

# Real-life cops recover my nonexistent stolen car

They got my sneakers. Which, by itself, would have been no small loss, but the reason they got my sneakers was because they were in the trunk of the car, which was last seen by the parking lot guard heading more or less east, having become what the cops call a UDAA, which is copese for "unlawful driving away of an automobile."

It came as something of a shock, since I was just leaving a press conference announcing the new Bentley Continental R, a \$261,000 artifact of British automotive tradition, and was still practicing how to say Bentley-type things like "those peasants," with the proper kind of disdain.

ACTUALLY, I never had a car stolen before, even the old Pinto I kept leaving in bad neighborhoods

with the keys in the ignition. I've had tools, wallets, briefcases and tachometers stolen out of cars — even a bouquet of flowers on Mother's Day — but never the whole car. This kind of thing takes a while to sink in with all of its ramifications.

The first thought was chilling. Here I was, on foot, in the middle of the worst urban hellhole on earth, as one editorial writer put it, with nothing between me and the street savages but a uniformed doorman and a tray full of empty champagne glasses.

LUCKILY, THE doorman, who was feeling pretty bad about the car theft at the Bentley luncheon, offered me a ride in a chauffeured limousine. Lucky I wasn't stuck in the suburbs, I thought, remembering



auto talk  
**Dan McCosh**

a friend who had his car stolen in Birmingham: He had to get his own ride home. Eventually he got a note in the mail: "I only got a lousy \$100 for your car — your friendly neighborhood junkie."

It's bad enough even if they don't rub it in. But I digress.

I TOOK THE limo to the police station, where the guy who takes UDAA reports was buried in paper.

First he wanted a VIN, which is copese for "vehicle identification number," since, as he explained it, a lot of car thefts are reported by people who actually want their cars stolen, or even fake the theft to get insurance money. Another chilling thought. He knows about the Pinto.

The problem, as I tried to explain, was that it actually wasn't my car. It was a pre-production model that belonged to Chevrolet engineering, on

loan for evaluation, and since it wasn't yet in production, it wasn't listed. It may have been the first car in history stolen before a single one was sold. In fact, as far as the UDAA computer was concerned, it didn't exist.

The look a cop in the worst urban hellhole on earth, who is buried in UDAA paperwork, gives you when you start this kind of story is the most chilling of all. I think he made a move for his gun, but being trained in public relations, he caught on that I was a member of the press.

I WENT BACK to the office to find some VIN numbers — or something that the UDAA computer could digest — when the phone rang, and a cheery voice that identified itself as working for the Wayne-Macomb

auto theft task force, or something, announced that they had found the car already. Not only the car, they had another under surveillance.

"Nice job," I said, thinking that all this publicity about car thefts has finally got some action. Then I remembered that I had to go back to the UDAA cop and explain that not only did the stolen car not exist, but it was already found, and he would have to get the VIN number from the other cops who had the car, who were writing up reports on finding it, and wondering why it wasn't stolen yet.

I could only hope he was a bad shot.

Dan McCosh is automotive editor of Popular Science Magazine.

## datebook

- DETROIT CHAMBER**  
Thursday, Sept. 19 — Greater Detroit Chamber of Commerce meets in Southfield. Information: 851-8270.
- WOMEN'S ECONOMICS**  
Thursday, Sept. 19 — Women's Economic Club meets in Detroit. Information: 983-5088.
- NETWORKING**  
Thursday, Sept. 19 — The Business Network meets in Novi. Information: 644-1229. Sponsor: Oakland County Chamber of Commerce.
- HUMAN RESOURCES**  
Thursday, Sept. 19 — Human Resources Association of Detroit meets in Southfield. Information: 524-1385.
- ADVANCED WORDPERFECT**  
Friday, Sept. 20 — "Advanced WordPerfect" 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. in Southfield. Non-member fee: \$225. Information: 353-4500. Sponsor: American Society of Employees.
- CHILD CARE PROVIDERS**  
Friday-Saturday, Sept. 20-21 — Sixth annual Karing for Kids small business conference for child care providers near Rochester. Fee: \$25. Information: 1-689-6410. Sponsor: U.S. Small Business Administration.
- BEGINNING IBM PC**  
Saturdays, Sept. 21 through Oct. 12 — "For Beginners: the IBM PC" 9 a.m. to noon near Rochester. Fee: \$120. Information: 370-3120. Sponsor: Oakland University.
- QUALITY MANAGEMENT**  
Saturdays, Sept. 21 through Nov. 16 — "Total Quality Management" 9 a.m. to noon in Farmington Hills. Fee: \$375. Information: 540-1511. Sponsor: Oakland Community College.
- SPREADSHEETS**  
Monday, Sept. 23 — "Lotus 1-2-3: Spreadsheets" 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. in Southfield. Non-member fee: \$225. Information: 353-4500. Sponsor: American Society of Employees.
- OVERBUILT MARKET**  
Monday, Sept. 23 — "Suburban
- Prospects in an Overbuilt Market" 7:30-9:30 p.m. in Birmingham. Fee: \$10. Information: 644-5832. Sponsor: The Community House.
- GET A MORTGAGE**  
Monday, Sept. 23 — "Purchasing Your Home and Obtaining a Mortgage" 7:30-9:30 p.m. in Birmingham. No charge. Information: 644-5832. Sponsor: The Community House.
- MANAGEMENT PROGRAM**  
Mondays, Sept. 23 through Oct. 8 — "Leadership Skills for Managers" 6:30-9:30 p.m. in Bloomfield Hills. Fee: \$175. Information: 540-1511.
- SPREADSHEETS**  
Mondays, Sept. 23 through Oct. 14 — "Introduction to Lotus 1-2-3" 7-9 p.m. in Bloomfield Hills. Fee: \$10. Information: 645-3635. Sponsor: Cranbrook Schools.
- BUSINESS WRITING**  
Tuesday, Sept. 24 — "Effective Business Writing — Letters, Memos and Reports" 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. in Southfield. Non-member fee: \$225. Information: 353-4500. Sponsor: American Society of Employees.
- FINANCIAL PLANNING**  
Tuesdays, Sept. 24 through Nov. 26 — "Do-It-Yourself Financial Planning" 6:30-9:30 p.m. near Rochester. Fee: \$245. Information: 370-3120. Sponsor: Oakland University.
- DESKTOP PUBLISHING**  
Tuesdays, Sept. 24 through Oct. 15 — "Desktop Publishing Featuring Aldus PageMaker 4.0" 2-5 p.m. near Rochester. Fee: \$175. Information: 370-3120. Sponsor: Oakland University.
- DESKTOP FUNDAMENTALS**  
Tuesdays, Sept. 24 through Oct. 22 — "Design Fundamentals for the Desktop Publisher" 6:30-9:30 p.m. near Rochester. Fee: \$175. Information: 370-3120. Sponsor: Oakland University.
- WORDPERFECT 5.0**  
Tuesdays, Sept. 24 through Oct. 15 — "Beginning Computer" 7-9 p.m. in Bloomfield Hills. Fee: \$88. Information: 645-3635. Sponsor: Cranbrook Schools.

