

Opinion

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Together, cops must cope with police chases

WE TALKED to several Oakland County police departments about their policies on high speed chases.

Our pursuit of information uncovered one tidbit: Little uniformity exists among departments.

This part of the county is packed with busy, populated communities. These communities share many problems and must cooperate on a daily basis.

So, we reasoned, cities and villages in this part of the state should agree on how and when to give heated chase to suspected lawbreakers. But that's not the case.

Some seem ready to join with Oakland County Prosecutor L. Brooks Patterson in his effort to reach a consensus on a model police-chase policy. Other communities, however, have their own ideas about police chases.

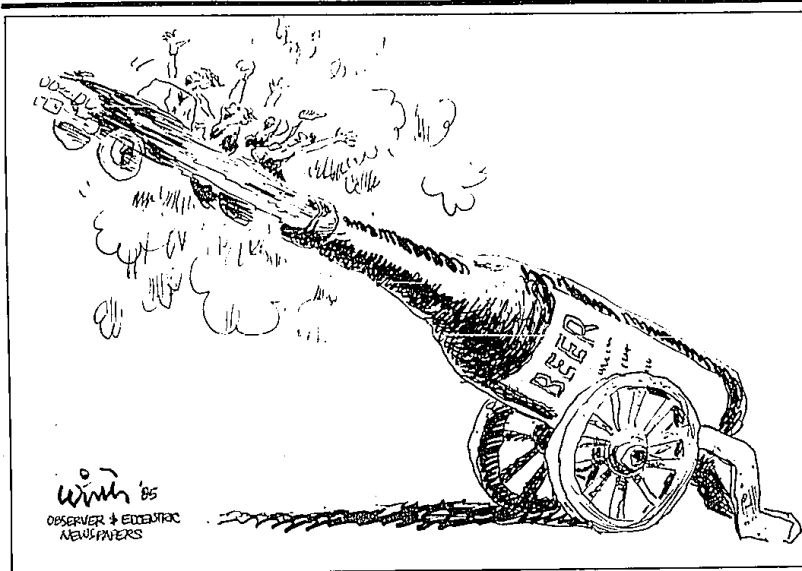
But there is benefit, to both the law enforcement community and the traveling public, in police departments sitting down together and agreeing on a police-chase policy. Cooperatively, law enforcement personnel can cover the legal, ethical and

criminal ramifications of proposed chase guidelines.

THE URGENT need for direction in police chases was underscored again this month when a Troy man was killed and his wife critically injured at a Birmingham intersection. The couple's car was struck by a car being chased by Pontiac police.

Police officers, of course, must make decisions instantaneously and cannot take time to review a policy when an emergency occurs. Perhaps sitting down together and hammering out a plan of action in dealing with chases will lead to some innovative and fresh approaches to training and guidance. Listening to those who have to live by the policy, the officers on the road, may help in the transfer of the words to the streets.

This is a case where working together can help lead to a solution to a common problem and hopefully new safeguards for both those in law enforcement and those in the driver and passenger seats.



Drink takes unknown toll

I READ with interest the story about "Project Graduation," an attempt by several organizations to ensure that the thousands of area high school seniors will make it through the next few months without becoming the victims of an alcohol- or drug-related tragedy.

The guest speaker at a "Project Graduation" workshop, attended by 1,000 area students, was a 24-year-old Livonia man who became a paraplegic after a car crash seven years ago.

As the untoward incidents unfold in our newspapers and on our broadcasts, I wonder how much of a factor drinking played in each particular tragedy.

We read of a head-on crash on a lonely road in which both drivers are killed. It turns out both were legally drunk at the time of impact. The accidents are often detailed, but how many other incidents are reported with no account given of whether the person involved was drinking?

SOMEONE THROWS a bowling ball out of a moving car and it smashes through the window of an oncoming car, killing the young driver. Was the youth who threw the bowling ball drinking?

