



Tom Patterson Emerald

Under the right circumstances, a ride in a Eugene Police Department car isn't all that bad.

Cornering Eugene's bad guys

■ A night spent cavorting with some of the Eugene Police Department's best reveals what it's like to take the law into your own hands; as an officer of the law, that is

By Rebecca Newell
Oregon Daily Emerald

Gripping the passenger side door, I was in a car hurtling down Sixth Avenue in the wee morning hours at more than 100 miles per hour. I wasn't a victim of a drag racing driver nor on my way to any hospital.

No, I was in the passenger seat of a police car, surrounded by as many gadgets as an airplane cockpit, with Officer Mark

Hubbard in hot pursuit of some runaway bikers — the BMX type, not motorcyclists.

As my first ride in a police car — and fortunately in the passenger side rather than the back — there was a lot to see, despite what Hubbard described as a "slow Wednesday night." Which meant no bloodshed, drug users or dead bodies. All of which aren't unusual sights for a Eugene Police Department officer.

Hubbard, who has been in the force for two years, said an officer never knows what he could be up against on a call. It could be a frightened woman calling because her dog treed a raccoon, and won't stop barking. But just as likely, it could be a man strung out on meth and booze who assaulted his wife in front of his kids and refused to

see the blue uniform as a stop sign.

Hubbard stressed that police must be objective when arriving on the scene. In his words, "practice the Golden Rule." But break the rules or try to assault an officer, and that objective view becomes a defensive one, where decisions are instinctive and officers must react reflexively, using their training to keep themselves, as well as other citizens, safe from lawbreakers.

"You don't really think of it 'til afterwards," Hubbard said. "But then you think back and think 'Wow, that was pretty hairy'."

Hubbard recounted the story of that boozed-up husband on meth, who after beating up his wife, went after the officers arriving on the scene. It took two officers to hold down the man and a third to cuff him, a result of his hyper-charged drug state.

Of course, patrol duty has more than its fair share of noise violations, interviews and — yawn — routine traffic stops. Our first task of the night was interviewing an assault victim.

A young man in the downtown mall had been beaten unconscious after slapping a teenage girl on the rear. The events weren't exactly clear, as the witnesses gave conflicting accounts and the victim had his memory literally almost knocked out of him, along with four teeth and a broken nose and cheek. And the young girl and five assailants didn't stick around to be interrogated, something not uncommon in the mall, where many young adults are transients.

After re-interviewing the victim at Sacred Heart Hospital, we took a call for a noise violation. I followed Hubbard, toting my big plastic "police observer" label which hung around my neck like a kindergart-

ner's name tag. The apartment was quiet when we arrived, and when Hubbard questioned as to the prior noise, the answer of "we're watching Letterman, so we wouldn't turn the music up" seemed acceptable.

The rule of thumb displayed by Hubbard and other EPD officers I had a chance to observe during the late night and early morning was definitely an objective one. If people cooperated and were straightforward, they consistently got off with a warning. Jaywalking and loud music were stereotypes, but was not limited to drivers who had committed traffic violations.

Surprisingly, Hubbard did not pull drivers over for speeding; his squad car is not equipped with a radar. Only sheriff's vehicles and a select number of squad cars have radars, though Hubbard noted excessive speed as a surefire way to be noticed by an officer and to be pulled over.

In most cases during the ride-along, speeding cars caught Hubbard's attention, but were pulled over for an additional violation, such as changing lanes within 100 feet of an intersection or driving with fog lights only.

During a lull in activity, in which some cops often park and talk in order to keep themselves alert during the late night shifts, we took a tour of the downtown police station. We traversed through the dispatch center and the interrogation rooms, which come in two styles: Comfy with couches or chilling with stark bolted down furniture and two temporary holding cells, which were just as small and dingy as their TV alternatives displayed.

In the evidence room, a huge

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