

Sheriff's point of view

Guidelines needed for smoother media-cop relations

The news media at times engages in "overkill in its haste to get a story," Oakland County Sheriff Johannes Spreen told college journalism instructors at their convention held last week. Spreen spoke at one of the sessions of the annual Association for Education in Journalism convention at Michigan State University.

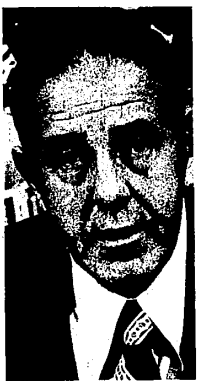
He was part of a panel speaking on photographers' and reporters' right of access to news events and the courts. Also speaking was Don Middlebrooks, an attorney who represents Florida newspapers; and William Seymour, a photo journalism professor from West Virginia University.

The Oakland County sheriff said media people had to "understand the view from behind the badge."

"I've often thought the only journalist who really understood police work was Clark Kent," Spreen joked. The media and cops can get along only if they attempt to understand each other, he said.

"There will always be crime... disturbances... disasters. And we will always be there. So will the press. But the conflict between the need to get the news, to meet a deadline versus the officer's need to protect lives and property are the seeds of conflict."

The working cop is a citizen doing a job... just like the journalist. We admit many cops don't know how to han-



Johannes Spreen
Oakland sheriff

dle the media; yet most of them realize the public has a right to know.

"We need the media to present our side — not only to cover crimes and disasters — but to help us reach the hearts and minds of citizens to prevent crime and injury."

The media can hurt the police, Spreen said, "and sometimes they should."

But, he said, some of the coverage of Detroit that labeled it "Murder City" wasn't deserved. "Detroit is a great town, full of working folks who like their beer and a shot."

As an example of overzealous media reporting, he cited the story about black and white officers drawing guns on each other, calling it "totally false at the time." The media was partly responsible for the decline of Detroit and the media has ignored other areas such as south Oakland county, which is "rapidly becoming a wasteland."

"The free press has to be a fair press; often their noble ends don't justify less-than-noble means."

Spreen noted programs to develop guidelines for reporters and photographers covering crimes and disasters was an important step but that the effort was a "huge task," since they are about 30,000 police departments in the county, 43 in Oakland County alone.

Court cases only represent exceptions and show where the process broke

Patterson to speak Tuesday

L. Brooks Patterson, Oakland County prosecutor and a recently announced candidate for governor, will speak on capital punishment at 8 p.m. Tuesday before the general membership meeting of the Alliance of Free Enterprise Companies.

Capital punishment has been prohibited in Michigan since 1837. Patterson is leading a petition drive to reinstitute it. Patterson reports that small groups of small size owners are the proposal's chief supporters.

Tickets are \$15 per person. Reservations for the meeting at Murdoch's, 2086 Crooks Road, Auburn Heights, are required. A cash bar opens at 6:30 p.m. Call the alliance at 531-6633 to make reservations.

State's rest stops to offer weather info

Michigan motorists will soon be able to learn about severe weather conditions as they travel along the state's 1,722 miles of freeways.

At rest stops, a new electronic road system will provide up-to-the-minute weather information. It was recently installed by the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) at its rest areas along I-96 near Okemos, just east of Lansing.

MDOT plans to install the systems in all 76 rest areas in the state by next year. They will monitor the Okemos system and expect to correct any technical deficiencies by that time.

Each unit costs approximately \$500, with federal funds paying 90 percent of the cost. It was designed and built entirely by MDOT staff.

The system consists of a wallboard in the lobby of the rest area telling people to press a large button for current weather information. The button activates a recorded message from the National Weather Service.

Taped weather messages are revised every 1-3 hours.

OCC realigns managerial posts

Oakland Community College has realigned the duties of several top managers in an efficiency move, President Robert F. Roelofs has announced. Some individuals will be assuming additional duties and responsibilities.

Dr. James L. Stevenson, OCC vice president of employee relations, is serving as coordinator of instructional programs in addition to his previous responsibilities. His new title is vice president of employee relations/academic affairs. Dr. Stevenson, of Utica, joined OCC in December 1978 after serving as vice president of employee relations at Macomb Community College.

William O'Mahoney, who joined the college as dean of applied sciences and arts in January 1979, has broadened his scope of duties and serves as dean of academic affairs. O'Mahoney, of Pontiac, previously served as acting director of career education at a community college in Alaska.

Betty Roame, who served as employee relations special, has assumed the position of associate director of personnel. Mrs. Roame, of Farmington Hills, was one of 64 women recently chosen from more than 400 applicants nationwide to participate in a leadership training program financed by a grant from the Fund for the Improvement of Post Secondary Education.

Kathie Standel, of Attica, has been promoted from control system supervisor of the computer center to operations supervisor. Mrs. Standel has been with OCC since 1973.

Charles Miller, director of personnel since 1974, will join the accounting department as director of budget and planning. Miller, of Bloomfield Hills, who originally worked in the college accounting department, is returning to his first love. However, he will still play an active role on college bargaining committees.

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