

**Illegal Drag Racing Project****~~Officer Ed Ochoa, NIPD~~****Summary:**

Illegal drag racing in the City of Redding, California had been popular for decades. On Friday and Saturday nights, cars would illegally drag race on a 1/4 mile stretch of road leading out of the city. Many spectators would stand on the side of the road to watch. The primary road used for illegal drag racing was Clear Creek Road. This road is long, flat, and isolated. Police units responding to the area had only one approach. Illegal racers posted lookouts in the area who phoned or paged them when they **saw** police cars responding. This allowed the participants to flee before units arrived.

Over time, more people became interested in this activity. In the beginning of 2002, there were as many as 30 cars illegally racing and up to 200 people watching the races. Most of the participants were between the ages of **16** and 25 years old. Alcohol was introduced to the illegal event and this created more problems. There were numerous unreported traffic collisions and disturbances due to intoxication. The problem then spread to other locations within the city and was no longer confined to just Clear Creek Road.

On Friday and Saturday nights, the Redding Police Department received numerous citizen complaints regarding illegal racing and underage drinking on Clear Creek Road. Many citizens stated they had to pull off the roadway to let oncoming racers pass them. This created a dangerous environment for the citizens who utilized this roadway.

Officer Ed Ochoa of the Neighborhood Police Unit recognized the need to find a long term

resolution to this problem before fatalities began to occur. The Officer contacted numerous illegal racers and asked what he could do to stop them from racing on public roadways. The illegal racers said that a track was not always available to them and when it was, the entry fees were too high.

The Officer contacted the Redding Drag Strip and asked if they would open the track on Friday or Saturday nights for street racers. The Drag Strip declined stating the illegal racers would not show up. After several contacts, the Drag Strip agreed to open the gates for a one time event if all related fees were paid up front. This would be a safeguard in case the racers did not show up and would help off-set the low entry fees which would be five dollars per carload to watch plus another ten dollars to race their car during the event.

Officer Ochoa recruited local businesses as sponsors and raised enough money to rent the track for one night. He and local legal and illegal racers passed out thousands of flyers and attended many car related events to promote the races. The races were named "Street Legal Drags".

On Saturday, July 20<sup>th</sup>, 2002 the track was opened from 4:00 PM until Midnight. Approximately **120** cars entered to race and approximately **1200** spectators showed up. The event was a success and the Drag Strip decided to continue the races on a monthly basis. By the third and final event for the **season**, there were over 210 cars entered to race and over 2500 spectators.

While assessing the results of the project, it was found that calls for service on the nights of the events dramatically decreased. These were calls related to illegal racing, cruising, **vandalism**, and curfew violations. After the season was over, Officer Ochoa received numerous calls from local citizens and businesses who wanted to help the Police Department with future projects.

Description:

In the early months of 2002, citizens began calling the Police Department with complaints of illegal racing, reckless driving, **vandalism**, and underage drinking on Clear Creek Road in the City of Redding, California. Many of the calls came from citizens who frequent the road. Some stated they were forced **off** the road by vehicles illegally racing and driving on the wrong side of the road. They felt unsafe and were not satisfied with the police just issuing citations and breaking up the illegal racing events.

In January of 2002, Officer Ed Ochoa of the Redding Police Department's Neighborhood Police Unit decided to start a Community Oriented Policing project in hopes of finding a long term resolution to this problem before fatalities began to occur.

In that same **month**, **Officer** Ochoa began to frequent Clear Creek Road in the evening hours and conduct traffic enforcement vehicle stops to learn more about the **illegal** races. While conducting these stops, he met many of the participants and soon after was able to use them as liaisons between the illegal racers and himself.

Officer Ochoa advised these liaisons that he was interested in helping them find a safe place to race and requested they help him gather information regarding the "Clear Creek Drags." On Friday and Saturday Nights, the liaisons went out to Clear Creek Road and conducted surveys with questions given to them by Officer Ochoa. On the following Monday, they would call Officer Ochoa with the results. After numerous surveys it was determined that the illegal street racers wanted to race at an approved facility but the only track in town was not open to them on weekends and when it was open, the entry fees were too high.

