

July 19, 1993

POLICE EXECUTIVE RESEARCH FORUM
PROBLEM SOLVING AWARD NOMINATION

Gresham Police Department 911/230-2121 Comic Book

THE PROBLEM

In February 1991 the Bureau of Emergency Communications (BOEC) of Portland, Oregon installed an enhanced emergency communications system. Prior to this date all police, fire and medical calls for service came over a single 911 emergency line. After the installation of the enhanced communications system, the public was directed to call 911 if their emergency situation was life threatening in nature, however, if their situation was not life threatening, people were told to call the non-emergency phone number of 230-2121.

The Bureau of Emergency Communications is administrated by the City of Portland, a municipal government. BOEC is also the primary emergency communications provider for eight additional law enforcement agencies located in the Portland metro area. Each police agency has separate policies and procedures which are utilized when BOEC dispatches their agency's officers to calls for police service. BOEC call-takers and dispatchers are responsible for learning and dispatching police calls for service according to each agency's directives.

The Bureau of Emergency Communications User Board, whose members represent each user agency, meets on a monthly basis and is responsible for reviewing and assessing BOEC service. Board members also make recommendations to assure each jurisdictional service level is met.

This arrangement is unique in presentation. For instance, the City of Gresham (as determined by Police Chief Arthur Knori) mandates a Gresham police officer will respond in some manner to every citizen call for police service. As an example, Gresham requires a police officer respond to cold burglaries - another member police agency routes this type of call to a desk officer. The desk officer sends a police report to the victim. The victim completes the police report and mails it back to the police agency.

It takes two years for BOEC trainees to learn each of the eight police agencies policies and procedures which is required for the level of service expected by the taxpayers for these individual jurisdictions.

Prior to the enhanced emergency communications system, citizens were well educated about how to make emergency phone calls. Like most communities throughout the nation, children grew up learning in school how to call the police for help.

But when the new emergency system went on line in 1991, citizens were required to learn a new process in accessing emergency services. The public needed to learn the differences between life-threatening and non life-threatening situations.

The regional Portland media market developed and produced numerous informative and educational stories about how the public could access the 911 and 230-2121 emergency communication systems. But the news media did not report, nor focus attention of how this new communications systems could impact police calls for service to the other surrounding communities serviced by BOEC.

Each BOEC member agency was responsible for educating their own community about this distinction in police service.

As time went on, members of the Gresham Police Department began to hear, and receive reports from citizens who were attending community presentations, Neighborhood Watches, police sponsored "town hall" meetings, and school presentations. Taken in substance, these citizen reports seemed to reflect an apparent growing frustration by people who did not understand why they were not getting the expected level of police service when they called 911. The concerns were compounded by people's lack of knowledge of BOEC dispatching policies, and an apparent misunderstanding about the differences of what constituted a life-threatening and non life-threatening call for police service.

THE IMPACT

This problem affected the community as citizens were not getting the response for service they had come to expect. If a citizen called 911 to report a cold burglary the dispatcher asked the citizen to hang up and call the non-emergency phone number of 230-2121. Had the citizen initially called the non-emergency number, the dispatcher would have informed the person that the call was a low priority, the reasons as to why the call was considered a low priority, and the approximate time frame of when the citizen could expect a Gresham police officer to respond to the scene.

Citizens sometimes became frustrated, angry and agitated with BOEC dispatchers and with responding Gresham police officers. At times these people expressed that they didn't know they were expected to know the difference between the two systems - and that by calling the "wrong" phone number, the dispatcher would tell them to hang up and call the non-emergency number. To many people this new system was complex and confusing.

Gresham police officers were also frustrated about the problem. Many officers were concerned the public perceived this communication/response problem as a reflection on the part of the responding officer.

Another segment of the public who were impacted were those citizens who called the non-emergency phone number for police service - when actually these people should have called the 911 emergency phone number. These people were impacted because valuable time may have been lost in police response.

There are times when this problem comes to full focus. There are occasional incidents of children making prank calls. With the enhanced system dispatchers can track this type of call. If children commit pranks and hang up the phone, the dispatcher can redial the number and tell the parent what their child has done. However, if at those times there is no response to the dispatcher's call the dispatcher sends two Gresham patrol units to the residence listed on the dispatcher's screen. The patrol officers are responsible for making contact at the residence to make sure everybody, and everything, is safe and secure. This type of call directly impacts the welfare of our community. First and foremost, officers who are dispatched to respond to this incident - means less officers on the street are available for incoming high priority calls. If there is a high priority call (for instance involving a shooting) it means a reduced response time and less officers at the high incident scene.

In conjunction with the patrol officers assessment of this problem, the department's community education coordinator informally assessed grade school children to gain an understanding of the students perception of the 911/230-2121 communications system. Information from these informal verbal surveys, which were conducted during classroom presentations, provided further research material for the development of the project.

THE PROJECT

Command staff of the Gresham Police Department decided to launch a public education campaign. The belief was that if an activity book could be created to teach children about the 911/230-2121 systems that it would help alleviate, and prevent this on going problem. Department members wanted to increase community understanding to effectively access the emergency communications systems.

Because so many public safety education tools take the form (and appearance) of traditional activity workbooks, it was decided the department would produce a new innovative teaching tool. Some parents had previously pointed out that activity books sometimes fall by the wayside as children seemed turned off by the "preaching look" of more traditional activity workbooks.

The 911/230-2121 comic book was born.

Strategies in developing the comic book included criteria as: it had to look like a comic book, feel like a comic book, and it had to be as jazzy and hyped with content - just like a comic book.

The primary objective in the development of the book was to present the subject matter in an age appropriate manner which would challenge the aptitude of a ten year-old child.

From a cultural view point the comic book needed to reflect the diversity and make-up of Gresham's populations. The introduction and portrayal of characters from different cultures was incorporated. Additionally, the book needed to capture visual images reflecting communication between people of different ages and disabilities.