- HIRING BETTER**  
Tuesday, Sept. 24 — "How to Hire the Best" 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. in Auburn Hills. Fee: \$79. Information: 370-3120. Sponsor: Oakland University.
- OFFICE PARKS**  
Wednesday, Sept. 25 — National Association of Industrial and Office Parks meets in Troy. Information: 255-2540.
- BUILDING MANAGERS**  
Wednesday, Sept. 25 — Legal seminar for property management companies 8:11-30 a.m. in Southfield. Fee: \$50. Information: 352-0202. Sponsor: Institute of Real Estate Management.
- CASE USERS GROUP**  
Wednesday, Sept. 25 — CASE users group meets in Southfield. Information: 641-8820.
- CAREER WOMEN**  
Wednesday, Sept. 25 — National Association of Career Women meets in Farmington Hills. Information: 474-4241.
- IBM PAGEMAKER**  
Wednesday-Thursday, Sept. 25-26 — "IBM PageMaker: Introduction" 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. in Southfield. Non-member fee: \$420. Information: 353-4500. Sponsor: American Society of Employees.
- MANAGEMENT PROGRAM**  
Wednesday, Sept. 25 through Oct. 30 — "Fundamentals of Finance and Accounting for Non-Financial Managers" 6:30-9:30 p.m. in Bloomfield Hills. Fee: \$175. Information: 540-1511.
- CUSTOMER SERVICE**  
Thursday, Sept. 26 — "Reinventing Customer Service in the 1990s" 7-9:30 p.m. in Birmingham. Fee: \$15. Information: 644-5832. Sponsor: The Community House.
- CPAs, BANKERS**  
Thursday, Sept. 26 — Michigan Association of Certified Public Accountants meet with bankers in Southfield. Information: 855-2288.
- NETWORKING**  
Thursday, Sept. 26 — Strive, a networking group for women in business, meets in Troy. Information: 391-0065.
- APPRAISER LAW**  
Friday, Sept. 27 — State appraising licensing law discussed in Southfield. Information: Michigan Association of Certified Appraisers, Box 4691, Troy 48069-4691.
- WORDPERFECT INTRO**  
Friday, Sept. 27 — "Introduction to WordPerfect" 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. in Southfield. Non-member fee: \$225. Information: 353-4500. Sponsor: American Society of Employees.
- WOMEN SUPERVISORS**  
Friday, Sept. 27 — "How Successful Women Supervise" 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. in Auburn Hills. Fee: \$79. Information: 370-3120.
- SITE MANAGEMENT**  
Fridays-Saturdays, Sept. 27 through Oct. 12 — "Successful Site Management" in Southfield. Fee: \$359. Information: 559-1110. Sponsor: Institute of Real Estate Management.

## marketplace

Visual Communications Inc., a full-service marketing/communications firm in Farmington Hills, has entered the publishing business with the creation of a new division. The publishing division's premiere publication, Solutions, is scheduled for a September release. Solutions is a package of easy-to-read direct response cards targeted at business-to-business advertisers.

The Merrick Insurance Agency Inc., Southfield, has been named to SECURA Insurance's 1991 President's Circle. Merrick Insurance Agency Inc. was one of the top 75 independent insurance agencies who

earned membership to this year's President's Circle. In order to qualify for SECURA's President's Circle, agencies are rated on various criteria.

Hilton Hotels Corp. assumed management of a former Comptel Hotel in Southfield. European Hotel Investors Inc. will maintain ownership of the 198-room Hilton Garden Inn.

Ray D. Elsbrenner & Co. of Troy won top honors in the Public Relations Society of America's East Central District award competition for media relations program it developed and implemented for Robert Bosch Corp.

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## AN OPEN LETTER

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Ralph Sherman  
Director of Sales

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