Officer Ochoa set up a meeting with the illegal racers at a local restaurant. He explained the situation from a Police Officer's point of view and then listened to what the racers had to say. **All** of the racers stated they would stop racing on Clear Creek Road if the track was made available to them on weekends and the entry **fees** were kept to a **minimum**. While at the meeting, Officer Ochoa learned that there were numerous unreported traffic collisions and underage drinking on the nights of the illegal drag races. He also learned that alcohol burning fall drag race cars were being dropped off trailers and raced. These vehicles were capable of speeds in excess of 150 miles per hour.

In March of 2002, Officer Ochoa contacted the Manager of the Redding Drag Strip and inquired about an event for street racers. He **was told** that similar types of events had been tried, and failed, due to the lack of participation by the illegal racers. The Drag Strip felt it was not a worthwhile venture as they could not break even with the amount of participation in the past. Officer Ochoa advised the Manager that the racers felt the fees were too high and the track was not available to them on the weekends. After numerous contacts with Drag Strip management, they agreed to have an event on a Saturday night with low entry fees for spectators and racers. They said they would only do this if Officer Ochoa would pay for the event in advance. This would protect the Drag Strip from a loss if the event was a failure. If the event was a success, the money left over would be used for a second event, etc.

In April of 2002, Officer Ochoa sent a letter out to forty-two local businesses asking if they would like to sponsor **Redding's** first "Street Legal Drags." Numerous businesses responded and the money was raised to rent the Drag Strip for one night. The business owners were excited and

looked forward to working with the Police Department. Many purchased radio spots to advertise the event. Officer Ochoa returned to the Drag Strip with the money and the first event was scheduled for Saturday, July 20<sup>th</sup>, 2002.

Over the next few months, Officer Ochoa put Phase II of the project to work. This consisted of Education and Enforcement regarding illegal **racing**. On Friday and Saturday Nights, Officers from the swing and graveyard shifts went out to Clear Creek Road and distributed flyers to racers and spectators advising the punishments for racing and watching races. At the same time Officer Ochoa distributed event flyers to numerous local businesses and attended various car related functions to promote the event.

In between distributing flyers and promoting the race event, Officer Ochoa and his partner, Officer Eric Little conducted stake-outs at known illegal racing areas such as Clear Creek Road, Abernathy Lane, and Mt. Lakes Blvd. Over the course of the next few months, eight people were arrested for engaging in a speed contest or aiding and abetting a speed contest. Participant vehicles were impounded and the drivers were booked into jail.

On Saturday, July 20<sup>th</sup>, 2002, the first event was held. Approximately **120** cars entered to race and approximately **1200** spectators showed up to watch. The Drag Strip was pleased and by the end of the first night, they had scheduled two more races on August 17<sup>th</sup>, and September 28<sup>th</sup>, 2002. Officer Ochoa set up an information booth at the drag races and passed out eighty surveys asking people what they thought of the event. Of the eighty surveys, all stated they enjoyed the event and would return for the next one. This held true, and by the third and final event of the **season**, there were over 210 cars racing and over 2500 spectators.

On the nights of the "Street Legal Drags," police calls for service dramatically decreased in regards to illegal racing, **vandalism**, graffiti, and underage drinking. There were also no citizen complaints regarding the Clear Creek Road issues. On the night of the third event, Officer Ochoa received an applause from the oncoming shift because they knew they would not be **overwhelmed** with the above mentioned calls for service.

After the season was over, Officer Ochoa sent thank you letters to the sponsors. All of the sponsors contacted Officer Ochoa **and** advised they would like to help again the following year. At the time of this writing, all 2003 "Street Legal Drags" sponsorships have been secured and the Drag Strip is now opened every other weekend for the local racing enthusiasts. On March 29, 2003 the first "Street Legal Drags" for the year were held at the Redding Drag Strip. There were over **160** cars racing and over 2800 spectators. The illegal racing problems have not resurfaced since the start of the Street Legal Racing **program**.

Officer Ed Ochoa attended the COPS and POPS school in Sacramento, California in 2002 and credits that, coupled with the support of many local businesses and the Redding Police Department Administration, for the success of his "Illegal Racing Project."

#### Overview using the SARA Model:

##### Scanning:

The problem was identified as illegal street racing through citizen complaints. Other problems identified were, **vandalism**, graffiti, reckless driving and underage drinking. The core problem was identified as illegal racing.

### Analysis:

Computer generated calls for service were checked monthly to identify problem areas. Illegal racers were interviewed to determine why they were racing and what could be done to stop it. From these interviews, it was determined that numerous unreported traffic collisions with injuries were occurring and juveniles were consuming alcoholic beverages. The illegal racers were not afraid of just getting a ticket.