Interactive activities were introduced after the text portion of the 911/230-2121 book. In developing the book in this manner, children were first given the opportunity to learn, assimilate and process the information, and then demonstrate their competencies of the two processes.

It was decided the targeted age for the comic book would be 10-12 year olds. Children of these age levels have an aptitude in recognizing and understanding the concept of "emergency" and "non-emergency". They tend to be excellent role models for younger brothers and sisters - and enjoy sharing their experiences with parents, grandparents and older siblings.

PROJECT GOALS

The first objective was to educate children about the differences between the emergency and non-emergency processes. In doing so, children would learn how "pranks" can cruelly impact police response to emergencies.

A second objective was the belief that in teaching the children, we would also have the opportunity to teach adults about the differences between the two communication systems - and the different processes which are involved in dispatching 911 and 230-2121 (non-emergency) phone calls.

The third objective in this campaign was to utilize the resources of the Portland area media. Approximately 58 news releases were sent out to Portland area media outlets. Response from the media was good - several print, television and radio outlets developed and produced feature stories about the department's innovative teaching tool. This also increased public awareness about the problem.

As a result of the media attention, numerous organizations have contacted the Gresham Police Department requesting copies of the comic book for distribution to their members. The books have been taken to many community meetings, where the subject was discussed and the educational tool provided a means for people to gain a better understanding of the 911/230-2121 processes.

Several other police departments have requested a copy of the book, and some have asked to make copies for their communities. We are quick to point out that the strategies introduced in the 911/230-2121 comic book are intrinsic to this area's emergency communications needs - yet the basic concepts may apply in other communities.

EVALUATION

This project will be evaluated on an on-going basis.

When we first introduced and gave the comic book to third and fourth grade students, we were able to see and learn their immediate reactions to the comic book. As demonstrated by the attached newspaper clippings, children were excited about the product. Students read the material on the spot and many said they couldn't wait to take it home to show their family members. We had achieved our first objective.

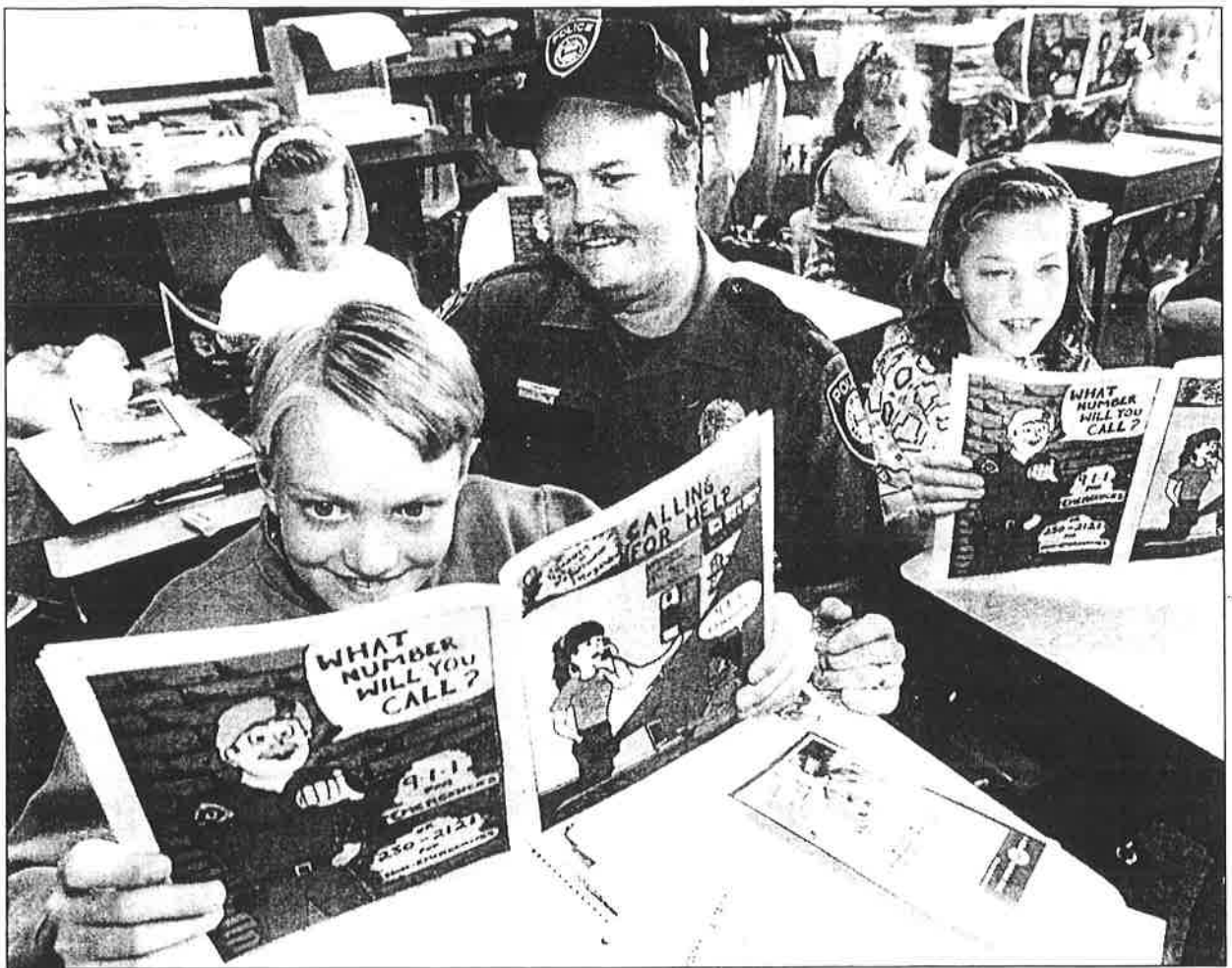
Some of the results of the evaluation process will be received through citizen comments at community meetings, through communication between the Bureau of Emergency Communications via the BOEC User Board, evaluative response from Gresham police officers and through verbal surveys of grade school students while classroom presentations are conducted in the upcoming school year.

