

# Nichols aims for open-door policy, end 'confrontations'

By Kathy Parrish  
staff writer

Unlike his predecessor, Oakland County's new sheriff won't be calling a lot of news conferences.

But Sheriff John F. Nichols assured reporters he and his officers intend to work with them, not dodge their questions.

Meeting with reporters last week, Nichols said he intends to cooperate as fully as possible with the press. In new guidelines issued Jan. 23, he encouraged his officers



Sheriff John Nichols  
remove the barricades

cers to help reporters get "the complete story" out to the public.

"We've seen 12 years of confrontation, and it's gotten us nowhere," said Nichols, alluding to former Sheriff Johannes F. Spreen's difficulties with the press.

"I'm gonna give it a try another way."

INTRODUCING his command officers, Nichols asked reporters to call him if they encounter real problems. But he urged the press to try to work through the staffers who handle day to day activities.

"I know how my name looks in print, and I don't need any additional publicity," said the former Detroit police commissioner who also was Farmington Hills police chief.

Taking another swipe at Spreen, whose name was constantly in the papers, Nichols said firmly that he had no intention of calling "any self serving press conferences."

"There won't be a press conference called that's not of a serious nature," he added.

The sheriff suggested dealing with his subordinates will be "easier, more efficient and gives recognition to the people doing the work. Most of us are deep thinkers, and they are out there working."

STARTING OUT the Oakland County Jail news conference, Nichols said he wants to cooperate with the media.

"I want to start this administration off with a new approach to dealing with the media. I've learned by experience that the easiest way to get bad press is to shut the door in their face," he explained.

The sheriff said he realizes there is a long tradition of distrust between reporters and policemen. But that suspicion makes it difficult for reporters to gather timely in-

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— Sheriff John Nichols

formation and may contribute to inaccurate reporting of police activities.

"Let's let our hair down. Traditionally there has been an adversary relationship between police and reporters," Nichols explained.

"If we recognize the problem and are both willing to deal with it, I don't see any problem."

DURING A QUESTION and answer session, Nichols and his command officers asked reporters about their concerns. He listened carefully to complaints ranging from photographers being shooed away from a crime scene to deputies refusing to identify themselves to reporters.

"Officers who refuse to identify themselves? You've got to be kidding," the sheriff said.

An organizational chart outlined who to call for information. But Nichols assured reporters access will not be limited to just a couple of officials.

"We are honestly and sincerely attempting to remove some of the barriers of the past," he said.

"I'm not so naive that I don't realize that with you people lies an opportunity for the Sheriff's Department to sell itself.

"And if we've done something bad, while the hell out of us."

Thursday, February 7, 1985 O&E

(BWT, 9, 197)

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## Dem 'brainstorm' session set

Oakland County Democrats will hold a "brainstorming" session to discuss county needs and Democratic politics in the county.

All interested people are invited to the 11 a.m. meeting Saturday, Feb. 9, in Room 3122 of Cobo Hall, Detroit. The session will precede the 1:30 p.m. district caucuses at the Democratic State Convention.

Democratic candidates for 1984 county offices will attend to do long range planning. "We need to discuss where we are, where we are going and what we have to do between now and 1988," said Larry Pernick, Democratic leader.

"Together we must build on our past efforts to achieve greater victories." For more information, call 647-2981.



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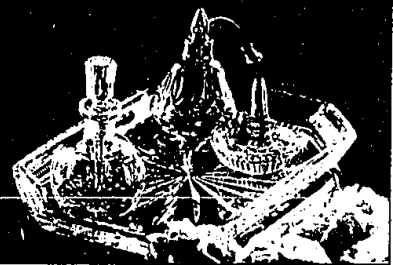
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