### Response:

A three pronged approach was decided. Environment, Education, and Enforcement. Many agencies had tried one or the others, but not all three at the same time. Officer Ochoa coordinated with the Redding Drag Strip to provide a legal racing environment for the illegal racers. He coordinated with patrol officers for the distribution of educational fliers and teamed up with patrol and traffic officers for illegal racing enforcement. Officers manned an information booth at the legal races and provided information regarding the hazards of illegal racing.

### Assessment:

Education coupled with enforcement reduced illegal racing by about fifty percent based on information provided by informants. Once the Drag Strip was opened, the problem decreased further. By the end of 2002, there were no reports by citizens of illegal racing on any of the mentioned roadways. As a side benefit, the local "cruise" was non existent on the nights of the races which helped to further decrease calls for service. Illegal racing will continue to be monitored and education and enforcement will continue.

**Agency and officer information:**

The illegal racing project was initiated by the Neighborhood Police Unit. The project was supported by **Administration**, Patrol, and the Traffic Unit. NPU Officers adjusted their days **off to** work the events, keeping overtime pay to a minimum. Crime Analysis assisted by providing statistical data and starting a web page which is linked to the Police Department **web-site at** [www.reddingpolice.org](http://www.reddingpolice.org).

**Contact information:**

Lt. Sid **Riley**  
Officer Ed Ochoa  
Redding Police Department  
1313 **California** Street  
Redding, **CA**, 96001  
Ph (530) 225-4200



## **Thinking about illegal street racing?**

Think about this . . . .

You can be **arrested** for engaging in a speed contest...

Your **car** can be **impounded** for up to 30 days....

You can be **fined** up to **\$1000.00**....

You can spend up to **90 days in jail!**

### **California Vehicle Code Section 23109(a)**

And did you know spectators can be cited too?

It's true... so if you want to race or watch races, do it at an approved facility!

This information was provided by Officer Ed Ochoa of the Redding Police Department.

For more info go to [www.reddingpolice.org](http://www.reddingpolice.org) and click on Street Legal Drags. . . . . Thanks!

- DRAFT -

# CITY OF REDDING



## POLICE DEPARTMENT

1313 California Street, Redding, CA 96001-3396

530.225.4200 FAX 530.225.4553

April 4, 2002

Dear Local Merchant:

Hello, my name is Ed Ochoa. I am a police officer for the City of Redding. You may have read in the newspaper about the "Illegal Street Racing" that is occurring within the city limits. This presents numerous problems due to vehicles driving in the wrong lanes, driving recklessly, and reaching speeds in excess of 100 miles per hour.

I am currently working with the Redding Drag Strip to provide racing on Friday and Saturday nights in an attempt to stop illegal racing before any serious injuries occur. We are trying to find sponsors for a one night "Grudge Racing" event to generate interest in the Drag Strip. If the event is a success, we would like to continue the racing as a series and may seek sponsors to offset entry fees and track services.

If you are interested in helping us to stop illegal drag racing in the Redding area or would like to make a donation, please contact me at the Redding Police Department at 225-4200 for further information. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Robert P. Blankenship  
Chief of Police

Officer Ed Ochoa  
Redding Police Department

eo/kc

## Street Legal Drags Sponsors and Donations for July 20, 2002

1. Win-River Casino	1500.00
2. Redding Physical Therapy Redding Fitness Center	500.00
3. Franklin Auto Parts	250.00
4. Taylor Motors	250.00
5. Jiffy Lube	250.00
6. Redding Peace Officer's Assn.	250.00
7. Hartnell Transmission	200.00
8. Top Notch Performance	150.00
9. Redding Police Manager's Assn.	150.00
10. Magic Auto Painting	100.00
11. Foothill Distributing	100.00
12. Anderson Peace Officer's Assn.	50.00
13. Ed and Kim Ochoa	50.00
14. Record Searchlight	5000 Flyers
15. Redding Muni Airport	Waive 6% Fees
Total dollar amount donated:	\$ 3800.00



# REDDING POLICE DEPARTMENT

AND THE

# Redding Drag Strip

PROUDLY PRESENT

# STREET LEGAL DRAGS



*Come out and see  
how quick your  
ride really is!*

*A night of fun runs and gudge racing*

# Sat., July 20, 2002 at the Redding Drag Strip

Old Oregon Trail off Airport Road and Rancho Road

Gates open at 4 p.m. – Racing from 5 p.m. to midnight

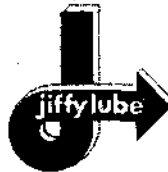
**Admission only \$5 per carload to watch!  
Plus \$10 if you want to race your car**

All you need is a safe, registered and insured car, truck or motorcycle  
and a valid drivers license.