The department printed 2,000 copies of the 911/230-2121 comic book (a two year supply of materials). A formal written evaluation will be conducted with grade school and middle school educators in the spring of 1995 - approximately two years after the initial introduction of the comic book.

THE NOMINEES

Officer Jim Danner created the text and drew the illustrations for the 911/230-2121 comic book. Danner also designed and drew the interactive activities incorporated in the book.

Sherry Connolly, the department's Community Education Coordinator, conceived the idea of the comic book, developed the project strategies and coordinated the production of the 911/230-2121 book.



ROGER JENSEN/The Oregonian

Officer Jim Danner sits in a fourth-grade class at West Gresham Grade School on Monday while students Luke Hintz (center), Jennifer Donnelly (back) and Emily Borling (right) examine a comic book that explains when and how to use police emergency and nonemergency numbers.

Comics help kids choose when to call 9-1-1

■ The Gresham Police Department experiments with a new form of education for third and fourth graders

By ERIC L. WEE
of The Oregonian staff

GRESHAM — "Cool!" "Neat!"

The words echo around the fourth-grade classroom at West Gresham Grade School as 9- and 10-year-olds eagerly flip through their new comic books.

Gresham Police Officer Jim Danner scans the scene. A smile slowly crosses his face. They've just made his day.

Monday morning marked the beginning of an experiment by the Gresham Police Department. Danner's comic book is the main tool.

Danner spent 30 to 40 hours earlier this year creating a comic/coloring book that educates kids on when to call 9-1-1 and when to call the

gency and nonemergency calls are taken by dispatchers and sent out to officers in police cars. A dot-to-dot drawing game is in the middle, followed by comic scenarios telling kids when not to call 9-1-1.

One of the last exercises has a drawing with different situations in it.

Kids then list on another page those activities they believe are emergencies and those that are nonemergencies. At the bottom of the page is an official set of guidelines.

"It's kind of like a mystery," said fourth-grader Luke Hintz explaining why he likes the exercise in the back of the comic book that has children decide if different events happening in a drawing are emergencies or nonemergencies. Hintz squeezes his pencil hard and sounds out the words as he etches the words "Fire", "Robber", and "Fite" under the 9-1-1 column.

"In a year from now we'll see if emergency services are better utilized," said Connolly. "And we'll see if this is something the citizens

His bosses got word from emergency dispatchers in Portland late last year that lots of youngsters were calling 9-1-1 for nonemergency matters. They asked Sherry Connolly, the police's community education coordinator to come up with something to educate the kids.

"I didn't want it to be just another educational booklet," said Connolly. "I wanted something they would be excited about."

Connolly and Danner decided a comic book with the necessary information could be their answer.

The department printed up 3,000 copies of the booklet at a cost of \$1,700 and have handed out a copy to every third-grader in the 11 elementary schools in their jurisdiction.

Police also believe that the rest of a child's family — parents included — will benefit by the book.

The 10-page book is black and white inside and has color drawings on the outside covers.

Police 'book' students

Officer artist creates comic book to teach about use of 9-1-1

by PAT O'HALLORAN
of The Outlook staff

Making a learning experience fun is a challenge for any educator.

Teaching students about 9-1-1 was a challenge the Gresham Police Department took on and turned into a comic book.

"Calling For Help," a 12-page comic book, made its debut last week with 1,100 third-graders in city of Gresham. A fourth-grade class at West Gresham Elementary School also got a peek Monday at the book, which features color front and back covers and line cartoons on the inside.

It's the handiwork of Officer Jim Danner, the department's resident artist, who took the impetus of Sherry Connolly, the department's community education coordinator, and ran with it.

Connolly, a civilian in the Crime Prevention Division, was approached by two officers about the lack of knowledge youngsters — and their parents — have displayed about the distinction between using 9-1-1 and the non-emergency police response number, 230-2121.