There are barricaded gunmen, family fights which turn into tragedies, irrational, violent acts which somehow make you think that drinking was involved. We hear a lot these days about child abuse and



Bob Wisler
wonder how much of even this behavior has an alcohol factor.

We tend to forget about the dark side of drinking as we go about our pursuit of happiness. The facts are grim. Some experts say alcohol is the leading cause of death in the country, ahead of cancer and heart disease. More Americans die in alcohol-related car accidents each year than died in Vietnam during any year of the war. And 40 to 50 percent of these accidents involve drivers under 21. Most drownings involve drinking.

Some experts on crime contend that more than 50 percent of those in prison did their crimes either under the influence of alcohol or because of an alcohol-influenced life.

ALCOHOL-RELATED problems — absences, sick time, health-care costs, poor workmanship, etc. — contribute enormously to the cost of doing business and buying merchandise.

And still the beat goes on. There seems to be an almost unquenchable urge passed from generation to generation to want to combine drinking with successful careers,

successful marriages, successful businesses. Drinking is part of success, say the ads and the examples we often give to the young.

A survey of seniors in Birmingham shows that 12 percent drink alcohol every weekend or more often. School officials say the figure is typical of the national average.

The "Project Graduation" program sponsored by Students Against Drunk Driving and others is commendable. It will no doubt have some influence on students and help some teen-agers get safely through a period when drinking is even more of a predominant exercise in enjoyment than usual.

BUT WE also must worry about the rest of the year and the rest of the lives of those high-school students who are now, drinking every weekend.

This will take a more pervasive effort which will have to include the recognition by every level of government, every police agency, every civic group and every family that drinking alcohol can lead to serious problems which ought to be addressed every week of the year.

Perhaps with the kind of effort that has so far been exhibited by only small segments of the society — Mothers Against Drunk Driving, for example — we can begin to make more and more young people think twice about becoming victims of alcohol-related problems.

What did women do in 'Nam era?

THERE IS SOMETHING curious about the media's regurgitation of the Vietnam war era. Most stories are about men, written by other men.

The local Veteran's Administration knows that about 150,000 Michigan men served in Vietnam from August 1964 to May 1975. Neither that office, nor its public affairs department in Washington, knew anything about women from Michigan who served in Vietnam.

Nor does the Defense Department have statistics, they said.

The National Archives don't know anything more than very general statistics, some of which a spokesman said he learned by reading Foreign Affairs magazine. He did know that, nationally, eight women died while serving in Vietnam.

A VETERAN'S readjustment center in Lincoln Park said that, according to the Pentagon, 8,000 women from Michigan are believed to have served in Vietnam.

Those who did serve aren't recognized either by the media or by the national Vietnam veterans' memorial, which shows three soldiers, all of them male.

What was the role of women during the Vietnam era?

Most were nurses, the VA said, but few ever show up for counseling. The only known therapy group for women is in Toledo.

Did they suffer as did their male counterparts?

"Of course they did," said a counselor. "They had to treat these guys who came in all torn up."

BUT THERE IS a group of women about which even less is known. They are



Sandra Armbruster

the 150,000 mothers, the 150,000 wives and girl friends of those Michigan men we've heard so much about with the 10th anniversary of Saigon's fall.

Perhaps those women were foreshadowed by John Milton in his 1652 sonnet: "They also serve who only stand and wait."

Airports were filled with them. And they waited for soldiers flying on standby fares, waited for one last look at the plane as it taxied down the runway.

They bore the taunts of anti-war groups which said their men were baby killers who made love and war. And they waited quietly, unable to share their mixed guilt and pride, knowing that serving in "Nam" was a stigma. For, in the early years of the war, only those too poor to afford college, or those who dropped out, were drafted.

They listened to media reports of the horrors of war. And they waited, reading the daily casualty lists.

They learned to bake with honey and to fill packages with popped corn to ensure safe shipment overseas. And they waited for return letters, which usually came in bunches.