Under 18 years old requires a signed parental consent form to race.

*FINAL  
DRAFT*

Sponsored by:



Redding Peace Officers Association • Redding Police Managers Association • Anderson Peace Officers Association  
Shasta County Peace Officers Association • Redding Physical Therapy • Redding Fitness Center • Taylor Motors  
Hartnell Transmission • Foothill Distributing • Shasta County Sheriffs Deputy Association

**Absolutely no alcohol or glass containers allowed on race track property**

Call the Race Hotline for times and race information — 347-4237

See us on the web @ [www.reddingdragstrip.org](http://www.reddingdragstrip.org)

N.C.D.R.A. P.O. Box 492021 • Redding, CA 96049-2021

**Do you need more  
in a phonebook**

Call 24-MERCY  
for physician referral.  
Medical Center Redding  
1000

ig.com

# Local

Section

**B**

Record Searchlight

Sunday, July 21, 2002

## North state

### in brief

#### shoots self in head

**Y** — A 21-year-old  
died early Saturday after  
accidentally shot himself  
with a handgun, the Tehama  
County Sheriff's Department

James Lopes, 21, was  
killed at Enloe Memorial Hos-  
pital in Redding, where he died,  
officials said.  
Lopes was apparently party-  
ing with three friends shortly  
before 11 a.m., when he acci-  
dentally shot himself in the  
head, officials said.  
The three friends were de-  
tained and later released after  
questioned by detect-  
ive's officials said.

#### bus will visit

A communications  
bus will be making a  
visit to the C-  
ool Bus in Redding  
from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Friday.  
The 40-foot motor coach is  
the country's largest  
and cable systems  
out the nation. The  
TV production studio  
also has a demonstration cen-  
ter where students, ed-  
ucators and community lead-  
ers can gain first-  
hand knowledge  
of Span Networks'  
public affairs pro-  
gram.

The bus will be parked at  
Citizens Recreation  
Center, 100 Benton Drive, dur-  
ing the visit.

#### high school win award

Shasta County high  
school graduates have been  
recognized by Family Planning's  
Outreach Program  
for their dedication to  
the program. The  
award was presented to  
the graduates of  
Shasta High School  
for their dedication to  
the program. The  
award was presented to  
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Shasta High School  
for their dedication to  
the program.

#### Association local director

The DeMarais of Red-  
ding assumed duties as  
the local director for the  
Heart Association's  
program.



**BURNIN' RUBBER:** Stephen Goldsbury, 17, of Anderson uses his 1972 Dodge Dart 318 to blow the doors off 31-year-old Eric Hall's 1959 Datsun 1000 sedan. The Redding Police Department and the Redding Drag Strip hosted drag races in an effort to curb illegal street racing.

## Kicking asphalt

Redding Police Department's street legal drag races draw huge crowd

By **BHl Choy**  
Record Searchlight

**T**he need for speed was satisfied  
in a safe environment for  
street racers Saturday night.

For months, the Redding Police  
Department has been concerned  
with illegal street racing in Red-  
ding — mainly on Clear Creek  
Road. To combat this the depart-  
ment, along with the Redding Drag  
Strip, hosted a street legal race at  
the drag strip, east of Airport Road.  
Event organizers hoped it would  
give racers a legal, safe place to  
challenge one another.

Officer Ed Ochoa of the neighbor-  
hood police unit, organizer of the  
races, said numerous complaints in  
the Clear Creek Road area of dan-  
gerous, illegal street racing  
prompted the event.

"There were cars out there that  
were exceeding 100 mph, some  
going the wrong way," Ochoa said.  
"We decided to take a proactive

step, instead of waiting for an in-  
jury or a fatality to occur."

Ochoa said that when talking to  
street racers about racing at the  
drag strip, the high cost always  
came up.

