



Turning Blue: A Life Beneath the Shield

Lawrence Hoffman

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As a kid growing up on Long Island, I struggled with an unknown psychological need to wear a uniform and a strong desire to be a part of an organization. My search would take me through Little League, Cub Scouts, and various fraternal organizations. This desire would only be fulfilled after joining the NYPD in February of 1984. Somewhere during my twenty-year career, I was transformed from that kid into a veteran New York City police detective. This is my evolution from a middle-class suburban kid with simple values who naively thought the "projects" were a homework assignment into a veteran detective working in some of the most unforgiving neighborhoods of New York City. With this transformation comes the ability to separate the daily exposure to the dark side of human nature from your own life-sustaining core beliefs. Many will fail to acquire this ability and fall victim to drugs, alcohol, divorce, crime, and even suicide. This is a process which I have come to call Turning Blue. This is my story of how I dealt with life-changing experiences at home while my gun belt and uniform hung safely in my locker. In my twenty years of experience as a police officer, I can honestly say that I have been scared and feared for my life. Could you go back to work after crying yourself to sleep, reliving your partner's screams as he lay bleeding to death in the backseat of your unmarked car, and the only thing keeping your heart in your chest was your department-issued bulletproof vest?

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