Sometimes, they accompanied friends to pick out flowers for the casket. And they waited for the call they hoped would never come.

NOW IT HAS BEEN 10 years or more for these women, too. Many are mothers, and some are receiving enlistment literature for sons who are approaching draft-registration age.

First they take their friends and lovers; next they ask for their sons.

Nothing has changed in the history of the world. Useless wars are still being fought by men playing children's games.

How long will women be content to only stand and wait?

There may be better ways to serve.

Gandhi, in the movie of that name, tells a reporter that if a man enjoys the rights and privileges of a nation, he must also be willing to defend that nation.

But how, asks the reporter, does that fit with Gandhi's pacifism?

There are many ways to fight, Gandhi replies.

Whether marching in uniform, or marching in unison at Williams International Corp., women must find those new ways to serve.

Sidestepping, corporate style

YOU THINK only reporters ask tough questions?

You think only politicians are evasive about answering to the voters?

You should have heard the stockholders tangle with the board chairman at Michigan National Corp.'s annual meeting last week.

Forty years ago, when President Harry S. Truman didn't want to deal with a question, he flatly said, "No comment." Modern PR technique, however, is to give every question some verbiage, conveying an impression you're responding, even if you fail to answer the question. Bill Lucas has mastered it.

MNC, BASED in Bloomfield Hills, is a retail bank holding company with 23 affiliates across Michigan. In 1984, the board halted dividends during its period of troubles.

A stockholder asked Chairman Robert Mylod what factors the board would consider in reinstituting dividends. A fair question.

Mylod cited two factors, one of which was "return on equity." (Incidentally, last year's return was 6.24 percent, according to the annual report.) Mylod didn't say what return the MNC board actually is seeking.

Words but no substance.

A STOCKHOLDER identified as Harry



Tim Richard

Carson asked about \$200 million in energy loan losses. Why, he wanted to know, was it "swept under the rug?"

"It was not swept under the rug," answered Mylod. He said the company is now policing its lending policies better, has instituted "proper controls" and maintains "proper reserves."

Carson really wanted to know what action was taken against the officers who made the loans.

Mylod repeated that proper controls and policies were in place, and the board had taken the "proper position."

Carson still hadn't received an answer, so he asked his question a third time: What action was taken against the officers responsible for the loan?

"Whatever actions are necessary," Mylod said blandly.

The stockholder gave up.

STOCKHOLDERS were treated to a 30-minute videotape in which radio personality J.P. McCarthy, several customers and a bank vice president extolled the vir-

tues of Michigan National banks. The gist of their message was: Don't change a good thing. It left you the impression that it would be bad for MNC to merge with Comerica Inc.

Except for the McCarthy narration, the same material was in the annual report, with color photos.

During the Q&A session, a visibly angry stockholder chewed out Mylod for putting so little in the annual report about Comerica's merger offer, saying the annual meeting should allow "more time for questions and less time for J.P. McCarthy." Before stalking off, the stockholder asked how much MNC paid McCarthy for the videotape.

Mylod stonewalled it, Nixon-style.

ONE OTHER note of my own on the MNC meeting:

The McCarthy videotape featured a radio personality who is identified with enthusiastic observance of St. Patrick's Day, a woman fashion-house owner, a professor-turned-stained-glass-merchant, an east-side Detroit couple with a Polish surname, and a black VP of the bank.

The all-American melting pot, eh?

Well, when it came to selecting the board of directors, the nominating committee nominated 15 persons. All whites. All males.

Opinions are to be shared

Opinions and ideas are best when shared with others.

That's why the Farmington Observer encourages its readers to share their views with others in the From Our Readers column.

Submitting a letter to the editor for publication is easy. Letters should be typewritten or printed legibly and kept to 300 words. Letters must be signed and include the address of the sender.

Names will be withheld only for the best of reasons, and the decision to do so will be made by the editor.

Letters should be mailed to: the editor, Farmington Observer, 33202 Grand River, Farmington, MI 48024.