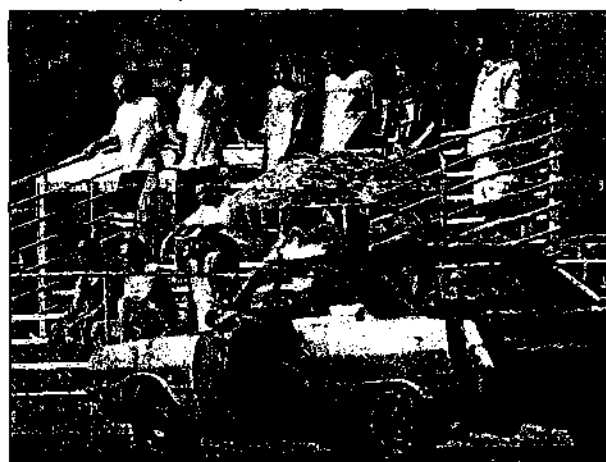
To reduce the cost, Ochoa went  
throughout the community and  
found numerous businesses that  
donated more than \$4,000 total to  
put the event on. Racers were  
charged \$10 and spectators \$5.

It started at 5 p.m. and was sched-  
uled to end at midnight.

Mike Bolduc, operations man-  
ager of the drag strip, was hoping  
for a big turnout.

"If we get 100 racers, I would con-  
sider it a smashing success," he  
said early in the event. "It's 100 less  
cars you got illegally racing on  
Clear Creek Road... and we get to  
show them what safe, legal drag  
racing is all about."

See **Races**, B-2



**LIFE'S A DRAG:** Fans brave 100-plus temperatures at the Redding Drag Strip on Saturday to watch the races. More than 200 cars participated in the races and more than 2,500 spectators watched.

### PUBLIC SAFETY

## Man injured in single-vehicle wreck on Placer Street

By **BHl Choy**  
Record Searchlight

a.m. when he apparently fell asleep.  
The car drifted into the westbound

Placer was closed for more than 30  
minutes while crews removed the

Ward said Wion was wearing his  
seat belt.

**TUARIES**

**POLICE LOG**

30\*  
G — Graveside services for Ann Hansen, 61, will be at 4 p.m. at St. Joseph Catholic Church in Redding.

Services will be from 5:30 today at Allen & Dalrymple Chapel in Palo Alto.

Funeral services will be recited at 7 at the chapel.

Her son died Saturday, Aug. 2, at her son's residence in Cedro.

She was born May 17, 1921, in Hungary, she moved to Redding in 1991 from Newark, N.J.

She was a homemaker, a piano and vocal soloist and a member of St. Augustine church, Rosary Society and union.

Her survivors include sons Roberto Cedro, Allen of Redding, N.J., the Rev. James Hansen of Preston, N.J., and John of Sun Valley, N.J.; brothers William and John Redding, Redding, N.J.; sister Mary Ann Woodcliff; three grandchildren; and one great-grandchild.

Contributions can be made to the Monastery of the Holy Spirit, 484 Tucker St., New York, N.Y. 12469.

Funeral services are being held at Allen & Dalrymple Chapel in Palo Alto.

K — Services for Caudill, 61, of Hayward, at 4 p.m. Monday at St. Joseph's Chapel in Redding.

Funeral services will be at Hayfork.

Funeral services for Caudill died Friday, Aug. 2, at Redding Medical Center.

She was born Aug. 13, 1940, in Blackfoot, Idaho, she moved to Redding many years ago.

She was an office manager for Smith Petroleum Co. and active with the Ladies Club, both in Redding.

Survivors include husband Russell Drake of Redding and Ralph of Redding; Tammy Baudizaverville; brothers Robert and Marysville; and daughter Carter of Carey.

Funeral services for Wanda Carlisle of Redding, Ore.; father Donald of Peoria, Ohio; and grandchildren.

Contributions can be made to the Roderick Seniors, P.O. Box 723, Hayward, Calif.

Funeral services are being held by McDonald-Files Funeral Home in Redding.

**DEATHS**

— Frank Joseph of Oak Run died at SunBridge Care Redding. Arrangements pending at Lawn

The following thefts and vandalism were reported Friday and Saturday to the Redding Police Department:

- A garbage can was knocked over in the 1000 block of Calexico Drive.
- A window was broken in the 1000 block of Hartnell Avenue.

- A garbage can was stolen in the 500 block of Collyer Drive.
- A building was marked with graffiti in the 1000 block of Churn Creek Road.

