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WR1020 Writing in the Liberal Arts and Sciences II

Professor Anderson

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The Test

On a gloomy November Saturday morning, alarm not acknowledged and a sense of dread menaced my mind. Moving slower than usual, I managed to appear presentable enough for my day ahead. Miscalculating the time from house to destination, an ache in my belly brewed. I knew at that moment; the rest of my travels would be tense.

Only a thirty-five-mile drive one would expect to have sufficient fuel in their tank, not on this day. It seemed to fit the theme, stressful. I was not stressed for the task at the destination, but for not being better prepared. With less than a quarter tank of fuel, I anticipated the chime of the low fuel alert followed by the bright yellow reminder next to the gas gauge that screamed, “you’re a loser, plan better next time.”

At last, I approached the destination town with enough time to spare to whip in to the Shell fuel station. Not a typical fuel stop, I requested just “10 bucks please, and as fast as you can, thanks so much!” Passing on the receipt, that would waste another ten seconds, I proceeded on.

Whew, made it! Pulled in the parking lot, grabbed by ID and keys and attempted a fast walk to the double doors. Nine o clock was the target time and my watch said 8:55. Victory! Easing my tension was the sight of another late arrival. Smiles exchanged and access given through the secure double doors. Escorted through another door, down a short hallway, and to the left to take a seat among twenty other prospects.

I veered directly for the last row, found an empty chair and took a deep breath. “Take one and pass it down”, was instructed by the gentleman conducting the test. This test was called Police Officer Testing Program (POST). The pesky tummy ache accelerated. With twenty minutes to complete each section, little time was left to observe my competition. Multiple people all vying for one open position.

At last, all sections were completed and an offer to tour the facility would grant the testers time to score the participants. This offered ample opportunity to evaluate social behaviors and mannerisms of other candidates. Opting for silence, it become obvious to me who felt confident in their performance.

The time came to receive the hand-written scores. 70% or higher for each category, 75% for an overall score would get you a ticket to the next step. An internal “Yay me!” echoed in my head as I spotted the “88.9%, passed.” Lower than I wished, but relieved to have that behind me. An offer to advance to the next phase was delivered and accepted. I had nothing planned for the remainder of the day, except to visit another fuel station. $10 would last not more than the ride home.

On to the Oregon Physical Abilities Test (ORPAT); an obstacle that included walking, climbing, carrying, running, vaulting, pulling, jumping, lifting, and pushing. The only female there, my technique was to appear polite by moving to the back of the line. Really, I wanted to thin out the audience and lessen the pressure during my attempt.

Alright, here goes nothing! I was to complete six laps through the indoor course under five minutes and fifty seconds. Laps one and two came with ease, lap three was met with a burning sensation in my chest. Cold gym air in, short gasps out and the mind games commenced. “What am I doing?” repeated through laps three to five. Lap six came and my attitude toward the whole event worsened. I was annoyed, exhausted, and angry. Not an option to give up, for I would never live it down.

Yes, the last lap under my belt and all energy spent. It was not over, the push-pull portion awaited. I had practiced prior, but that was when I was fully charged. Irritation replaced energy and I powered through just in time to beat the clock. I could care less what the stop watch said, I was still caught up in my emotions. One more element, I was to drag the 175 lb. dummy across the width of the gym. With a minute to pause and catch my breath, I wobbled to the hunched over object mimicking an average sized man. I slid my arms under the dummy’s simulated armpits, bent my knees, and dragged this final hurdle through the orange cones.

I left the parking lot of that gym feeling like a champ. Not because I had the best test score or for defeating the physical challenge. I felt like a champ because I had eliminated self-doubt that I had created and accumulated. You see, I had accomplished this feat seventeen years ago at the start of my career, an experience at twenty-three which is unlike one at forty. Funny thing is, it took me half of my life to validate what I heard by others; wisdom and confidence increases with age. This indeed was validation day!

References

“The Oregon Physical Abilities Test (ORPAT)”. *Department of Public Safety Standards and Training*. <http://www.oregon.gov/DPSST/Pages/at/ORPAT.aspx>

“Police Officer Testing Program (POST)”. *Oregon Association Chiefs of Police* <http://www.policechief.org/programs/police-officer-testing-program-post/>