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Police promote nosey neighbors

By SUSAN AVERILL

FARMINGTON—A neighbor's nosiness is usually considered an irritating invasion of privacy. But when it comes to prevention of burglaries, it can be an asset, said Capt. Daniel A. Byrnes of the Farmington Police Department.

"Crime is increasing, and part of it is because people don't know their neighbors. Most people, when they see a strange car, assume it's a company," he said.

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"If they knew their neighbors, they'd recognize these cars and be able to report any strange or suspicious ones."

Most of the time, people rationalize the strange occurrences and write it off to someone else's business, he said. Sometimes, they are afraid to report suspicious persons or phone calls because they're afraid to be called cranks or worrywarts.

That shouldn't prevent them from calling the police, he said.

"IT'S NOT that big a bother for us as a matter of fact, it definitely assists us," Capt. Byrnes said.

"Sure, in 99 out of 100 cases, it will turn out to be some guy who has forgotten his key and is trying to get into his own house, but sometimes it isn't."

And it's those once-in-a-blue-moon cases that count.

Crime rates in Farmington rose 34 per cent in 1974 over 1973 rates and a "substantial increase" has been noted

during the first five weeks of 1975, he said.

Farmington isn't the only suburban community to notice the increase.

"I think most suburban police departments anticipated a rise in crime because of the layoffs and the general economic situation," Capt. Byrnes said.

Most of the crimes are committed by people under 30, and nearly half of those are committed by juveniles of 16 or younger according to national statistics, he said.

YOUNGSTERS ARE usually involved in larcenies like bicycle thefts and aren't normally directly associated with robberies. Often, they are involved in muggings and purse-snatchings, crimes which aren't common to the suburbs, he said.

"We don't have the people out on the streets like they do downtown," he said. "Most of the people in the suburbs drive from place to place and do their walking only from the car to the store and back again."

Muggings and purse-snatchings are more likely to occur under the crowded conditions of malls or down inner-city streets where the main mode of locomotion is walking, Byrnes said.

Part of the way to prevent crime is to be more suspicious of unusual occurrences, he said.

"PEOPLE SHOULD report anything at all they think is suspicious. It could be an unfamiliar car driving up and down the street or sitting in one spot for a long time," he said.

People knocking on doors and asking for fictitious persons may actually

be looking for a home safe for burglary.

"Often, these people are looking for a darkened home prior to breaking in. To make sure no one is there, they may walk up and ring the doorbell. People may have been in a back room, watching television," Capt. Byrnes said.

That being the case, the would-be thief will often ask for a fictitious person, he said. When he receives a negative answer, he'll make a pretense of checking the address, making an error in the street name.

After setting him straight, the householder will walk away thinking he has only helped a lost person.

"To most people, it doesn't seem like anything is wrong, but it may be that this guy is casing a potential target neighborhood," he said.

Businessmen should also be aware of suspicious loiterers, he warned.

"THEY SHOULD be very aware of people who come in just to look around, yet their actions show more than a casual interest. Chances are, they're casing the establishment so that when they come back after the place is closed, they'll know what to take and its exact location."

"If they know exactly where they're going and what they want, they need only two to five minutes to do what they have to do before we get there, even if the building is 'alarmed,'" he said.

Capt. Byrnes said merchants should call the police after carefully noting physical description of the persons and the license number of the car, if possible.



A cache of stolen goods recovered from a burglary ring is being examined and inventoried by Farmington Hills police officer Raymond Marchewitz, left, and Captain Russell Conway.

Hills librarian bristles at idea of censorship

By CORINNE ABATT

FARMINGTON HILLS — Any similarity between the stereotyped cloudy-brained librarians of former days and the clear-thinking, verbal director of the Farmington Hills library is sheer accident.

Gordon Lewis, Buckeye by birth, holder of degrees from Pitt and Temple universities and former librarian in Philadelphia, can wind up and take a healthy swing at the mention of the word "censorship."

It's on his mind because Farmington Hills, like several of its neighboring communities, has an obscenity ordinance. Theoretically, libraries fall under the ordinance.

The neighboring West Bloomfield Township library recently asked to be exempted from the township's obscenity ordinance. Lewis says it has not

been upheld in the request.

The Farmington Hills library board has not applied for such an exemption, but should the censorship question arise, Lewis could prove a formidable foe.

PHILOSOPHICALLY, he is committed to the First Amendment of the Constitution, protecting the individual's right to choose his religion, say what he wants to, petition as he pleases as well as enjoy freedom of the press.

Saying he understands and supports a community's desire not to have a strip of peep-shows or other entertainment appealing to prurient interests, he still believes a line should be drawn between that and libraries.

Since the Constitution was written, Lewis said, there have been two points of view.

The conflict continues in our society between the large number who feel the essence of the Constitution lives in the amendments which protect the rights of the individual and those who feel the essence of government is to protect the social order.

Lewis, an amendment person, states his belief. "One of the freedoms extant in the social process is total and free access to ideas—regardless of whether they are popular or not at a given time."

SPEAKING OF accessibility and a citizen's right to obtain the information he chooses to obtain, he concluded, "If that freedom is denied, we have begun to infringe on his rights as a citizen."

The policy of free access to needed (See LIBRARIAN, next page)



GORDON LEWIS



A person's right to browse and choose whatever book suits his needs has long been a basic tenet of the nation's libraries.

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