

**1996 HERMAN GOLDSTEIN EXCELLENCE IN PROBLEM SOLVING
WEST TRAFFIC DIVISION
INDIVIDUAL AWARD NOMINATION
POLICE OFFICER III SOL A. LEBUS**

SCANNING

West Traffic Division has experienced a long standing problem of controlling speed violations in the West Los Angeles canyon areas. Police Officer II+2 Sol A. Lebus was assigned to the West Los Angeles Area to coordinate the Department's efforts to address the problem and to enlist the assistance of the community most affected by the problem. Officer Lebus¹ research included reviewing statistics of speed-related traffic collisions and complaints by citizens living or employed in the area.

The canyon areas have many narrow thoroughfares with numerous extreme curves and uphill and downhill grades. Many residences abut the roadways, there are no sidewalks for pedestrian travel, and there is often reduced visibility due to foliage. Some canyon areas have wide straightaways, with uphill and downhill grades and wide sweeping curves. At various times, there is water on the roadways from residents watering their property or rain flowing down the canyon streets.

These routes through the canyons link the San Fernando Valley area with the cities of Beverly Hills, Santa Monica, Culver City, West Hollywood and metropolitan Los Angeles. Hence, a great amount of commuter traffic passes through the area to avoid the congested Sepulveda Pass on the 405 Freeway.

ANALYSIS

Statistical information for the last three years and six months supported the need to address the speed violation problem. In 1993, 348 injury traffic accidents occurred, 71 (20%) of which were speed related. In 1994, there were 340 injury traffic accidents, of which 65 (19%) were speed related. During 1995, 347 injury traffic accidents occurred, of which 72 (21%) were speed related.

Seventy-seven complaints of speeding vehicles were lodged with the Community Traffic Services Unit, West Traffic Division, from January 1993 through June 30, 1996. Many of these complaints are related to long-term, ongoing problems assigned to Community Traffic Services Unit officers in the West Los Angeles area.

The problem involved residents of the area, as well as commuter traffic traveling between the San Fernando Valley and the metropolitan Los Angeles area.

Three of these speed-related accidents resulted in fatalities, 12 resulted in major, incapacitating injuries, and 220 resulted in other injuries. Prior to January 1996, the

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traditional method of enforcement had been the only effort employed to reduce the problem. The results of these efforts were temporary reductions of speed, based on the availability of officers to address the problem.

There had been homeowners' association meetings involving Captain Mark Leap and Officers Lebus and Bill Justice discussing the speed problems and enforcement efforts.

RESPONSE

In July 1995, Officer Lebus met with Ms. Silvie Brown, Chairman of the Traffic Committee, Beverly Glen Homeowners' Association. Ms. Brown advised Officer Lebus that she had recently read of a program in Ohio where citizen volunteers were assisting the police with recording speed violations in their neighborhoods. Officer Lebus obtained a copy of the program. He then approached Captain Mark Leap, Commanding Officer, West Traffic Division, and explained what he had learned of the Ohio program. Captain Leap assigned Officer Lebus to develop a similar plan to be used in the West Los Angeles canyon areas. Officer Lebus developed a program which involved the community, acting in partnership with the police, in the detection of violators and presented it to Captain Leap, who then forwarded the plan to the Department's Traffic Coordinator and the City Attorney for approval and implementation on a Citywide basis.

In January 1996, Officer Lebus used civilian volunteers assigned to the West Los Angeles Area to look at the plan in action. He provided the training for the volunteers; and on three occasions, he implemented a test program. A couple of minor problems surfaced which Officer Lebus addressed. The next step in the process was to enlist volunteers to be part of the program. Officer Lebus attended the Beverly Glen Homeowners' Association meeting and had no trouble obtaining willing participants. On March 26, 1996, the program was implemented under the leadership of Officer Lebus. The Community Speed Watch Program had officially begun, teaming the community and police in a joint effort to solve a long standing traffic problem in West Los Angeles.

The program provides use of a City-owned radar gun to monitor the speed of vehicles traveling through selected areas. The results are recorded on a log which is returned to the Department, detailing the license numbers of vehicles violating the speed regulations. The Department of Motor Vehicles is queried to identify the registered owners of the vehicles. A letter from the Department is then sent to advise the registered owners of the program and that their vehicle was monitored in violation of the speed laws. A brief encouragement is included, promoting the safety enhancement of driving within the speed limits throughout the City.