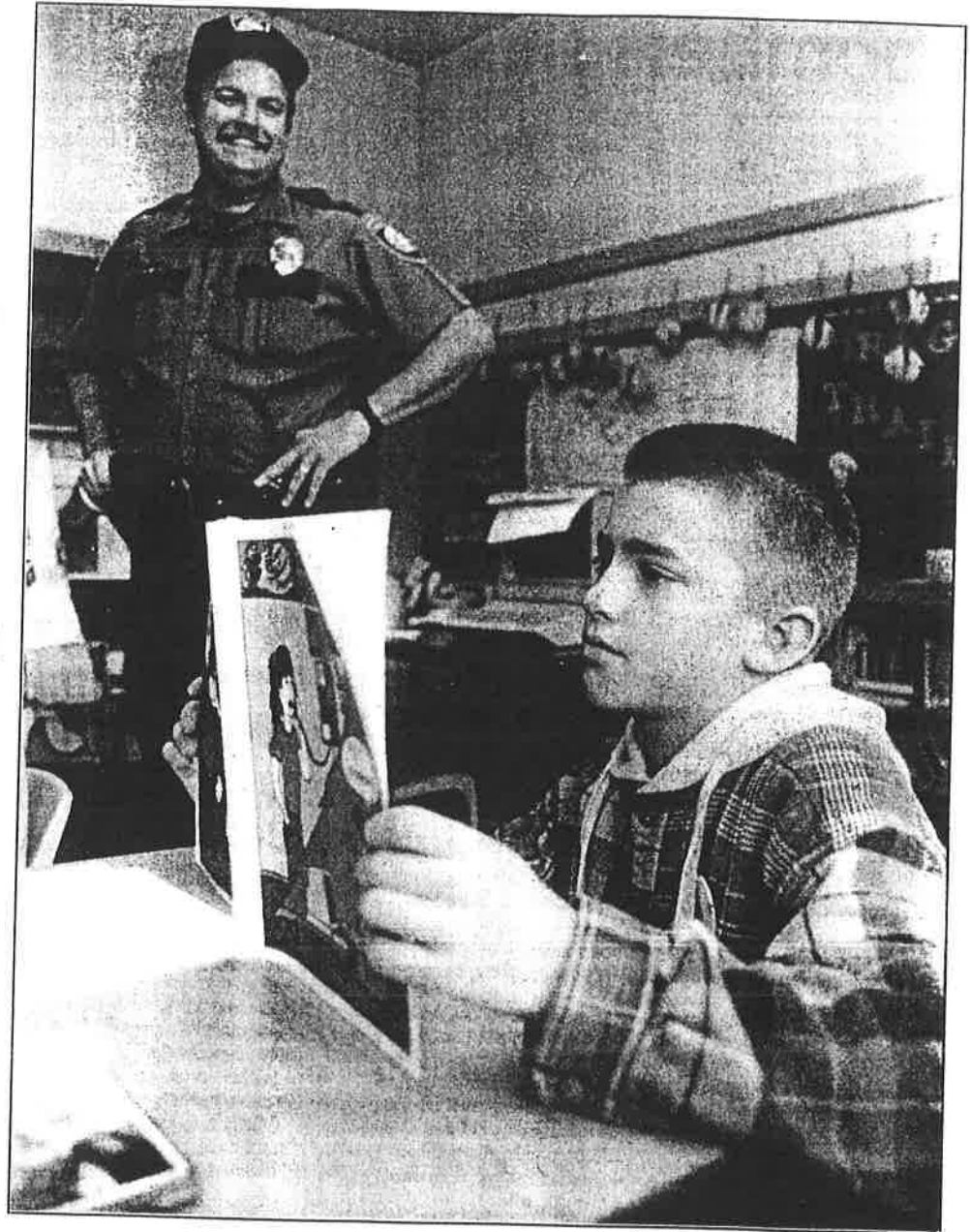
"I though the idea of a comic book would be novel," Connolly said. "Jim Danner was a natural."

An art major who became a police officer, Danner has been drawing cartoons of police anecdotes for years. He recently qualified as a composite-drawing artist for the department.

With Connolly providing some guidelines, Danner came up with the book and its accompanying drawings.

Three pages deal with the process of dispatching police, beginning with the caller and ending with the police writing a report after the disposition of the call.

A connect-the-dots picture follows, and two one-page stories showing a child instructing a parent and a sister



MARGARET M. DUNNE/The Outlook

Gresham Police Officer Jim Danner looks on Monday as West Gresham student Kyle Qualhein peruses the department's new comic book on 9-1-1.

instructing a younger sibling on the proper usage and non-usage of the emergency and non-emergency numbers.

Danner finishes the book with a two-page question-and-answer problem on police problems and a two-

page compilation of the different jobs police do.

Danner spent about 40 hours on the project, which will contribute 10 hours to the community service portion of his certificate. He began in December and finished earlier this year.

The department plans to continue the project next year and continually evaluate it for effectiveness, Connolly said. Three thousand were printed in the initial run at a cost of \$1,720.

Groups wishing to use the books can contact Connolly at 669-2546.

Professional Profile

JAMES DANNER
P.O. Box 2002
Gresham, OR 97030 * (503) 669-2320

EDUCATION

- 1993 Completed 40 hour "Forensic Art Class", Portland, OR. Received Certificate of Completion.
- 1984 Graduated from the Oregon Police Academy, Monmouth, OR. Achieved Basic Police Certification.
- 1984 Graduated from Oregon State University, Corvallis, OR. Bachelor of Science in Art.

EMPLOYMENT

- Present Police officer for the Gresham Police Department, Gresham, OR. Appointed to serve as department composite artist. Assigned as patrol officer in the department's Field Operations Division. Duties include emergency response to police calls for service, conducting initial and follow-up criminal investigations, and initiating and participating in problem solving community policing projects.
- 1984-86 Employed as a deputy for the Benton County Sheriff's Office, Corvallis, OR. Responsibilities included performing uniform patrol, assisting in corrections, conducting marine patrols and serving civil processes
- 1983-84 Served as a volunteer with the Benton County Sheriff's Office performing patrol and corrections assistance.

COMMUNITY SERVICE

Volunteer with the Oregon Institute of Archeology. Recruited to serve as a diver in the agency's quest for research and exploration of artifacts.

Volunteer diver for the Oregon Historical Society.

Illustrator in the creation of public safety informational and educational materials (upon request).

SHERRY R. CONNOLLY
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BORING, OR 97009
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**CAREER OBJECTIVES**

To attain a position in the fields of public education/public information in a progressive public safety organization needing an employee devoted to providing community members with current fire related/public safety information.

**SKILLS SUMMARY**

- Learned to become flexible in any work situation and to work independtly to reach employment systems goals.
- Ability to sustain lifetime learning in order to adapt to the new demands and opportunities of a changing world.
- Understanding of human relations, and a respect for and ability to relate to other people of our own and other nations, including those of different sex, origins, cultures, and aspirations.
- Possess characteristics of the six roles of the competent teacher, Diagnostician, Prescriber, Facilitator, Evaluator, Communicator, and Helper.
- Ability to personalize an effective competency-based prevention education programs appropriate to age group, or interest level.
- Ability to gather, process, and disseminate newsworthy information in a formulated manner appropriate for a variety of specific groups and organizations.
- Competent in MacIntosh computer systems; and software applications as MacWrite, Pagemaker, FullWrite, MacDraw, and Excel.

