

# On target Alcohol patrols prowl the roads

By Alice Collins  
staff writer

**I**T'S KIND OF like going fishing. To get the best results you have to know where the best fishing holes are. And you have to be patient.

Oakland County Deputy Sheriff Bruce Pearson was talking about fishing for drunk drivers.

The eccentric rode along with Pearson last Friday night and early Saturday morning as he and other members of the alcohol enforcement team zeroed in on the roadways of Beverly Hills, Franklin, Bingham Farms, Southfield and Lathrup Village.

Those communities make up what's labeled Section 10 on the map that divides the county into 11 alcohol enforcement areas. Making up the team last weekend were two Oakland County Sheriff's cars, and several assigned cars from the community police departments in District 10.

All assigned officers were armed with a Preliminary Breath Tester (PBT), an instrument the size of a pocket calculator used by officers in the field to give a quick, preliminary reading to determine the blood alcohol content of a motorist suspected of driving drunk.

INSTALLED IN one of the county cars is a Breathalyzer, the device used throughout Michigan to determine the blood alcohol content of persons arrested for drunk driving. The reading from the Breathalyzer, run by a certified operator, is admitted as evidence in court.

Back at the various police departments, booking officers and holding cells were awaiting those arrested. At the Southfield department, there's another Breathalyzer and certified operator waiting to make tests.

Briefing for the officers involved was at 11 p.m. Friday at the Southfield Police Department. Re-familiarized alcohol enforcement team logos were placed on the police cars.

Then the team went to work. Pearson was anxious to get going. His co-workers claim he holds the unofficial record for nabbing and arresting suspected drunk drivers.

Pearson says he doesn't keep track himself. But Deputy Lewis Tyler does.

"BRUCE IS way out there ahead of everyone else," said Tyler. Prior to last Friday night Pearson had an unbroken string of 28 drunk driving arrests — at least one for every night working alcohol enforcement.

Pearson, a resident of Stochester, works 9 p.m. to 5 a.m. on the roads of Oakland County four days a week and spends countless hours in court testifying on those cases.

Pearson and Tyler, like many specially trained police officers in Oakland communities, are dedicated to clearing drunk drivers from the roadways.

Arresting suspected drunk drivers has always been part of a police officer's job. Now, armed with new laws, new testing equipment, specialized training, higher fines and a major national focus on the problem, it has become a crusade.

PEARSON IS considered a specialist. He's been working primarily on alcohol enforcement for five years. He often joins the enforcement teams that go into each county district an average of two nights a month. The peak nights for drunk drivers, the hours



A motorist suspected of driving under the influence of alcohol agrees to blow into the preliminary breath tester. In this instance, the man is cleared by the test.

and the special locations are identified by the data system of the Traffic Improvement Association (TIA) of Oakland County, co-sponsor of the county-wide project.

Asked if he thought he'd maintain his record by making a drunk driving arrest Friday night, Pearson indicated he probably would. "We may not find one this early," he said, "but there's a 99 percent chance we'll get one after 2 a.m. when the bars close."

"THE REAL DRUNK ones are easy to spot, they're all over the road."

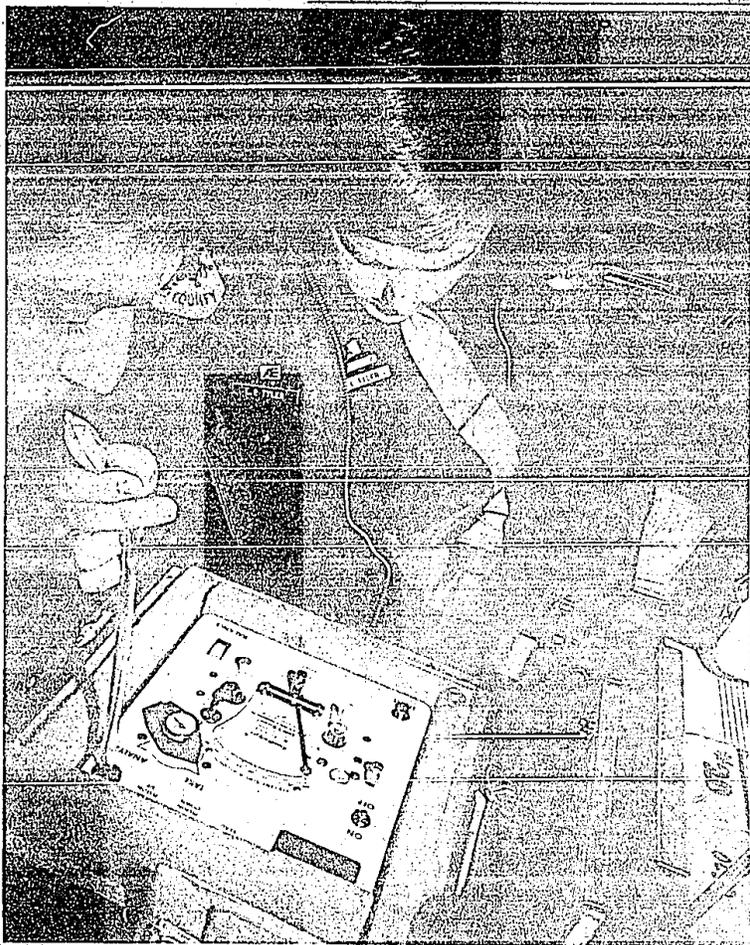
Pearson continued to talk as he drove up and down Telegraph, back and forth across 12 and 13 Mile, down Evergreen, over 10 Mile and up Greenfield.

"It's the ones who register .11 and .12 percent (on the Breathalyzer) that are harder for officers to spot and are ones who do a lot of damage to others." (Under Michigan law a motorist whose blood alcohol content registers .08 and .09 is considered impaired. Those .10 or above are considered intoxicated.)

Pearson pulled in behind several cars stopped for a light. "You get in with a pack like this, and if there's a drunk in the bunch, usually the sober ones will pick him out for you by kind of keeping away from him."

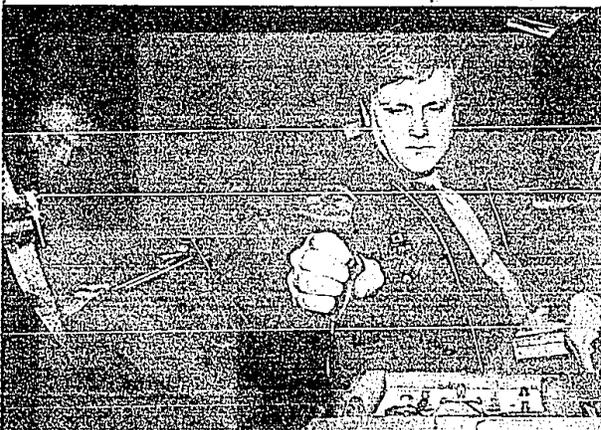
"THE FUNCTIONAL drunks out there can fool a lot of people. But you watch their lane usage. You have to look hard, but then you can see them drift in the lane. When you get up near them, you can see their front wheels jerking. They're always correcting."

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Oakland County Deputy Sheriff Lewis Tyler administers the Breathalyzer test to a man just arrested on a charge of drunk driving. He's already failed the preliminary

breath test. The test is being administered with a portable unit installed in the police car.



Oakland County Deputy Bruce Pearson, left, brings his prisoner to the car with the

portable Breathalyzer, so that Deputy Tyler can administer the test.



Members of the alcohol enforcement team on a stop in Southfield early Saturday morning process a suspected drunk driver.

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