

Your opinion

Surly toll collectors could use an extra dollop of politesse

Recently, the Advance addressed issues concerning the state of affairs at the toll booths at the Verrazano-Narrows Bridge. Mr. Carl Jameson was praised for his personality, good humor, and generally, giving people a good feeling about paying their \$4. In the article by the Advance (Sept. 30, 1985), I presented Mr. Jameson with a special award for his outstanding work.

The bottom line is Mr. Jameson only stands out of the crowd because his fellow workers do not maintain the standard of politeness and adequate communication which is suppose to be part of their job.

According to my research into the communication skills training of officers at the TBTA, they are provided information and strategy in using communication skills to reduce the stress of motorists when they need information. Yet how many of us do not even get eye contact or a "hello" from the toll collector we encounter. And the further indignity of being given your change while he/she is listening to a loud radio or watching a television does not seem to be what the TBTA teaches.

I do not claim that my research into the very negative behavior the TBTA officers exhibit on the job is unique. I submit that my research is very typical of what motorists have to be subjected to



every day — and it is not fair.

You will hear the argument from the TBTA that the officers are subjected to verbal abuse by motorists. I do not deny that. Because a motorist is rude an officer should dish it right back? Not according to the training manual of the TBTA.

It is time Mr. Jameson no longer stands out as some kind of superhuman being with a heart of gold for humanity. Mr. Jameson must fade away into the ranks of his fellow officers who should be doing what he does — or should we say, should be doing what the training manual says.

It has been more than three and one-half years since I conducted my first communications survey at all the TBTA locations. At that time 36 percent of the officers did not use eye contact, 38 percent did

not say "thank you" and 62 percent did not even think to smile.

I leave it up to the readers of the Advance: Has it changed? The solution is clear:

- There must be full use of training programs at the TBTA so officers can grow and perfect their skills at good communications.

- Senior officers should be the role models and monthly [training sessions] on communication techniques should take place.

- The TBTA should conduct a motorist survey identifying areas the motorists feel need changing and improving (politeness by officers included).

- Commence a merit campaign and take ads out in all the local newspapers to promote it. Let motorists submit a name or badge number of an officer who has performed admirably.

Now, getting the name and badge number from the officer may be a challenge. The officers rarely post their badge number outside their booth and if you ask them for the information, do you think they would respond: "Oh, yes, Sir, it's 1415 — you have a good day."? Why, that's exactly what Mr. Jameson would do, I'm sure.

JERRY CAMMARATA
Rosebank