**EDUCATION**

- |                 |                                                                                                                            |
|-----------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| June 1991       | Graduated from Marylhurst College, Marylhurst, Oregon with a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Communications/Public Relations.   |
| August 1990     | Attended the National Crime Prevention Council's "Youth in Crime Prevention" program at the Oregon Police Academy.         |
| August 1987     | Attended the National Crime Prevention Council's Planning and Managing Crime Prevention Programs" in Denver, Colorado.     |
| April 1988 & 87 | Attended "Advanced Crime Prevention School" at the Oregon Police Academy. 40 hours each term.                              |
| December 1985   | Graduated from "Basic Crime Prevention School" at the Oregon Police Academy. 80 hours of instruction.                      |
| April 1984      | Graduated from Lane Community College, Eugene, Oregon with an Associate Degree in Communications/Visual Design Production. |

*Since 1985 I have attended various conferences and seminars on such wide ranging topics as: teaching dysfunctional youth, police media relations, residential and commercial security, fire prevention safety education, gangs, criminal justice system, victim assistance; and also developed field experience in fire safety inspections/investigations, ambulance ride-alongs, and police ride-alongs.*

**COMMUNITY SERVICE**

Active member of National Women in Communications, Marylhurst Women in Communications, Gresham Children's Week Committee, and Crime Prevention Association of Oregon. Past member of Lane County Crime Prevention Council and Oregon Fire Educators Association.

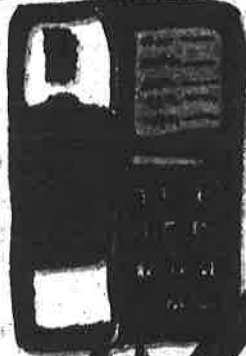
GRESHAM  
POLICE  
DEPARTMENT  
PRESENTS

# CALLING FOR HELP

EMERGENCY  
NUMBERS  
9-1-1 POLICE/FIRE  
MEDICAL  
DRUG DOCTOR



BILLS

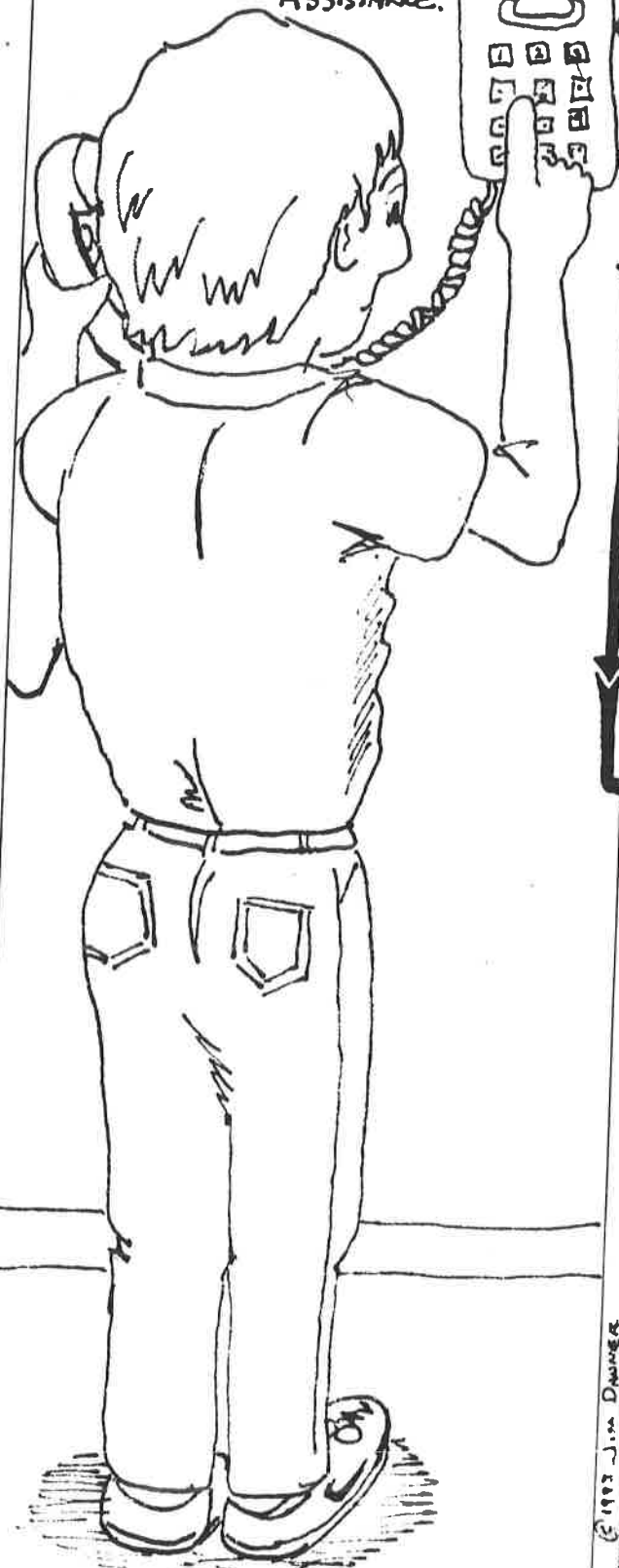


9-1-1  
EMERGENCY.