- A garbage can and a recycling bin were stolen in the 10000 block of Posey Lane.
- Property was stolen from a business in the 1000 block of Center Street.

- Medication was stolen in the 1000 block of Grace Avenue.
- A window was broken in the 1000 block of Oregon Street.

- A purse was stolen from a vehicle in the 300 block of Park Marina Circle.
- A garbage can was stolen in the 5000 block of Mountain View Drive.

- Money was stolen from a purse in the 2000 block of Hilltop Drive.
- A purse was stolen from a vehicle in the 200 block of Hilltop Drive.

- A vehicle was vandalized in the 700 block of Cypress Avenue.
- Money was stolen from a residence in the 1000 block of Dana Drive.

- Property was stolen from a business in the 1000 block of Willis Street.
- A cellular phone was stolen in the 300 block of Park Marina Circle.

- A computer was stolen in the 6000 block of Eastside Road.
- Gasoline was pumped and not paid for in the 2000 block of Eureka Way.

**Today in HISTORY**

Today is Sunday, July 21, the 202nd day of 2002. There are 163 days left in the year.

**On this date:**

- In 1902, Meyer Meyers, a young stenographer, drowned in the Sacramento River while bathing near Kennett. When the man did not return from lunch a search was made. His clothes were found near the shore and his body in a deep pool.
- In 1952, a fire swept through a mill of the Crawford Lumber Co. in Anderson. The \$15,000 blaze ate up 10,000 board feet of lumber.
- In 1977, a big rig attempted to go under the Highway 44-Butte Street overpass, but the truck was too tall. The cab of the truck was smashed and the overpass was closed because of damages.
- In 1992, the Redding City



**AERIAL ASSAULT:** A plane flies through thick haze Saturday as it dumps retardant on a fire near Summer Lake, Ore.

**Two blazes merge in south Oregon**

PORTLAND, Ore. (AP) — Two wildfires crackling through sagebrush and juniper in south-central Oregon merged Saturday to create an 83,000-acre blaze. Residents of more than 60 homes were urged to evacuate.

Crews said they'll have a better shot at containing the blaze now that it's concentrated in one area.

"The fire crews are getting together and talking about what's going to happen next," said Dale Warriner, a fire spokesman.

The wildfire was the second-largest in the nation, trailing only a complex of fires burning across 94,000 acres in a remote area northwest of Green River, Utah, said Marc Hollen, spokesman for the Northwest Interagency Coordination Center.

Residents in and around Summer Lake and Silver Lake, two isolated high-desert communities, were asked to consider evacuating.

The blaze was about 15 per-



**WATCHFUL EYES:** Firefighter Larry Allen of Albany, Ore., watches a blaze Saturday in south-central Oregon.

cent contained Saturday afternoon. It was among about 25 major fires burning in Oregon across a total of about 212,000 acres.

Meanwhile Saturday, an order grounding much of the nation's firefighting fleet of aging, heavy-duty air tankers was lifted, two days after the second deadly crash since June in the middle of a busy wildfire season.

Still grounded pending results of federal investigations, however, were nine planes of the same types as those that crashed in June near Walker, and Thursday near Lyons, Colo., killing a total of five crew members.

Some tankers in Oregon remained on the tarmac for additional checks, but most of the 10-plane fleet took off with loads of slurry, Hollen said.

So far this year, wildfires have burned more than 3.5 million acres around the United States, about as much as burned in all of 2001, according to the interagency fire center.

Elsewhere, a wind-whipped fire in Washington threatened residential areas near Lake Chelan on Saturday, and nearly 300 homes had been ordered evacuated. The fire in north-central Washington had burned about 17,000 acres.

In Colorado, a small part of Rocky Mountain National Park was closed after a wildfire nearby nearly doubled in size to 4,000 acres. In Boulder, firefighters contained a 400-acre grass fire that had prompted an evacuation request for residents of about 1,600 homes.

After burning for six days, a nearly 10,000-acre blaze near Topaz Lake on the California-Nevada state line was declared contained Saturday. Also contained was a roughly 8,500-acre fire on the Nevada-Utah line near Ely.

**RACERS: More than 200 cars sign up to drag**

*Continued from B-1*

By 8 p.m., more than 200 cars had signed up to race and more than 2,500 spectators had packed the stands, organizers said.

