

Hot-pursuit chases are too dangerous to bystanders

THE RECENT deaths of two young residents of Oakland County — one 20, the other 19 — in a collision caused by an Oakland County sheriff's department car smashing into their car during a high-speed chase has prompted a lawsuit.

The mother of the 19-year-old filed the lawsuit against the sheriff's department and the deputy driving the car. The suit charges that the deputy "failed to act in a safe and responsible manner."

The chase started at 1:49 a.m. April 29 in Orion Township when officers tried to stop a car they thought had been stolen. The driver ran through five roadblocks at speeds up to 160 mph, according to police. The chase eventually ended when the driver being pursued lost control of his vehicle while driving the wrong way on Wide Track Drive in downtown Pontiac and it hit a utility pole.

UNFORTUNATELY, the chase did not end soon enough. At the intersection of Baldwin and Walton in Pontiac Township, one of three police cars in pursuit slammed into a Chevrolet Chevette contain-

ing Brian Barry, 19, and Jeffrey Nelson, 20, both of Oxford.

The chase, the deaths and the lawsuit focus attention on a problem that is of growing concern. There have been a number of instances in Oakland and Wayne County where people have been severely injured and narrowly escaped death in crashes which occurred during high-speed chases.

The question becomes: Is the capture of someone fleeing the police worth the risks involved in conducting a hot-pursuit chase?

Most police officials and officers contend that they must be ready to pursue as fast as is necessary and as far as is necessary to capture those fleeing the police. If police officers are not prepared to do this, officials say, fleeing felons and lawbreakers will take advantage of their reluctance and will evade police whenever capture is imminent.

THOSE CRITICAL of police pursuits say that police are risking the lives and limbs of themselves

and innocent bystanders, mostly to catch people who are driving on suspended licenses or who are guilty of traffic violations, not fleeing felons. The police can merely note the license plate of the car, track the owner, find out who was responsible and then arrest the driver at a later time, they say.

Officers counter that they have no way of knowing if the person trying to elude the police is a traffic offender or someone who has a more serious offense to hide and they have to assume that any person who tries to get away is trying to cover up much more than a suspended license. It is also difficult to prove who was driving unless the driver is arrested on the spot.

So far, there has been little enthusiasm on the part of police departments to put a curb to police chases.

BUT THE ALMOST automatic response of beginning a chase when a driver fails to pull over and of having cars from other departments join in along

the way seems too reckless for the urban area in which we live.

In too many instances in the last few years, people have lost their lives because of pursued drivers who have crashed into another car. And now we have a case of two bystanders killed by a collision with a police car in hot pursuit, a rarer occurrence because of the driver training police officers usually receive.

But chases are becoming commonplace enough so that an observer could almost have predicted that a death will result from one of these chases.

The deaths of Brian Barry and Jeffrey Nelson certainly weren't worth the arrest of a man suspected of stealing a car.

Departments should act on a coordinated basis to do whatever is necessary to ensure that such a tragedy will not occur again. If this means operating a driving school, or if it means limiting chases to only extreme cases involving felonies, then steps should be taken.



Tim Richard

As our parks lose funding, we lose value

"Do you ever have the urge to spend some time out-of-doors, maybe counting a few wolves, planting some trees or patrolling wilderness."

"If you have some free time, you may be able to do just that by volunteering to work on National Forests." Last year, says the handout, 821 volunteers performed work valued at nearly \$722,000 in the eastern National Forests.

They worked as campground hosts, supplying information to campers and cleaning up; issuing burning permits; assisting in archeological work; and maintaining trails. "Among those who donate their time are students, retirees, professionals, teachers and the unemployed."

ANOTHER ITEM from the mail: The state Department of Natural Resources is seeking volunteer state forest campground hosts.

"Volunteer hosts receive a free campsite and are expected to stay at least three weeks at one forest campground . . . giving campers information about the camp, rules and area, assisting in emergencies, notifying the forest manager of any problems and helping keep the grounds neat."

Yet another item: The Oakland County Parks and Recreation Commission has helped set up a Parks Foundation. It will accept gifts of money and land for the expansion of Oakland County's parks.

TWO RELATED items from Wayne County round out the sampling.