# THE PROCESS

1. You Call FOR Police ASSISTANCE.



9-1-1  
CALLS



2. CALL-TAKERS ANSWER

230-2121  
CALLS



© 1997 Jim Danner

3. THE DISPATCHER RECEIVES CALLS FROM CALL-TAKER AND GIVES THEM TO OFFICERS.



4. DISPATCHER GIVES CALLS TO CARS ... OR ...

5. DISPATCHER SENDS CALLS TO DESK OFFICER



© 1997 Jim Downer





6. POLICE OFFICERS COME TO YOUR HOUSE TO HELP YOU... OR...



7. POLICE OFFICERS CALL YOUR HOUSE TO TAKE YOUR INFORMATION.



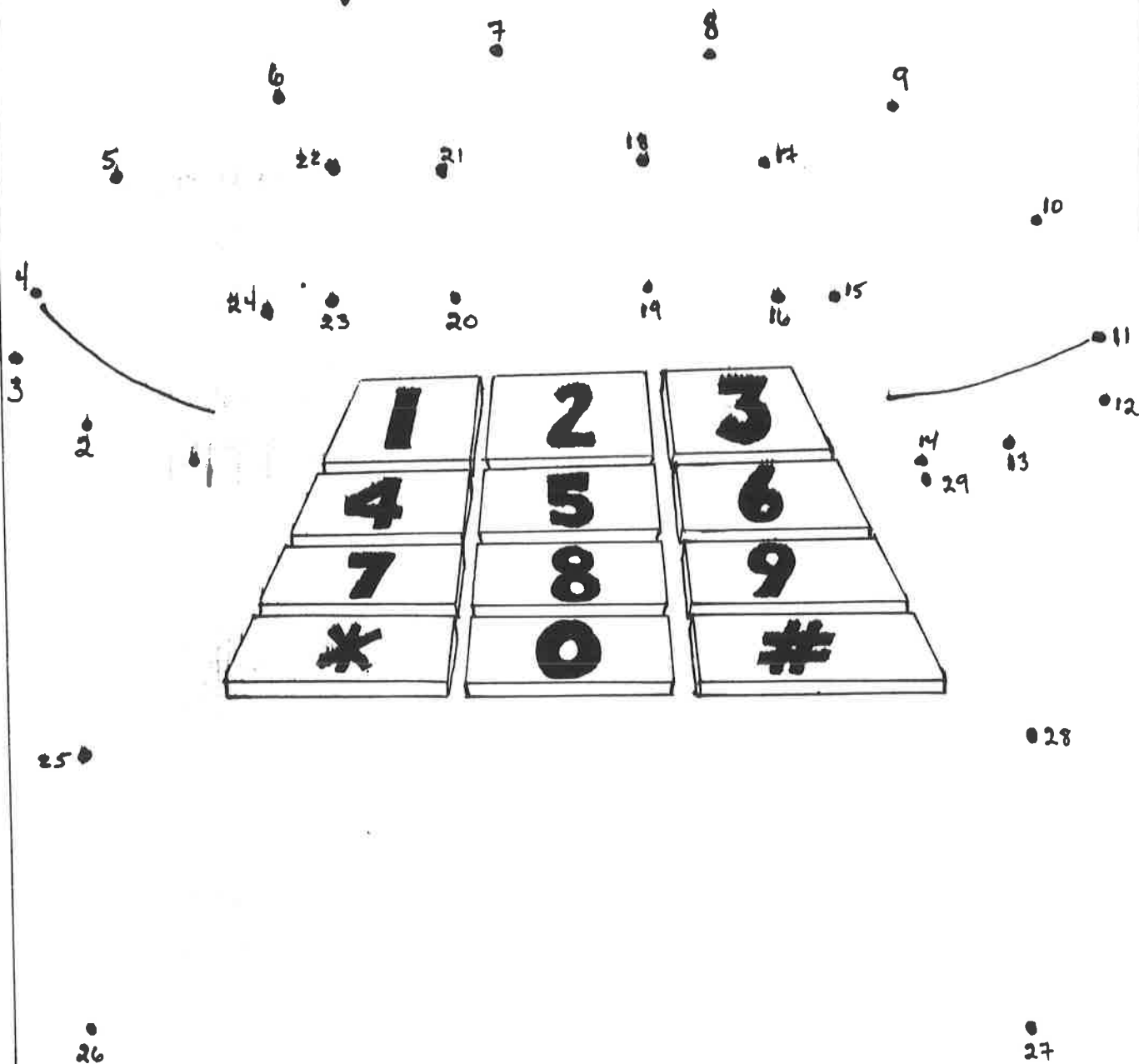
THEN

8. POLICE OFFICERS WRITE THEIR REPORTS



# CONNECT THE DOTS

USE ME  
TO GET HELP!





Hi Mom.  
WHAT ARE YOU  
LOOKING FOR?

MY WALLET.  
I THINK I  
LOST IT!



OH BUMMER!

YES.  
I THINK I'LL  
CALL 9-1-1



WAIT MOM. WE LEARNED AT  
SCHOOL, THAT FOR  
NON-EMERGENCY POLICE SERVICE  
TO CALL 230-2121.



REALLY? THANK YOU  
HONEY. I'LL CALL  
230-2121 INSTEAD.





JOHNNY,  
PLEASE HAND ME  
THE TELEPHONE



HELLO, I'M SORRY  
TO HAVE BOTHERED  
YOU. MY LITTLE  
BROTHER PUSHED  
THE 9-1-1 BUTTON.  
NO, IT WON'T  
HAPPEN AGAIN



IT'S OK JOHNNY.  
BUT IT'S IMPORTANT  
ONLY TO CALL  
9-1-1 IF IT'S  
AN EMERGENCY.  
OKAY?



© 1993 Jim Dwyer

ON THE NEXT PAGE ARE PROBLEMS WHICH MAY NEED POLICE TO BE CALLED. LIST WHICH ITEMS TO CALL 9-1-1 AND WHICH ITEMS TO CALL 230-2121 FOR HELP.

(ANSWERS LISTED AT BOTTOM OF PAGE)

9-1-1



230-2121

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BUREAU OF EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS (BOEC)/DISPATCH GUIDELINES

PRIORITY 1

- A CRIME IN PROGRESS OR SITUATION WHERE THERE IS AN IMMEDIATE DANGER TO A PERSON'S LIFE OR SAFETY  
EXAMPLE - HOLD-UP IN PROGRESS; FIRE  
(A 9-1-1 CALL)

PRIORITY 2

MAJOR CRIME IN PROGRESS; OR JUST OCCURRED AND SUSPECTS MAY STILL BE IN THE AREA.  
EXAMPLE - BOMB THREAT, FIGHTS, BURGLARY JUST OCCURRED.  
(A 9-1-1 CALL)

