

Police pursuit

Officer rightly commended

You hear the words — police pursuit — and your spine chills. You prime yourself for the bad news. Someone, most often an innocent motorist or pedestrian totally uninvolved in the pursuit, has been seriously injured or killed.

That's why Farmington Hills Police Chief Bill Dwyer's commendation of Officer Mitchell Skazalski — who on Monday, Sept. 28, decided to end his pursuit of an auto theft suspect — is right on target.

Too often, pursuits in any number of communities continue far beyond what is safe for other motorists on the road.

Skazalski backed off a 80- to 90-mile-an-hour pursuit of a car theft suspect on west-bound 12 Mile. A police videotape shows the suspect running a red light at the 12 Mile and Farmington intersection, then continuing west at a high speed to Haggerty, where he turned south, sideswiped a van on the I-696 overpass, careened into the concrete guardrail and totaled the vehicle.

Skazalski picked up the vehicle just west of Orchard Lake on 12 Mile. After talking with a supervisor, the veteran officer decided to call it quits.

If you drive around Farmington Hills, you know that the route chosen by the fleeing suspect is plagued with traffic congestion. Skazalski made the right decision.

The public's conscience has long been concerned about police pursuits. While the police may have every good intention of driving safely — even at high speeds — the guys they're

chasing aren't sharing the same state of mind. The bad guys have one goal: to get out and to get out fast. And in the process, a number of other motorists have had the misfortune of being in the way and end up dead.

An auto theft is not worth it, and neither is the suspect driving the car. It's true those of us who are not police officers have no idea what they are confronted with daily. We can only imagine the pumping adrenaline and the need to get the bad guy, especially if a violent crime is involved.

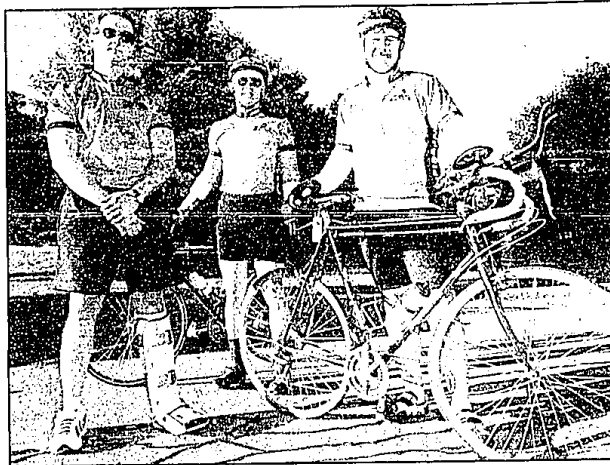
The Farmington Hills Police Department has a 28-page pursuit policy. Normally, Dwyer said, an officer or supervisor has the discretion to end or continue a pursuit. But we agree with Dwyer: when it comes to a police pursuit, "You're damned if you do, and damned if you don't."

There's no question that property crimes are not worth the chance of killing someone in a police pursuit. Police have at their disposal technological and scientific abilities to track and eventually apprehend most criminals.

A violent crime sheds a different light on pursuits. Arguably, the desire is to grab someone before they commit another violent crime. In the event that an officer decides to continue a pursuit, we hope that officer — like Skazalski did — puts the safety of other motorists and pedestrians foremost in mind.

It is fitting that Skazalski is honored for his decision to end the pursuit Sept. 28. Who knows how many lives he may have saved with his split-second decision?

Spokesmen



STAFF PHOTO BY BILL BRISLER

Speak up: Cyclists David Harper, Jon Carter and Fred Dore pose before their evening ride around the community. If you are an avid bicyclist and want more pathways for your sport and leisure and transportation, contact Oakland County and make your feelings known.

LETTERS

Give me facts

I do agree with the Rev. Ronald P. Byars in his article of Sept. 17 on Adam Cardinal Malda's religious right to speak out against physician-assisted suicide. Only I know that he not only has a "right" to speak out, but he, in his leadership position, has an obligation to speak out. This obligation also extends to all the reverends, pastors and rabbis and other teachers in our community's chapels, churches, temples and Christian schools.

This is not only his "point of view" — he knows it to be wrong based on the facts of the Ten Commandments which are to be followed by all Jewish and Christian people. The mere dialoguing of the facts from the Commandments or Scripture does not change the facts, it just may change the way we feel. Facts are facts.

I also agree with the fact that many people view the phrase separation of church and state in the wrong way. The separation of church and state is to protect the common people of the state from being forced to submit to one form of religion, chosen by the state or government OR to submit unreligiously, the absence of any religion (which is a religion in itself).

Please, as leaders, give your followers the facts, not your opinions or points of view. If you have the facts, give me the facts, not your opinion. I have an opinion and I want it to be my opinion based on facts, not my opinion based on your point of view! If you do not have the facts, why and where are you leading your followers? Be leaders, do not kowtow to consensus.

