

Living By Officer Poole's Rules

Tom Poole clearly enjoys his job as a Roger Williams Public Safety Officer. The inside of Poole's white Public Safety car reflects this, as it is immaculately clean and contains only *The Providence Journal*, *The Hawks Herald*, and two writing tablets, neatly folded by his emergency break.

Poole's job as a Public Safety Officer entails him having to open all the buildings and classrooms, make bank runs for the Bursar's Office and the Law School, and of course his favorite, taking care of medical transports.

Poole is a heavy-set 69-year-old white man who has grey hair, a warm smile, and an incredible sense of humor. He wears a clean navy blue police officer's uniform with "RWU" pins attached on both sides of his collar and a new pair of leather New Balance shoes. His bug-sized sunglasses, which are probably from the 80s, sit on the top of his nose, and he only reveals his crystal blue eyes from beneath his sunglasses if he goes inside of a building.

Poole, who currently resides in Middletown, R.I., grew up in Fall River, M.A. but says he never went to college because back in the days when he grew up, "you either went to college or you went into the service."

Poole obviously doesn't regret his decision to go into the service, seeing as how he lights up whenever he talks about how he served in the Air Force for four years before going into the Strategic Air Command Unit. He remembers many things about those times, such as being stationed in Korea, which he says was like a vacation.

Although he now works as a public safety officer, being so wasn't what he always wanted to do; he just said the job pretty much fell into his lap after working various militia jobs.

"I've worked in security most of my life," says Poole, "I worked on the naval base and I wasn't sure how I'd like working on campus but I find that I like it very much."

Poole has worked for the University since 1995 and excitedly points out all the things that have changed over the last 13 years as he drives through campus. It's incredible to think about the history of Roger Williams and how much he's witnessed change throughout those years.

"I can remember when these went up," said Poole while pointing over in the direction of the Bayside Residence Halls. He laughs when he explains how the Stonewall Residence Halls were built,

remembering that students would be in their classrooms nearby trying to learn, and a huge boom would shake the ground across campus because the construction required it to be all on one level and the only way that could be accomplished was using dynamite.

Yet, however much Poole jokes, he definitely takes his job seriously. He instantly stops whatever he is doing when a command is given over the radio, and very professionally says “10-4” whenever he understands. Unlike other officers though, Poole knows when to be serious and when to joke around. He turns his joking side on quite frequently, but when he is talked to by one of his colleagues he becomes a completely serious, almost entirely different person.

Still, Poole has an attitude about life that everyone should try to embody. No matter what happens, even when he discusses things that didn’t go so wonderfully in his life, he somehow always finds a bright side. In fact, when he drives by a construction site and the car suddenly gets a flat tire Poole exclaims, “Oh, I got a flat. Happy days!”

Instead of losing his temper, like many people would do, he excitedly hops out of the car and rushes over to the Public Safety Office to tell a woman working there what happened, so they can both share a good laugh.

Whenever there is nothing to say Poole quietly hums an upbeat tune. Whenever I ask him questions about himself, Poole is quick to try and twist his answer around to say something wonderful about Roger Williams rather than himself.

While Poole never disclosed what his dream job was, perhaps because he never really knew what he wanted to do, he seems to quite like being a Roger Williams Public Safety Officer. Despite the fact that this clearly wasn’t Poole’s first choice, he never once complains. He talks very highly of his job, the people that he works with, and the University. Maybe he never planned on being a Public Safety Officer, but it seems like it has absolutely worked out for him.

“You’ll find it’ll work that way in your life,” Poole says wisely from behind his dark, bud-eyed glasses, “You’ll train to do something but wind up doing something completely different.”