"They're coming in droves," Bokduc said.

He said racers from Southern California, the San Francisco Bay area, Oregon, Nevada and Arizona were expected.

Chad Richardson, 31, of Redding, who regularly races legally at the drag strip, said he was glad to have the street racers at the track.

"I love that they're here," he said. "I've been telling all the kids I see about it. I've seen too many poles struck on Clear Creek Road. ... If someone has a blowout here

there's someone to fix it. It's safe here."

At the drag strip, street racer Greg Frank, 34, of Redding was getting his turbo-charged Nissan 240SX ready to race.

"I thought, 'I'll bring it in and have some fun,'" he said.

Franks said he was excited to be racing at the drag strip. While there are unsafe drivers out there, he said, the majority are just "gear heads" who want to have fun and show off their cars. That, Frank said, is what makes the drag strip an ideal place to race.

Street racer Thomas Rossi, 50, of Redding said he was glad organizers made it affordable for street racers to enjoy the track.

"I really like to see this

pumped up and see more people here," he said. "I take my hat off to officer Ochoa for putting this together."

Ochoa said that to ensure a safe environment, the cars have to be registered. Alcohol was also prohibited at the event.

The officer said that if the event is successful, there are plans to hold it again next month and in September.

"It's up to them if this becomes a success," he said. "If

they come out we can have more of these."

He added that police will still be out in force to curb illegal street racing.

Reporter Bill Choy can be reached at 225-8217 or at [bchoy@redding.com](mailto:bchoy@redding.com).



**Blood needs**

- BloodSource (243-0160) needs today: O negative, A negative
- Shasta Blood Center (246-2400) needs today: O negative

**PAUL DOUGLAS**

## Redding provides thrilling solution for illegal racing

A truly amazing thing happened last weekend at the Redding Drag Strip. The sights and sounds of street racers revving their engines and peeling rubber wasn't so unusual — the drag strip is where this sort of competition should take place. What was remarkable was the community's response — from sponsors to spectators — to a Redding Police Department solution to illegal drag racing taking place within the city limits.

The RPD, through the industrious undertaking of officer Ed Ochoa, figured that perhaps the most effective way to curb the illegal and potentially deadly street racing was to hold drag races of its own in a family atmosphere at the Redding Drag Strip.

It worked — spectacularly. Police still need to patrol for speed contests, but a street-legal drag race is another tactic to preserve lives. The idea of the Saturday race was to provide a safe and legal alternative to the illicit racing that is a late-night fixture on Clear Creek Road, but has also popped up on Abernathy Lane and Mountain Lakes Boulevard.

Ochoa, a member of the neighborhood police unit, has a special affinity for racing and understands the mind of a "gear head." He used to drag race in his youth and got caught and got tickets. Out of frustration, he moved onto a sanctioned track and got a thrill from hitting the accelerator as the lights flashed green. Today, he has a '68 Camaro that he uses as a show car.

He wanted to organize races that would attract the locals. The races would be fast and furious — up to six lanes going at a time and without long waits between starts typical of bracket racing. And the entrance fees would be cheap — \$5 a carload and an extra \$10 fee to race. Drivers could race without fear of being arrested, getting fined and having their cars impounded or having a head-on wreck. What a deal.

Ochoa was encouraged by the support of Win-River Casino and other sponsors (including the Record Searchlight) that contributed more than \$4,000. The department raised enough money to essentially rent the drag strip, pay for insurance and hire staff for car safety inspections and other services. Fliers were distributed in Redding, and then in Burney and Weaverville. Word spread to Chico and Medford, Ore. Pretty soon, Ochoa and the drag strip were getting calls from people in Reno and Arizona who had heard about a street grudge match.

"We had no idea what would happen and whether anyone would show up," Ochoa said. Ochoa and Mike Bokduc, the strip's operation manager, figured the event would be a great success if 100 racers showed up. As it turned out, more than 200 cars hit the asphalt with more than 2,500 spectators cheering from the stands. "It was eight hours of 200 cars going nonstop down the track," Ochoa said. "Everyone said they loved it."

Families brought their barbecues and had a great time. Ochoa said there were no fights and no arguments. This was an alcohol-free event necessary for a family atmosphere, and the few people spotted with beer didn't object to pouring out their suds. The only complaint was the heat, but the racing lasted until midnight, well after the sun went down.