Marjorie Stefanick-Laabs
Farmington

will be justified by Time Warner as part of a so-called "social contract," actually a sweetheart deal worked out by the cable company with the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) without any participation by our city representing the consumers. Since the cable industry controls the FCC, it was easy for the two of them to come to an agreement that would shift the rest of us.

There probably will be an additional rate increase to cover, according to Time Warner, increased costs. This will probably reflect, according to Time Warner, the addition or shifting of a shopping channel or dropping another desired channel on the basic schedule and maybe replacing it with a so-called menu, the listing of programs on other channels.

Before you start feeling sorry for poor Time Warner, let me quote from a story from Reuters News Service that appeared in several newspapers. The story pointed out that Time Warner reported an unexpected profit for the second quarter as its cable networks, publishing operations and Hollywood studios all produced record cash flow.

The strong results sent their stock to record highs. Time Warner net income was up 237 percent, revenues were up 15.6 percent and growth was up 17 percent.

Come on, Time Warner, give Farmington Hills, Farmington and Novi residents a much-deserved break. Put away those notices to customers about a rate increase. You don't need it.

Aldo Vagnozzi, mayor
Farmington Hills and member
of the cable commission

Opinions are to be shared: We welcome your ideas, as do your neighbors. That's why we offer this space on a weekly basis for opinions in your own words. We will help by editing for clarity. To assure authenticity, we ask that you sign your letter and provide a contact telephone number.

Letters should be mailed to: Editor, The Farmington Observer, 33411 Grand River, Farmington, Michigan 48335. Or they can be faxed to (248) 477-9722.

Dipping into pockets

I know that with the new year approaching, our cable company, Time Warner, will be dipping into our pockets again with a rate increase. They will claim that they will need the increase because they're just not covering costs.

One dollar monthly of that rate increase

Say 'yes' to Clean Michigan

We urge voters to say "yes" to Proposal C, the Clean Michigan Initiative bond issue on the Nov. 3 ballot.

We laud Republicans and Democrats in both chambers of the Legislature and the Engler administration for putting aside partisan posturing and coming up with a proposal to clean up Michigan lands, waters and parks.

Proposal C is a \$675 million bond issue. About half, \$335 million, will go for "brown-field redevelopment and environmental cleanup." The rest will go to the Clean Water Fund, state parks revitalization, local parks and recreation, waterfronts, control of lead hazards and contaminated river sediments.

Just one question has been raised about the package — the "brownfield" portion. Its chief critic, Geoffrey Fieger, and others raise an honest question about whether it's "corporate welfare." We think not. It's in the public interest of cities, suburbs and farmlands. Here's why:

The 1992 Polluter Pay law backfired. It imposed such strict liability standards that anyone who ever had an interest in the property could have been stuck paying a cleanup bill.

Of course, the real polluter — who may be dead or bankrupt — couldn't be touched. Bankers and other lenders wanted no part of financing a new industrial project on old city land for fear of being stuck with liability.

Result: Business and industrial developers paved over "greenfields," meadows and croplands that used to provide food and recreation. This is known as "urban sprawl," not growth. It's improper stewardship of nature's resources.

So the state amended the law to change it from a "deep pockets" measure to something more nearly resembling true "polluter pay."

Election '98

The Proposal C bond money will enable the state to help fund cleanups, with local governments and potential developers, so that old land can be redeveloped. Moreover, it can be redeveloped close to people who need jobs.

It can be used for cleanups, demolitions and treatment where there is no financially viable person — human or corporate — to pay for it. Far from being "corporate welfare," that is the people of Michigan stepping into a vacuum and saving old urban land.

And it will result in more and better jobs than casinos or ball parks.

The \$675 million is \$175 million more than Gov. Engler wanted and \$325 million less than some environmentalists wanted. We are reminded of Alistair Cooke's commentary on American history: "The first three rules of politics are: compromise, compromise, compromise."

Finally, we point out that Proposal C asks no new taxes. The bond issue will be paid off at about \$40 million a year from existing state revenues.

Why bond? To get the job done faster. Economists say a bond issue is a valid way of financing a capital project. The Federal Reserve Board has just lowered the discount rate, making borrowing cheaper. This is a perfect time to borrow, and a perfect way to use the money.

Proposal C deserves a "yes" vote on Nov. 3.

COMMUNITY VOICE

QUESTION:

What do you like most about fall?



"You know how the trees turn orange. That's so beautiful. You can wear nice warm suits in dark colors."
Rita Altman
Southfield



"I like the start of the weather change. It's not too cold or too hot."
Jillian Skiver
Farmington Hills



"The fact that Halloween's coming."
Theresa Baumgardner
Southfield



"Farmington Harrison football. Currently 5-0. I love those boys."
Billy Stebbin
Farmington

Farmington Observer

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— Philip Power