Things Can Change Later	31
F. Hold on to Your Pride	32
G. Summary	33

Part Two: What Happens After "Yes?"

Chapter 5: The Big Contest (Preparation and Test-Taking)	37
A. What You Need to Know	37
B. Getting the Bigger Picture	39
C. Acing the Written Test	41
D. The Assessment Process	42
E. Learning from the Experience	47
F. Summary	49
Chapter 6: Now that You're A Winner (Skills You'll Need)	50
A. It's Time for a Self-Assessment	50
B. Roles You Must Master	51
C. The Big One: Role Model	56
D. Drinking from the Fire Hose	58
E. Summary	61
Chapter 7: Off to a Great Start (Touching All the Bases)	62
A. Your Relations with Your Team	62
B. Your Relations with Your Boss	67
C. Your Relations with Your Peers	70
D. Hallmarks of an Effective Leaders	79
D. Summary	71
Chapter 8: A Change in Outlook (You're One of "Them" Now)	73
A. Loyalty in Multiple Directions	73
B. Seeing the Bigger Picture	74

C. The Impact of Your Words and Actions	75
D. Traits You Don't Need	76
E. Hallmarks of an Effective Leader	79
F. It's a New World	84
G. Summary	84
Chapter 9: The Name of the Game Is Decision-Making (It's Not As Hard As It Sounds)	86
A. The Enemies of Good Decisions	86
B. The Elements of a Sound Decision	89
C. When You Just Don't Know	92
D. Summary	94
Chapter 10: The Toughest Part of the Job (Discipline Isn't Fun)	95
A. Why Do It?	96
B. Why You Must Be Involved	97
C. How to Do It Well	99
D. Summary	104
Chapter 11: The Next-Toughest Part (Overcoming the Performance Appraisal Blues)	106
A. Why Do It?	107
B. Preparing the Document	108
C. The Performance Review Session	113
D. Don't Neglect the Follow-up	116
E. Summary	116
Chapter 12: Keeping Your People Safe (Your Employer, Too)	118
A. What Are the Dangers?	119
B. Your Job as a Trainer	121
C. Your Job as an Inspector	123
D. Your Job as a Vigilant Risk Manager	124
E. Your Job as a Safety-Conscious Role Model	126
F. Representing Your Peoples' Interests	127
G. Guarding Your Officers' Mental and Emotional Health	128
H. Summary	133
Chapter 13: Surviving and Prospering in Your New Role (And Some Dumb Things Not to Do)	134

A. Don't Do Stupid	135
B. Keep Yourself Healthy	138
C. Managing Your Career	141
D. Summary	144
Chapter 14: It's the Best Job in Policing (You <i>Are</i> Making a Difference)	146
A. You Are Helping Build the Future	147
B. Constructing Your Own Future	148
C. There's No Law Against Enjoying Yourself	150
D. Summary	152
<i>Index</i>	153

MAKING SERGEANT

Part One

ARE YOU SURE YOU WANT TO DO IT?

Chapter 1

DO YOU KNOW THE POSITIVES AND NEGATIVES?

So, you want to be a sergeant? Or, at least, you are thinking that you just might want to be at some point in your law enforcement career. It may be in your plans for five years down the road. On the other hand, it may be something you want to accomplish within the next five months. Whatever the case, it involves a big, life-changing decision. It deserves a lot of deep thought. That thinking should include a close look at the potential positives and negatives involved in reaching for the chevrons—and grabbing them.

As you likely know by now, every job position in law enforcement, from chief on down, brings with it some good and some not so good. The position of first-line supervisor is not an exception. It should be of help to you to examine some of those things with an open mind before you proceed.

THE GOOD PART

As a first-line supervisor you will be expected to lead. As a leader you will have a greater degree of influence on the future direction of the department than you did as an officer. Just how much more will depend on a number of variables, including the size of your employing agency. You could not reasonably expect to have the same amount of influence at a department with 200 sergeants as you would at an agency with two. Your reputation as an ethical, effective first-line leader also will help determine how much impact your views and ideas have on the ranks above you.

Taking on the role of first-line supervisor will give you the opportunity to serve as a positive role model for those who work for you. As the professional you are, that doubtlessly will be a strong incentive to go for promotion. In the role of first-line leader you will have the chance to shape the future of your organization for years to come. Meanwhile, by observing the way you conduct yourself your subordinates may well tell themselves that is the man or woman I want to be one day. That really does happen, perhaps more often than you would think. Surely there can be no greater honor for a professional like you.

Becoming a supervisor will bring you a couple of personal benefits. You almost certainly will make more money. You also should enjoy an increase in respect and prestige within your organization and community. After all, you have accomplished something pretty impressive in making the big leap to formal leadership. That should contribute to your own, justified sense of accomplishment. In earning your promotion you have accomplished something that many, many cops would like to do, whether some of them will admit it or not. You are a winner.

Joining the supervisory ranks will enable you to see the bigger picture that is your organization. You will become more aware of its direction, vision, mission, and goals. You will be expected to communicate all of these things to your troops. In the process you will learn a lot more about your department and how it works. That will make you a stronger and wiser leader.

Promotion also should present you with the opportunity to secure additional leadership training that will help prepare you for further advancement in your profession. You are almost certainly seeking career advancement or you would not have sought a supervisory position in the first place. Additional leadership schooling added to on-the-job supervisory experience will aid you in moving ahead. As much as you may enjoy the job of first-line supervisor, nothing says you have to stop there.

In short, being a first-line police supervisor can be a real kick. There's no rule that says you cannot enjoy yourself!

THE MAYBE NOT SO GOOD

Doubtlessly you have heard it talked about, perhaps more than you would like. You may even have seen it in action. "It" refers to the