The event was so successful that the next race is scheduled for Aug. 17. Next time trophies could be handed out and maybe the RPD brass will let a patrol car dash down the track. Imagine the bragging rights from that grudge match.

The event was a success in another way — no problems were reported on Clear Creek Road or on the other streets notorious for illegal racing. Ochoa says the Hilltop Drive "cruise" also shut down that night.

On a broader scale, cities elsewhere could solve their drag-racing problems by following Redding's example. Credit goes to Ochoa for organizing the event, to Redding Drag Strip officials for their cooperation, to the RPD administration for giving Ochoa the green light and to the sponsors and spectators for their support. We wouldn't be surprised if twice as many people show up the next time. Even Ochoa might be tempted to hit the track, but hold onto to the pink slip for that squad car.

# CITY OF REDDING



## POLICE DEPARTMENT

1313 California Street, Redding, CA 96001-3396

530.225.4200 FAX 530.225.4553

## PRESS RELEASE

On 7-24-02 at 11:45 pm, while conducting **illegal** racing surveillance, Officers from the Redding Police Department observed two cars on Mountain Lakes Boulevard as they engaged in a speed **contest**. The drivers of the **vehicles**, 24 year old Phillip Gomez and a 16 year old juvenile, both from Redding, **were** arrested **for** engaging in a speed **contest**. Both vehicles were impounded. A passenger in one of the vehicles, 20 year old Charles Wilson of Redding, was arrested for aiding and abetting after he initiated the race with a hand **signal**.

As of this date, eight individuals have been arrested for their **participation** in illegal street racing, as a result of ongoing enforcement of illegal drag racing violators at problems sites throughout the City of **Redding**.

Illegal racers and participants face arrest, fines, and **their** vehicles can be impounded for up to 30 days.

The Redding Police Department would like to remind racers that the Redding Drag Strip will be open on August 17th for another "Street Legal **Racing**" event.

Officer Ed Ochoa, #122  
Redding Police Department

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ed Ochoa".



Thursday, May 16, 2002

Sunny, 89°F



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## Briefs: Two are hurt in auto wreck

May 05, 2002 — 2:18 a.m.

A 18-year-old Redding man was seriously injured when he lost control of his car Saturday morning on Highway 299, the California Highway Patrol said.

### Special Editions

- Pearl Harbor Remembered
- Salute to Veterans
- Recreation 2001
- Welcome 2001

Kenneth Rumble Jr. was taken to Mercy Medical Center in Redding with a broken jaw and a broken left arm, CHP officials said. He was listed in serious condition, a nursing supervisor said. A passenger in the car, Kristopher Merritt, 18, of Redding, was treated at Mercy and released.

### Special Reports

- The Big Hurt
- Election 2002
- Last Resort
- A new direction
- CA STAR schools
- River of life
- Rx Fire
- Tera Smith
- Teen drinking
- Teen pregnancy
- The devil's drug
- Troubled waters
- Williams Brothers

CHP officials said Rumble was driving east on Highway 299 attempting to merge onto Interstate 5 about 7:45 a.m.

He lost control of the vehicle, struck a large bush, became and hit a pine tree, CHP officials said. Rumble was trapped in the car until fire crews removed him, CHP officials said.

## Drag race leads to four arrests

An Anderson teen-ager was arrested late Friday following a drag race on a Redding street.

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New users sign up!

Joshua William Felch, 18, was arrested after a Redding police officer spotted two vehicles drag racing southbound on Abernathy Way around 11:30 p.m. Friday, officials said. Felch, who stopped his car, was taken into custody, but the driver of the other vehicle left the scene.

Felch was booked on suspicion of participating in a speed contest and reckless driving. He was later released on his own recognizance, a jail spokesman said.

Three juveniles were also arrested on suspicion of aiding and abetting a speed contest. They were released to their parents' custody, officials said.

## Luau will honor CDF volunteers

# STREET LEGAL DRAGS

I participated as: Driver X Spectator \_\_\_\_\_

1. What did you like most about this event? *Plenty of passes*
2. What did you least like about this event? *Nothing*
3. Do you feel the fees were appropriate? *Yes, Very*
4. Would you return to another event like this? *Always to an event only like this*
5. What would you add or change? *Nothing*

Additional suggestions or comments:

*Excellent!!!*

**THANK YOU FOR SUPPORTING THE STREET LEGAL DRAGS!**