On April 3, 1996, the plan was presented at a press conference. A follow-up article touting the program was printed by the Los Angeles Times. This created interest for several other community groups. Officer Lebus made several presentations to homeowners' associations and handled requests for information from several Los Angeles Police Divisions, the Los Angeles County Sheriffs Office, Beverly Hills Police Department, Palm Desert Police Department, Cathedral City Police Department and the Azusa Police Department.

Officer Lebus developed an application for volunteers to submit an agreement to conditions of the program; an instruction sheet on the use of radar; a hands-on training program for volunteers; a "train the trainer" program for other officers who will be instructing and overseeing the program in their areas of assignment; a log reflecting the monitoring of violators; and a letter from the Department to registered owners of vehicles monitored in excess of posted speed limits. A sign out log for use of the radar equipment has also been initiated.

The criteria that were most important prior to implementation of the program were the legal issues and liability issues which were addressed by the City Attorney. The cost issues were minimal, as the officer can conduct training and oversee the program as part of his duty day. The equipment involved is minimal, and the use of volunteers creates no cost to the City. The cost for issuing letters to violators is basically limited to the amount of postage needed to mail such letters.

The intent of the Community Speed Watch Program is to create the atmosphere that speed violations will not be accepted by the community. The potential violators' frame of mind can be positively affected by the presence of volunteers assisting the police in reducing the speed problems in their respective neighborhoods.

EVALUATION

The most obvious results of the program have been the marked decrease in injury traffic accidents in the canyon areas of West Los Angeles. From January 1 through June 30, 1996, the area experienced 102 injury traffic accidents compared to 180 injury accidents for that same time in 1995. This difference of 78 injury accidents equates to a 43% reduction. The speed-related injury accidents also show a decrease of 15 for a 35% reduction for the same time frames. These reductions are well in excess of West Traffic Division's goal of reducing injury accidents.

The Community Speed Watch Program is in the early stages and is continuously being evaluated. There are now six community groups actively participating in the program in different areas of West Bureau, and officers from the Community Traffic Services Unit are in the process of enlisting and training more community groups.

Another indicator of the program's success is the feedback provided by the volunteers who are observing reductions in the speed of vehicles, as their presence is now becoming quite well known in the selected areas.

Officer Lebus was involved in the initial evaluation of the program. Officers of the Community Traffic Services Unit, the West Traffic Division Commanding Officer, and the watch commanders are now involved in the continuous evaluation of the program.

One of the problems associated with the program has been the need to add a third volunteer to the team to effectively record the vehicle information on the log. Another problem was the safe placement of the volunteer teams to conduct the monitoring, i.e., establishing safe locations out of the traffic lanes. Officer Lebus has addressed and resolved these areas of concern.

The program will continue to be monitored in the form of officers evaluating the effectiveness of the volunteers, the issuance of letters to the registered owners of vehicles violating the speed laws and the reduction of speed-related injury traffic collisions.

An excellent example of Community Policing, the program can serve as a model for other Departments or agencies plagued with speed violations.

PHILOSOPHY AND ORGANIZATION

The Community Speed Watch Program was initiated by Officer Lebus. This project required 40 hours of preparation prior to its approval. Officer Lebus then spent approximately 20 hours per week training the volunteers, speaking to homeowner's groups concerning the use of the program, querying the Department of Motor Vehicles, sending letters to registered owners of vehicles and answering numerous calls for information on the program.

Officers of West Traffic Division are currently being trained in problem-solving and problem-oriented policing. This training has been ongoing for approximately one year.

No incentives have been offered to officers engaged in problem-solving other than Departmental commendations and recognition.

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ADDENDA

1. Los Angeles Times article "Gunning for Speeders"
2. Department letter to registered owner of violating vehicle
3. Community Speed Watch Program Agreement
4. Community Speed Watch Observation Log



CAROLYN COLE / Los Angeles Times

Robert Ringler, head of Residents of Beverly Glen Inc., uses a radar gun provided by the LAPD to track speeders.

Gunning for Speeders

■ **Traffic:** Neighbors form Community Speed Watch Program to track reckless drivers on Beverly Glen.

