

# Oakland police needs coordination

By TIM RICHARD

"We have 42 different police departments in Oakland County, and they have 33 different communications systems."

"If you go down the Woodward corridor, you have a different jurisdiction every few miles."

Sheriff Johannes Spreen hits those facts repeatedly as he talks about what he would like the Oakland County sheriff's department to become.

Spreen denies he wants to be—or ever said he wanted to be—head of a single super force that would operate countywide.

But he does see the sheriff's department as potentially an "umbrella" agency providing support services that would make local departments better.

**SPREEN, A HUGE, hulking man** who has both walked a beat in New York's toughest neighborhood and been a college professor, sometimes fears he sounds paranoid as he talks about the resistance he runs into and the lack of cooperation he gets across the county.

He thinks it's because he's a Democrat. He was the only Democrat elected countywide in 1976, when he won his second four-year term.

"I'm not involved in the Oakland Community College police training program. I've never been invited by Ralph Moxley (now a county commissioner) even though I'm a full professor at Mercy College and an associate professor at John Jay College," Spreen said.

Spreen is a former Detroit police commissioner who spent his early years in New York City, where he rose through the ranks. His undersheriff, the man in charge of day-to-day operations, is John Nichols, also a former Detroit police commissioner and unsuccessful 1973 candidate for mayor.

**SPREEN SAID** in a lengthy interview that he wants to be more than "the keeper of the jail and deliverer of legal papers."

Actually, he also runs a road patrol in rural townships and has a marine patrol, too, but the Farmington Hills resident feels he could do far more.

The sheriff said his department would leave local police work to local police, even though he says candidly some chiefs are incompetent while offering local departments these countywide services:

•Public education. For \$25, the county can provide pamphlet racks, made by jail trustees, with the sheriff's and local police department's names, stuffed with pamphlets on how to avoid burglaries, how to deal with

rapists, how to protect against child molesters and other practical subjects. Some of the pamphlets were written by prisoners—the people who know crime best.

•Communications. This is where he talks about a single communications system for all departments in the balkanized county.

•Major crime investigation. Spreen is almost bitter as he talks about a police chief who walked around a body found in the snow and destroyed potential evidence. The sheriff's department has never been asked for help, he said.

•Records, identifications, laboratory services. Many departments are too small to have good systems, and much of their work is duplicative.

•Statistics. Much preventive work could be done if statistics were amassed to show patterns of crime. By spotting trouble areas, Spreen says, local departments could patrol more efficiently, and the sheriff could back up local efforts on a spot basis with a mobile unit. But he laments that some departments won't give him copies of the statistical reports they give the FBI.

•Hostage negotiation. The number of kidnappings has been increasing in recent years, and affluent residents in Oakland County are particular targets.

•Training. Spreen would like to have a role in planning not only basic training for new policemen but in-service training for veterans.

**SPREEN** is bluntly unhappy with politicians, though he doesn't see himself as a politician, even though he has run for office twice and has been involved in influencing public policy even as an appointed police executive. He complained that County Executive Daniel T. Murphy gives him too little flexibility in budgeting jobs. He considers it "futile" to expect cooperation from Prosecutor L. Brooks Patterson and says the state police—not the prosecutor—should be head of an organized crime task force.

Spreen said he ran as a Democrat only because Republican leaders in 1972 refused to give him the kind of primary endorsement that Democrats offered. He would rather run on a non-partisan ballot and at some time other than the November election of even-numbered years.

Spreen said his wife sometimes tells him to quit fighting, to be the keeper of the jail and server of legal papers, and he knows many in Oakland County consider him over-qualified for the post of sheriff.

But he won't give up his dream—to be "a modern urban sheriff."



JOHANNES SPREEN



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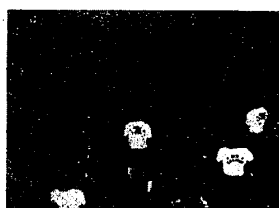


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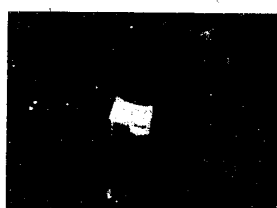
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