PRIORITY 3

DANGER TO LIFE/PROPERTY NOT INVOLVED, BUT TIME IS A FACTOR.  
INCIDENT IN PROGRESS, NON-PRIORITY 1 OR  
EXAMPLES - AUDIBLE ALARM, SHOPLIFTER IN CUSTODY  
TRAFFIC HAZARD.  
(USUALLY A 230-2121 CALL)

PRIORITY 4

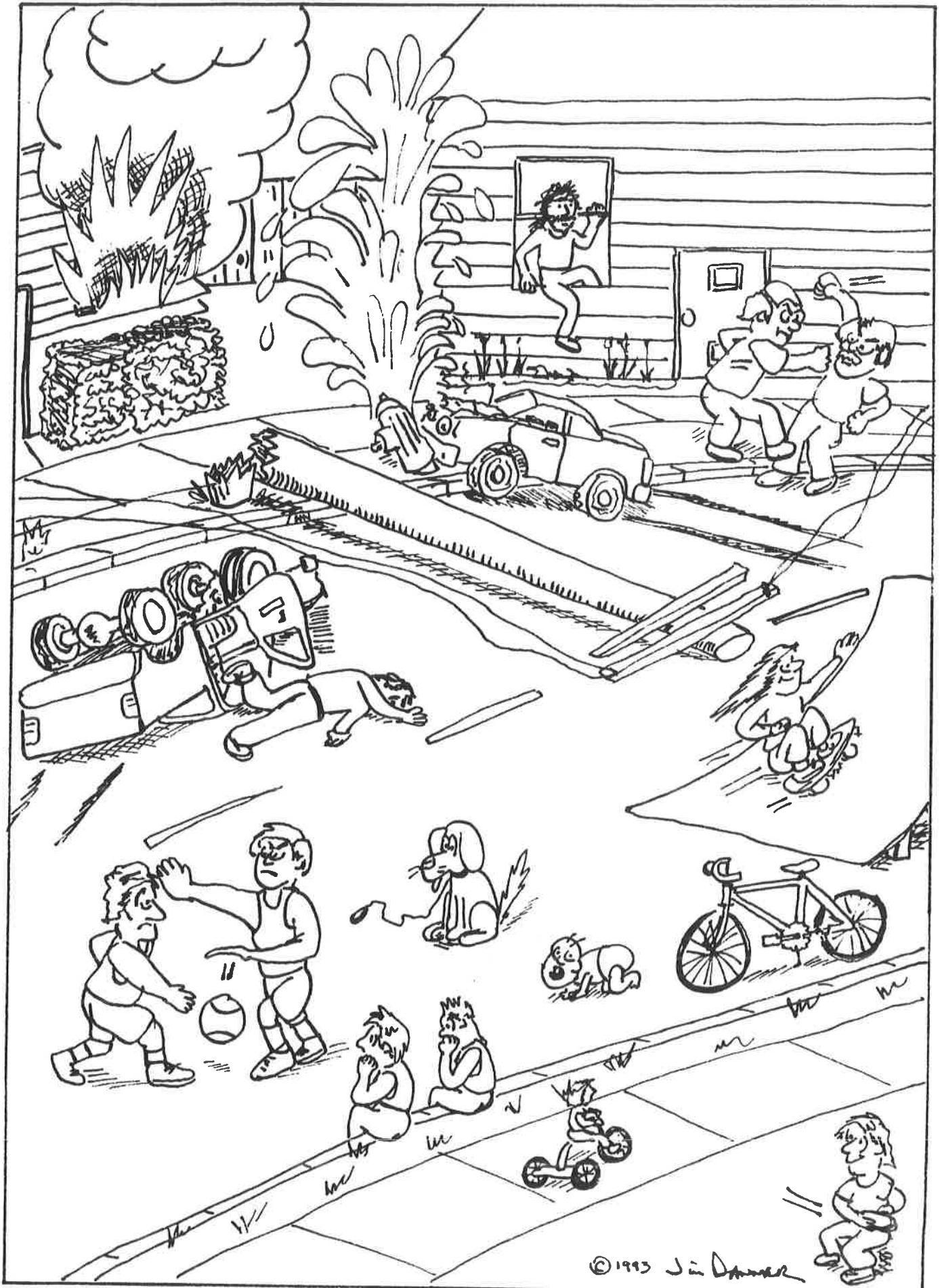
TIME IS NOT A FACTOR  
A SPECIAL OFFICER IS REQUESTED.  
EXAMPLES - PARKING PROBLEMS, FOLLOW-UP CALLS  
"COLD" CALLS (OCCURRED SEVERAL HOURS AGO)  
(A 230-2121 CALL)