The county executive's office sought and organized volunteers from the western suburbs to clean up Edward Hines Parkway, the 20-mile belt of parkland along the Middle Rouge River. That operation, the first of its kind since the birth of the environmental movement in the early 1970s, was conducted last weekend.

Meanwhile, the Wayne County Road Commission, which operates the parks system with county general funds, is complaining that it may have to close down the parks after the Fourth of July. It's running out of money.

Parks superintendent Ed Mika told a County Commission committee that only a few years ago the commission used to appropriate \$3 million to \$4 million to operate the parks. That was cut to \$1.25 million in 1981. The entire 1983 budget for Wayne County parks is \$950,000, and that is the sum which will be entirely spent by the Fourth of July.

VERY CLEARLY we can see some patterns.

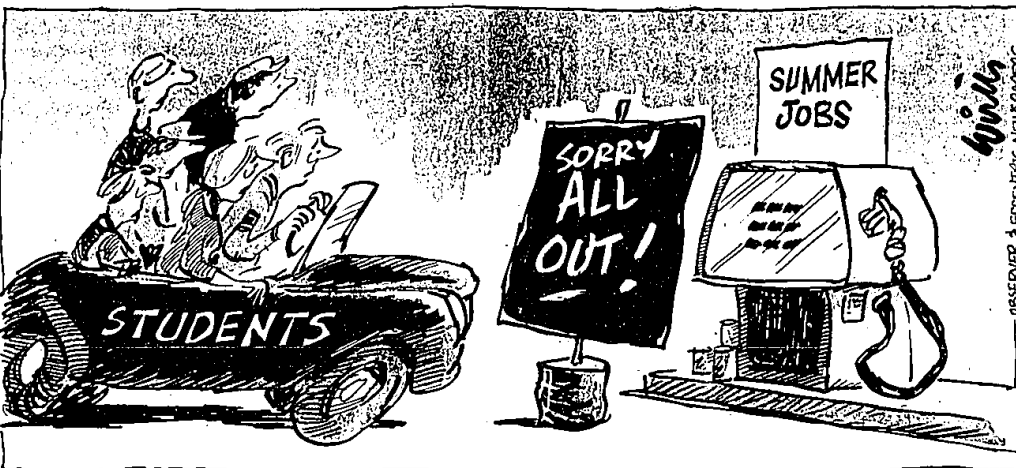
One pattern is that folks who make their livings running parks have all been attending the same seminars and are all looking to the public to volunteer to make parks and campgrounds nice.

The second pattern is that government at all levels is reducing its funding of recreation. The National Forests are run by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Just how the fellows in Washington can afford a 10 percent real increase in the arms budget — and yet ask students and unemployed folks to volunteer for National Forest jobs — is quite beyond me.

In Michigan, we know where bigger, bigger and ever bigger chunks of our state budget are going — to what is euphemistically termed "social services."

Parks should be for everyone, rich or poor, young or old. We shouldn't have to pay ever increasing fees to enjoy them. We should ask students facing ever-higher tuitions and the jobless to work for nothing.

Our governmental budget makers have their priorities screwed up.



Summer is challenging for teen-agers

With the coming of June our collective attention shifts to youths — especially teen-agers. June is a time for graduations, parties and the search for summer jobs.

Unfortunately, June also has a darker side. It's a time for teen-age pranks, unemployment and alcohol-related deaths.

An example of a harmful prank was the recent defacing of Adat Shalom Synagogue in Farmington Hills. According to police, three teen-agers spray painted swastikas, racial epithets and obscenities on the synagogue's outer wall. Sidewalks and nearby street signs also were vandalized.

GRADUATION PARTIES also present some unique June problems. The most serious concern is the abuse of alcohol.

Approximately 10,000 persons between 15-24 years old die every year after alcohol-related traffic accidents. In a recent survey, 50 percent of high school seniors admitted that they drink in cars. Obviously, the chance for a tragedy is great when alcohol and automobiles are combined.

Teen-age parties result in other problems. Often they become too large and disorderly and result in trespassing in neighbors' yards, littering and excessive noise.

Some help is being offered in the area of teen-age parties and drinking. For one thing, the legal age for drinking in Michigan has been raised to 21.



Nick Sharkey

Adults who permits teen-agers to drink at parties in their home assumes a liability risk for any tragedy that may result.

