

Police teamwork

Chiefs powwow on ways to catch mobile crooks

By Kathy Parrish
staff writer

Because criminals don't always stay within city limits, police chiefs have a lot of common concerns. At a conference sponsored by the Oakland County prosecutor and executive, they vent support for several countywide proposals they hope will make their local jobs easier.

The officials supported a new system of computerized criminal histories, a policy on firearm use by officers and a proposal to upgrade the computer system which spots "fugitive" drivers. They also took home to their city councils a model ordinance to regulate drug paraphernalia.

"Our purpose is to address some countywide law enforcement problems," explained Chief Assistant Prosecutor Richard Thompson, asking the chiefs for input.

"This is supposed to be a two-way program. We want to hear your discussion and criticism."

WELCOMING representatives of every police department in Oakland County was Prosecutor L. Brooks Patterson.

He drew chuckles with a quip that the seminar would climax with a shoot-out in the parking lot between Farmington Hills Police Chief John Nichols and James Stewart, Huntington Woods safety director. The two men are chief rivals, with Bill Ortmann, for the Republican nomination for sheriff.

The prosecutor asked the chiefs to help his office put habitual offenders in prison by keeping more careful case histories of those they arrest.

"The career criminal is the real threat to our society," said Patterson.

"But we need those case histories if we're going to file habituals against career criminals. And we're gonna be even more insistent in the future."

MICHIGAN STATE Police Capt. John Sura said a high priority with his organization is improving computerization of criminal histories. Kalamazoo and Emmett counties are testing a new system which Oakland County officials would like to adopt.

The unique feature of the system is that it is not based on fingerprinting — which Sura contends is the flaw in the present way of detecting criminals. To get a warrant, an officer must fill out a criminal

case history on a suspect. That is fed into a central computer which Sura hopes would have statewide information by 1987.

"In the 1950s, '60s and '70s, when you committed felonies you went to jail. But that's not always the case now," explained the captain, who said many criminals are diverted into other programs and never get fingerprinted.

"What makes the Michigan system fail-safe is that you need a fingerprint."

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L. Brooks Patterson
Oakland County prosecutor

THE PROSECUTOR'S office also presented the chiefs a model policy on use of firearms by officers. The subject is controversial because of two cases involving the shooting of two 15-year-old burglars — one in Memphis, Tenn., and the other in Flint.

There's a movement afoot to offer special protection to juveniles," said Assistant Prosecutor Gerald Poinon, who advised the departments to stop using "deadly force" against fleeing burglars. He suggested every department draw up a deadly-force policy.

The prosecutor's office also urged the officials to ask their city councils to adopt an ordinance regulating drug paraphernalia.

"It's constitutionally correct, simple to understand and effective," explained Thompson. The chief assistant prosecutor expressed concern that the Legislature is not moving faster on two Senate bills dealing with drug paraphernalia and "look alike," or counterfeit, drugs.

This would police both sides of the street. The chief would be able to get information from the Police Department.

ANOTHER PROPOSAL dealt with the expanding the county's Courts and Law Enforcement Management Information System (CLEMIS). It would criminal justice agencies to exchange information.

The chiefs were asked to support about 275,000 of improvements to the system by way of an analyst programmer and clerk liaison. The personnel would input burglary reports and those pawn shop dealers are required to fill out on property they buy.

"We want to increase our ability to use the Precious Metals Act to get the criminal — basically the burglar," explained Thompson, who still must present the proposal to the Oakland County Board of Commissioners. "Police departments are not able to loosen up the manpower to prepare the transaction reports. This would assist them."

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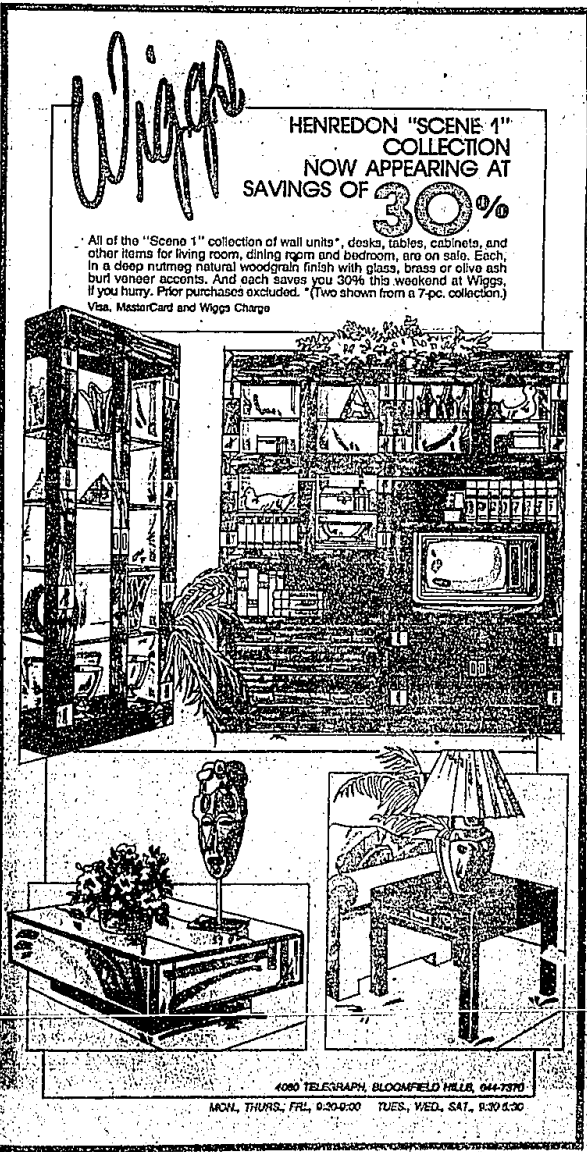
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