By **DUKE HELFAND**
TIMES STAFF WRITER

44-96

In a new twist on neighborhood Watch, residential crime fighters in Beverly Glen are waging a bold new battle against scofflaw

speeders.

Armed with a radar gun and a defiant attitude, they have taken up positions along steep and winding Beverly Glen Road to monitor cars and write down license plate numbers.

Police will send out warning letters to the registered owners of vehicles caught speeding down a three-mile stretch of the lush canyon road between Sunset Boulevard and Mulholland Drive.

The radar patrol is the first of its kind in Los Angeles but police are already getting inquiries from other

neighborhood groups about duplicating the effort.

For neighbors who spend their mornings and afternoons playing traffic cop, the new Community Speed Watch Program is a welcome relief from an old problem.

"Get behind the radar gun and it's like letting steam out," said Sybil Brown, 48, a member of Residents of Beverly Glen Inc., the group that officially launched its citizen's patrol Wednesday. "We're so angry at the way people drive

Please see RADAR, B6

RADAR

ntinued from B1
re—whether it's speeding, tail-
ting or not letting you out of
r driveway."

Police say the campaign is im-
o but effective. Officers from the
s Angeles Police Department's
est Traffic Division provide a
ar gun and a logbook for the
izen patrols, which take place
ut twice a week during the day.
The volunteer crime fighters
ically work in groups of three,
th one person holding the radar
n and the others noting license
te numbers.

The group, which began practi-
g last week, will conduct its
trolls up to four hours at a time on
specified days. Police will choose
: locations to be staked out on
: Beverly Glen.

Although the warning letters
nt by police are expected to have
impact, residents say the mere
esence of the radar gun already
ears to be working.

"It's obvious people are slam-
ing on their brakes," Robert
ngler, a former UCLA dean and
cident of the neighborhood asso-
ciation, said as he clocked cars
ednesday. "You watch the
eds drop as they go through
t."

Ringler, 55, who is also a justice
the peace, spent the better part
own hours gleefully calling out
eds as cars passed the group's
eckpoint for the day, a small dirt
ch alongside the road.

"I'm actually getting them be-
re they even see me, when they
me around the turn," Ringler
d, steadying the radar gun with
o hands.

Among the 20 or so cars caught
eeding through the canyon
ednesday were a Mercedes doing
mph, a Corvette at 42 mph and a
dW at 48 mph.

"We're heavy on the luxury
rs," said Adam Siegler, 38, an
orney who took time out from
rk to join the radar team.

Beverly Glen residents have
ig complained about speeders
ping down the two-lane road-
y, which snakes up Beverly
en canyon amid overhanging
ces and exclusive homes.



CAROLYN CHAN / Los

Robert Ringler, left, clocks cars while Adam Siegler writes down speeders' license plate

The street serves as a quick
route for commuters traveling be-
tween the Westside and the San
Fernando Valley.

In all, 17,000 cars a day travel
the street, where speed limits vary
from 20 mph at sharp turns to 30
and 35 mph along most stretches.

Police say the street has earned
an accident-prone reputation, with
29 collisions last year, including
one in which a motorcyclist lost a
leg. But those who live along the
street and in the quiet hills around
it say the official reports fail to
capture the true extent of the
trouble. They complain about mo-
torists crashing into mailboxes,
street signs, trash cans and parked
cars, with minor accidents occur-
ring at least once a week. Resi-
dents say they put their lives at
risk every time they pull out of
their driveways.

"It's fearful," Ringler said. "Try
to back out and you don't know
how fast somebody is coming
around the curve."

Last year, an answer emerged. A
member of the neighborhood asso-
ciation heard a radio report about a
small community in Ohio that was
using radar guns to curb speeding.
The group decided to contact Los
Angeles police about trying a simi-
lar approach on Beverly Glen.

Brown, head of the neighbor-
hood group's traffic committee and
the person who initiated the pro-
gram with police, recalled that
some residents were apprehensive
at first about taking aggressive
action.

"A few people said, 'What if the
motorists pull over and pick a fight
or pull a gun?'" Brown said. "The
police said that if it looks like a
motorist is going to get hostile, call

on [your] cellular phone."

Police held a training s-
eak the activists how to
radar gun and log licen-
se numbers and other vital
tion.