PRIORITY 5

REQUESTED DELAY BY CALLER (UP TO 30 MIN.)  
EXAMPLE - CALLING TO MEET OFFICER AT ANOTHER LOCATION

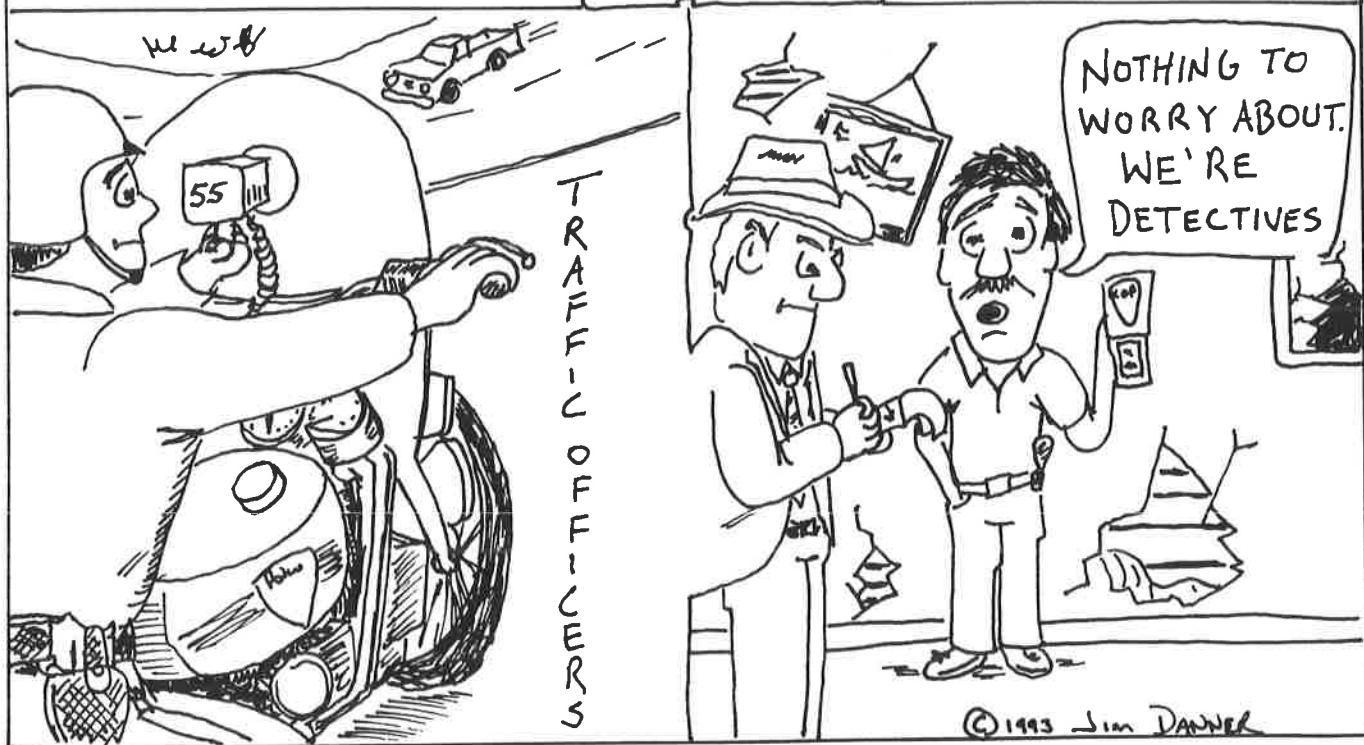
9-1-1 FIRE, ACCIDENT, FIGHT, BURGLAR IN HOUSE, POWER LINES DOWN, BABY IN STREET

230-2121 SKATEBOARD RAMP IN ROAD, BASKETBALL PLAYERS IN TRAFFIC, LOOSE DOG



© 1993 J. J. Danner

THE POLICE DEPARTMENT HAS MANY DIFFERENT OFFICERS, DEPENDING ON WHAT YOU NEED, YOU MAY SEE SOME OF THE FOLLOWING OFFICERS WHEN YOU CALL FOR HELP!





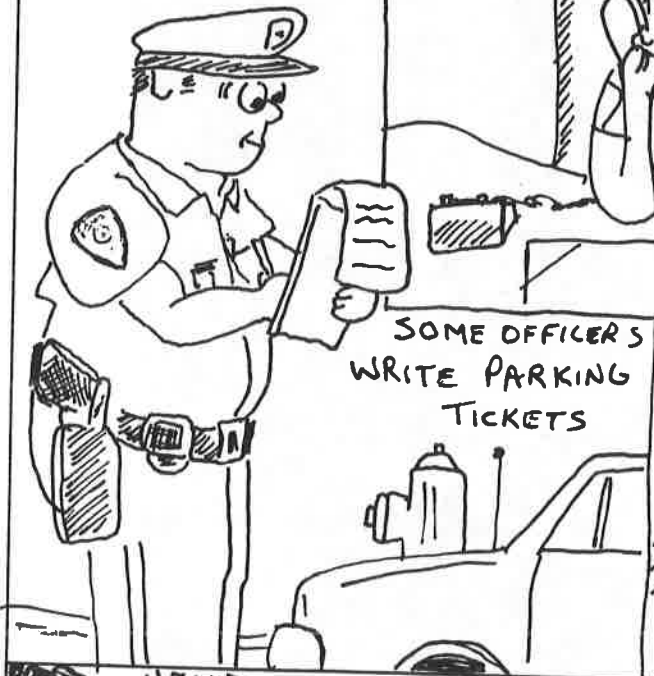


# DARE


YEAH



DESK OFFICER

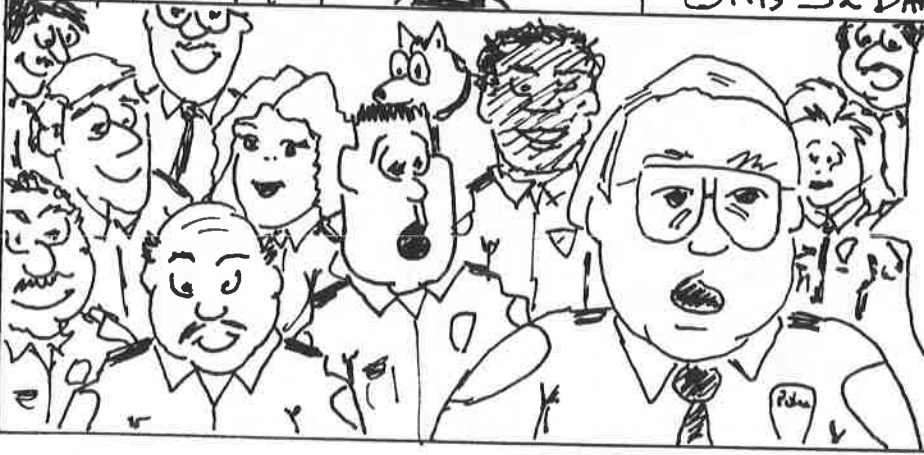


SOME OFFICERS  
WRITE PARKING  
TICKETS



SOME OFFICERS  
RIDE  
BICYCLES

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NO MATTER  
WHICH OF US YOU  
SEE, WE CAN  
ALL HELP  
YOU!