Several local organizations are conducting aggressive anti-drinking-and-driving programs. Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) has active groups in both Oakland and Wayne counties.

West Bloomfield Youth Assistance has sponsored several programs to alert adults to the dangers of teen-age substance abuse. The most recent was a "Let's Avoid an Epidemic" program which attracted 400 persons.

In addition, police agencies provide helpful advice for those planning parties.

1. An adult should be present during the entire party. Do not depend on a high school senior or college student to control his peers.
2. The party should be by invitation only. Avoid "open houses" where anyone who hears of a party can drop in.
3. Inform neighbors before the party.

4. Make sure the party stays within the confines of your yard.

ALONG WITH summer comes teen-agers searching for jobs. With a state unemployment rate of 14.9 percent, not too many jobs are available.

The 25,000 jobs created through the state's new Youth Corps plan will help only a limited number of teen-agers. Youth Corps will pay the minimum wage of \$3.35 per hour for youths to clean roadsides and parks and work in land and conservation projects.

But what about other teen-agers? Many local governmental units run job-referral centers. They should be contacted.

Teens willing to use a little creativity can often find their own jobs. There are usually neighborhood lawns that need to be cut and trees that require trimming.

Most golf courses face a serious shortage in finding male and female caddies.

Jobs are available for teens willing to work to find them.

ADULTS SHOULD not fear teen-agers as they contemplate June. Properly directed, teen-agers add zest and vitality to a community. They are one of our greatest resources.

But that requires that each of us take a personal interest in the well-being of youngsters, even if they are not our own children.

This June season should be a time for celebration, not regret.

Colorful editors showed Stroller the way

Every now and then as he travels along the journalistic highways The Stroller takes a side trip down Memory Lane to recall some of the quirks of the editors for whom he has worked during the past half century — and they were colorful characters.

The first of these unusual characters was old Charlie Weiser, the last of the brown derby fraternity and the editor who started The Stroller on a career as a columnist.

This was back in the Pennsylvania Dutch country, and he didn't hesitate to lay down some unusual rules. For instance, the first advice he gave the budding columnist was, "Forget there is a capital I on your typewriter. Never use the perpendicular pronoun, and here's why. No one gives a damn about what you think. You write about what others think."

This sounded plausible. But he continued, "And always have someone walk through your column. By that I mean you should quote people. But be sure you quote them correctly. These quotes will give life to your column."

From that day to this, the Stroller has adhered strictly to that advice, and he has found it an ideal plan to follow.

YEARS LATER, when he arrived in Detroit as a rookie on the metropolitan paper, he met head-on



the stroller
W.W. Edgar

with some other editors with unusual quirks.

The first of these "big-time" editors — M.F. Drukenbrod — advised him that the rule on the Free Press, especially in the sports department, was never to use the word "over" when writing unless you are writing about someone jumping over an obstacle. Never use the word to write about a crowd, with an expression such as "over 3,000 people attended, etc." "You must write 'more than.'"

That was a help. But one of the real puzzlers came a bit later when a new sports editor, Ralston Goss, took charge. He was the only person the Stroller ever has met in a sports department who wore the old-fashioned pince-nez with a gold chain over his right ear.

"From now on, while I am here," he told the staff, "I don't want any paragraph, any place in a story,

starting with the words 'the,' 'a' or 'an.' Sounds peculiar, but it will stand our paper apart."

Then along came Harry Bullion to head the department, and he ruled that when writing about a baseball game the writer had to put the size of the crowd in the first paragraph. He also ruled that if a game lasted more than an hour and a half, the writer had to explain why in the lead paragraph. (He would be wild if he had to cover the long, drawn-out games we have today.)

NO ONE ever pressed his quirks more than Malcolm Bingley, who captured the love of the baseball fans with his "Ify, the Dooper" column. The expression "whether or not" drove him mad. When he spotted it in the paper he would rush in to the writer, and you could hear him all over the room as he said, "Why waste words, newspaper is costly enough without wasting it."

Then he would caution the writer to limit his words to "whether" and leave the "or not" alone.

One had to admit that Bingley was, right, and as The Stroller looks back now, each of these editors had reason to lay down these seemingly odd rules.

They were a colorful lot, and The Stroller always has considered himself lucky that he had them as his guide.