Two other Westside
one on nearby Rosemead
and another in the hill
Hollywood—are preparin-
their own patrols. Other
the area have also expres-
est, police say.

Ultimately, authorities
the program will be dupli-
neighborhoods citywide.

"The response to this
tremendous," said Officer
bus, coordinator of the pre-
the West Traffic Division
hoping more people will
involved. We'll train them
them out on the street."

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LOS ANGELES POLICE DEPARTMENT

WILLIE L. WILLIAMS
Chief of Police



RICHARD J. RIORDAN
Mayor

P.O. Box 30158
Los Angeles, Calif. 90030
Telephone:
(310) 840-2122
Ref #: 6.5

FIELD(date)

FIELD(name)

FIELD(address)

Dear FIELD(salutation):

The Los Angeles Police Department sponsors a traffic safety program known as the Community Speed Watch Program (CSWP). The CSWP allows trained community members to borrow a speed-measuring radar unit from the police department and conduct traffic speed checks in their neighborhoods. The CSWP is intended to enhance the traffic safety of all vehicles, pedestrians, bicyclists, and residents of the City of Los Angeles.

On FIELD(date viol occurred), at FrELD(time viol occurred), a FIELD(veh descrip) with license # FIELD(license no.) was observed speeding by one of the CSW? volunteers at FIELD(Ioc of viol). This vehicle, which is registered to you, was observed traveling at FIELD(radar speed) miles per hour in a posted FIELD(posted speed) miles per hour zone.

Although no citation will be issued as a result of this observation, it is hoped that you will take the necessary action to ensure that no future violations occur. As the registered owner of this vehicle, it is your responsibility to ensure that your vehicle is operated in a safe manner, regardless of who the driver might be.

On behalf of the Los Angeles Police Department and the CSWP participants, I would like to take this opportunity to enlist your aid in promoting traffic safety, not only in the City of Los Angeles, but also on all roads and highways. It is the hope of the Los Angeles Police Department and the CSWP volunteers that your vehicles are operated at or below the posted speed limits at all times.

Your cooperation is appreciated. If you have any questions regarding this notification, please contact Officer FrELD(officer's name) of West Traffic Community Traffic Services Unit at (310) 840-2122/23.

Very truly yours,

WILLIE L. WILLIAMS
Chief of Police

BETTY P. KELEPECZ, Captain
Commanding Officer
West Traffic Division

ADDENDUM 2

COMMUNITY SPEED WATCH PROGRAM AGREEMENT

I hereby acknowledge receipt of one radar unit, free of charge, from the Los Angeles Police Department for use in the Community Speed Watch Program. I agree this radar unit will be used in accordance with the training guideline established by the Los Angeles Police Department. In consideration for the privilege of utilizing this radar unit in the Community Speed Watch Program, I forever discharge the Los Angeles Police Department and the City of Los Angeles from any and all actions, causes of action, claims, demands, costs, loss of service, expenses and compensation in the event of any damage or injury occurring during the use of this radar unit, and do hereby covenant with the said Los Angeles Police Department and the City of Los Angeles to indemnify and hold them harmless from all claims, demands, costs, expenses, and compensations on account of, or in any way growing out of, said incident from the date of these presents.

Further, I hereby acknowledge that I have received training from the Los Angeles Police Department in the use and care of this radar unit. I understand the radar unit is to be used solely for monitoring traffic speed in my neighborhood, during the day or night, for a period of up to three consecutive days from the date of issuance, and that two persons are required for each data collection period - one to operate the radar unit and one to record the required vehicle information. When alleged speeders are detected by the use of this radar, information which will assist in identifying the violating vehicle will be recorded and submitted to the Los Angeles Police Department. The Los Angeles Police Department cannot issue a traffic citation to drivers detected by Community Speed Watch Program participants, but will send a letter to the registered owner(s) of the offending vehicle advising them of the observed infraction and encouraging them to observe traffic laws in the future.

I hereby acknowledge that I will in no way attempt to detain or make contact with a suspected violator, nor will I enter into a vehicular or foot chase of a suspected violator of a traffic law.

Community Speed Watch Participant

Address

Community Speed Watch Participant

Address

Community Speed Watch Participant

Address

Radar Model: _____

Radar Serial No. _____

Turning Fork No. _____

Issue Date: _____

Issuing Officer: _____

Return Date: _____

