

Sheriff loses personnel fight

By SUSAN L. SILK

OAKLAND COUNTY — Oakland County Sheriff Johannes F. Spreen has lost his second fight with the Oakland County Personnel Appeal Board over the dismissal of a jail detention officer.

The five-member panel—final arbitrators of county employe discipline disputes—ruled Friday that Detention Officer James E. Mathis, fired May 2, must be reinstated immediately. No lost pay was ordered for the employe, however.

AN OFFICER returning to the jail noticed Mathis and a second detention officer, Larry Young, leaving the jail compound in the county car without any other passengers, Stites said.

The men were ordered to return to the jail and comply. On June 20, after a departmental and FBI investigation, Young was arrested on charges that he was transporting prisoners from the jail to an area motel and delivering drugs to the prisoners.

Lt. Harry Jones, jail supervisor, testified that the April 27 complaint was only the latest in Mathis' personnel file. After three suspensions, a written reprimand and "many hours" of counseling, Jones said firing Mathis was the only alternative.

Mathis testified that when he asked for the county car it was to pick up free or discounted food offered by area quick-food restaurants to officers in uniform and driving a marked car.

IN STATEMENTS made by Mathis and the other detention officers, the panel was told such an occurrence was common.

After taking food orders for several other employes in the jail, Mathis, the senior officer on the jail's second floor that morning, said his whereabouts were known. He denied leaving his post without notification or dereliction of duty charges.

In ruling in Mathis' favor, the panel concluded that while the car was unauthorized the practice was established. Since the incident, a car use policy has been established, a board said.

An investigation into the free food charges will be initiated, Spreen said.

"There was a rule prohibiting such practice before this incident, and I am going to check into the allegations. But they may have been introduced to confuse the real issue," Spreen said.

HIS REACTION to the ruling, which he learned about Monday afternoon, was one of "amazement," the sheriff said.

"Mathis would never have been permitted to take a car to get food. That wasn't his function," the sheriff added.

The panel "believed Mathis over Jim Stites, an 18-year veteran of the department," Spreen said.

Stites is the object of a recently filed lawsuit charging that he attacked a suspect after a high-speed chase in an unmarked camper. The Lake Orion resident's \$150,000 lawsuit also names Spreen. The sheriff said, however, he had not taken office yet when the incident occurred in 1971.

ON JUNE 27, the appeals board ruled that the sheriff's department must repay two road patrol officers for their two-day suspensions after the officers participated in a newspaper interview critical of the sheriff.

Spreen then planned to appeal that ruling to the Oakland County Circuit Court. Those plans are now on the back burner, he said.

"I've been mulling that over. We don't have a full-time legal adviser. I don't have the time or ability to sit down with a (part-time) lawyer to provide an adequate case," Spreen said.

Union-provided or private counsel has been available to the employees during the two appeals board cases, the sheriff added.

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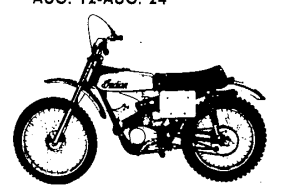
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Pontiac man held in fatal car crash

BLUOMFIELD HILLS — Twenty-two-year-old Charles M. Peckham, of Pontiac, will be arraigned Aug. 23 before Circuit Judge Robert T. Templin on two charges of manslaughter.

Templin was involved in the Aug. 4 accident that killed two, placed one passenger in critical condition and hospitalized three others for less serious injuries. The accident occurred near Woodward and Opdyke Road.

Albert Russell, 58, of Clearwater, Fla., was reported Tuesday in serious condition in St. Joseph Mercy Hospital. Russell suffered head injuries and lacerations. His wife, Mary Russell, was the only other accident victim still hospitalized Tuesday, but was reported in

good condition.

Ester Lapenta, 51, of Dearborn, died shortly after the accident. Frances Dizonia, 50, of Livonia, died the following evening in St. Joseph Mercy Hospital. Their husbands, hospitalized for minor injuries, had been released by Tuesday.

Peckham's car struck the vehicle carrying the six passengers at 11:40 p.m. Aug. 3, Bloomfield Hills police said it is believed that Peckham was traveling 80-85 miles per hour and that he had been drinking. He struck the other car from the rear.

Peckham is being held at the Oakland County Jail, unable to meet the \$20,000 bond that was set.

Seek Cleary graduates

All graduates of Cleary College in Ypsilanti are urged to contact their Alumni Association immediately. The association is conducting a campaign

to update all graduate files before the Alumni Reunion in October.

Graduates are asked to send current resident information to Carol Jones at the college.

The first annual Cleary College Alumni Reunion in 30 years will be held Oct. 19 on the college campus, and a full day of activities is planned for all graduates.

Machus Red Fox purchases animals

Machus Red Fox Restaurant in Birmingham was one bidder of champion animals at the recent Oakland County 4-H Fair.

Owner of the grand champion lamb and grand champion pen was Sandra Barnard, a six-year club member and daughter of Judge and Mrs. Norman Barnard of Troy.

Paula Comps of Rochester showed the reserve pen and reserve individual, which were purchased by Machus Red Fox.

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