



FACE to FACE



by Jeff Baile ~ Certified Forensic Interviewer

Rapport is Just a Wave Away

- Waving makes people feel good Not waving could mean something entirely different -

When you pass through your town and see the gas station attendant wave, chances are you wave back. I'm sure you instinctively wave at passing police vehicles and farmers as well. Waving to the people we know is something we do every day without even thinking of it. Acknowledging others by waving is a sign of friendliness. Ignoring someone not waving however, is a calculated decision to remain distant.

Historical explanations of the wave date back to early man when the palm was displayed as a sign of recognition. Showing the palm was also a way to let others know that he posed no threat. A modern day adaptation can be seen in the "I give up" position; the suspect's hands up, palms facing us. Some sort of waving is found in almost every culture. It is actually the psychological counterpart to the touch. When people who are bonded in some fashion and too far apart to touch or embrace, they wave at each other instead. When people are right next to each other, waving is replaced with actual body contact which usually comes in the form of a handshake.

Researchers have documented three forms of the wave. These waves are included in what Desmond Morris calls The Distant Display which are universal recognition signals given off after eye contact is made. Distant displays include the smile, the eyebrow raise, head tilt, and waving.

Vertical Wave - the palm faces the friend as the hand moves repeatedly up and down, somewhat like a patting motion. **Hidden Palm Wave** - found mostly in Italy, the palm faces the waver while the hand moves up and down, a form of embracing. **The Lateral Wave** - common throughout the world and learned at an early age. The palm is shown to the friend while the hand rocks from side to side.

Whatever form the wave takes the message is the same. It is a "long distance" way of indicating friendship or bonding. The bond may be concrete as in waving to a good friend or acquaintance or the connection could involve something that is shared. For example, city police officers share their ties with local merchants, gas station

attendants or city street workers by waving as they patrol by their store. A state trooper might routinely wave at Department of Transportation workers because he works the construction zones for speeders. An automatic wave is elicited when

boaters pass each other. And, from the game warden's perspective, any occupied tractor, combine, grain truck, or school bus, fisherman, hunter, or farmer getting his mail will instinctively receive a wave from us as we pass by. We are all in the same club.

WHY DON'T WE WAVE?

The fact that police look for the bad rather than the good in people day after day, probably has some disconnect effect on how outwardly friendly we are to others. This shows up in our lack of waving. We really aren't keen at waving to those we don't like or those we are about to arrest, let alone people who have caused us trouble in the past. We just get a bit more cynical year after year which tends to take its toll in the waving department. Most times we don't even like to fake it.

Believe it or not, job performance evaluations can have an effect on waving, specifically the tracking of arrests. Not that monitoring arrests is wrong. It's what we do and it will always be part of the job. Consider that this practice can further steer the game warden into believing it is more desirable to catch rather than help. In other words, looking for the good in others (non-violators) will never



Waving is learned at an early age.

Part one of two



Above: If this candidate failed to wave during this parade he would be considered standoffish and unapproachable. There are many forms of the wave found throughout the world but their meanings are the same. Waving is the nonverbal equivalent to saying we are on the same side.

Below: Waving is used to signal recognition and friendliness. Failing to return a wave, however, might mean friction exists.

be reinforced on evaluations as much as looking for the negative (violators). I maintain, when we become so focused on arresting rather than serving, especially when we are rewarded for it later, our discipline to display signs of friendliness will diminish as time passes, like waving.

THE WAVES OF FISHING

The act of waving to another person is the nonverbal equivalent of saying I'm on your side. It stands to reason waving suggests a good mood exists as well. Just as waving implies recognition and pleasant frame of mind, failure to initiate or blatantly disregarding a wave can



send just the opposite message. The person is troubled. It is the non-waver, in the law enforcement context, that is my real concern. It is the non-waver that, I contend, is a threat to us.

In the summer of 1998 I became curious about waving after I noticed a fisherman return my wave as I approached him. The person was talkative and friendly and I found no violations. I paid attention to the next fisherman and found identical results. A chart was made and for the rest of that day I recorded what the person did after I initiated a wave towards them. Specifically, I was concerned with:

- 1) Did the person know it was a conservation officer waving?
- 2) Did the person fishing return my wave?
- 3) Were there any violations?

By the end of that day I had checked twenty people, nineteen of whom were found to be legal. Each returned my wave without delay. The one person who failed to wave back, interestingly, did not have a fishing license and his girlfriend had an illegal fish.

Of course, twenty checks was too small a sample size for meaningful data, but it made me wonder if I might be on to a pattern. I decided to find out. For the next four years I recorded the immediate reactions of over 400 anglers following my initial uniformed wave to them. I present this information in the next issue.

I was quite surprised with the results.

REFERENCE:

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