FAIRFAX COUNTY POLICE DEPARTMENT

Oct.—Dec. 2008

Mason in Motion

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Lt. Frank Stecco

A Tribute to 2Lt. Frank Stecco

On October 21 the Fairfax County Police family lost one of our own in the line of duty. That day, Second Lieutenant Frank Stecco volunteered for a helicopter water-rescue training exercise at Pohick Bay in which he played the role of a victim. He died during this duty assignment.

How he died is not the memory that will come to most officer's minds when they remember Lt. Stecco. Instead it will be his dedicated years of service to the police department, his desire to be a positive role model for young kids and his wonderful sense of humor. Lt. Stecco was recently assigned to the Youth Services Division after spending several years as a supervisor at the Mount Vernon District Station. He was looking forward to working with young kids and making a positive impact on their lives. He was a highly respected role model in the eyes of his fellow officers at the Youth Services Division, Mount Vernon District, Franconia District, West Springfield District and the McLean District where he served during his 19 years with the department.

Lt. Stecco had been honored for heroism during his career:

- Silver Medal of Valor in 1994 for rescuing a man from the flame-engulfed mobile home the man had intentionally set on fire
- Bronze Medal of Valor in 1997 for disarming a suspect in a domestic violence shooting. Frank was staring down the barrel of a rifle as he wrestled the weapon away from the suspect.
- Certificate of Valor in 2000 for disarming a suicidal man armed with a knife and razor blade.
- Departmental Meritorious Commendations in 2002 and 2003.

These awards were earned for keeping his communities safe. What he could not display on his uniform though are pride and honor bestowed on him by his family, friends and coworkers. He sacrificed time from his family for the greater good of his community. He saved many officers' lives by being back-up, and giving direction to those under him. He routinely put himself and his personal wants last because he was needed elsewhere. He paid the ultimate price doing what he was most passionate about, police work. We will never forget him.

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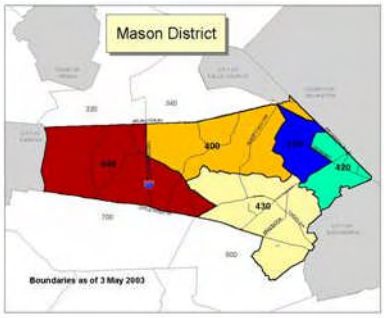


Neighborhood Patrol Unit

By PFC H. Mergler

The idea of patrolling a neighborhood on bikes has its roots in foot patrols. It was around 1990 when MPO Chris Harmison, a Mason Station patrol officer, first proposed the idea of patrolling high density communities in Fairfax County on foot. This foreign idea was the inception of what today is our Neighborhood Patrol Unit (NPU).

Armed with a backpack of summonses, blank reports, and a set of binoculars, MPO Harmison and PFC Richard Perez, now the Mason Station Assistant Commander, quickly realized that by walking these areas they were coming upon crimes in progress. This was truly a different perspective in policing. They quickly developed a rapport with many community members which made citizens feel comfortable sharing information on criminals living in their neighborhood. This information allowed the officers to target and weed out individuals who the community had come to fear.

Walking the beat soon turned to patrolling on bikes. The first two bicycles were donated by the bicycle shop located at the Wilston II Shopping Center. Riding the beat allowed coverage of the neighborhood faster and more frequently without sacrificing the element of surprise. Today, NPU works with the community to provide outreach to citizens and give them a personable face of the police department. Along with spending time performing bike patrols, NPU also attends community events to help create a sense of trust between the department and neighborhoods.

Now when NPU patrols, they ride a Trek 8000 mountain bike. The bike is set up with a headlight, rear light, and a bike bag which contains summonses, reports, and bicycle repair items. Officers also use helmets and gloves for protection. For safety reasons, officers are always assigned in pairs; but it is not uncommon to see groups of more than two officers riding around. Officers are required to complete a week-long bicycle school to ensure they are proficient with the bicycle before hitting the streets.

NPU is an effective way to address acute crime problems, build community relationships and provide non-traditional methods of policing which is a win-win situation for the community and the police department.

NPU Officer Dean Tran

Driving in the Left Lane
By PFC Katinsky & PFC Thibault

This has probably happened to everyone, your on your way home from work or errands, driving in rush hour traffic, hungry, tired and stuck behind the self appointed "left lane police." Whether it's on the Beltway, 395, Route 66 or any other major roadway, you probably know what I'm talking about. It's the person who drives under the speed limit or just at the speed limit in the left lane talking on the cell phone, daydreaming or just deciding that they are going fast enough and you don't need to go any faster. They look in the rearview mirror, see you, and take it upon themselves to dictate the speed in the left lane. They won't move over, not when people honk, flash their lights, or even tailgate.

Once again, this is another reason for maintaining our fifth place ranking for the highest incidences of road rage in the country, according to a survey by Auto Vantage. I thought it would be interesting to discuss what the left lane is for, which is detailed in the following traffic code: Virginia State Code ***46.2-802 Driving on the right side of highways***. Except as otherwise provided by law, on all highways of sufficient width, the driver of a vehicle shall drive on the right half of the highway, unless it is impracticable to travel on such side of the highway, and except when overtaking and passing another vehicle.

The code states that unless you are passing or turning, you shall drive in the right lane for travel purposes. If someone behind you wants to pass, let them! Move over, it's the law.

This leads us to a second code section that goes hand-in-hand with the aforementioned. The second noteworthy code section is Virginia State Code ***46.2-842.1. Drivers to give way to certain overtaking vehicles on divided highways***. It shall be unlawful to fail to give way to overtaking traffic when driving a motor vehicle to the left and abreast of another motor vehicle on a divided highway. On *audible (horn)* or *light signal (flashing headlights)*, the driver of the overtaken vehicle shall move to the right to allow the overtaking vehicle to pass as soon as the overtaken vehicle can safely do so.

This code explains that if the driver of the car behind you flashes his high beams at you or gently blows his horn, it is your responsibility to move over. It's the law. It should not be construed as an aggressive action or hateful in nature; it is an attempt to get you to kindly move over so others may pass. It should not initiate an obscene gesture battle or a round of cutting each other off. Most people react by slamming on their brakes to "get even" with the person behind them. However, the act of slamming on your brakes because the person behind you gave you an audible or light signal to move over constitutes reckless driving.

Be informed, know the laws, and keep your cool. While your first instinct may be to get angry, the appropriate response is to distance yourself from the other driver and try to avoid additional confrontations.

Safe driving begins with you!

Full Time and Attention

Driver inattention is the leading cause of rear-end collisions every year. With the rapid increase of electronic gadgets that demand our attention (GPS units, cell phones, and satellite radios), driving has taken a back seat to a multitude of tasks including talking on the phone, dialing, texting, eating, drinking, and smoking.

Below is the code section you can be charged with when your driving is effected by doing these other tasks:
Section 82-4-24. *Operator to give full time and attention to driving*. No person shall operate a motor vehicle upon the highways of this County without giving his full time and attention to the operation of the vehicle. (3-13-63; 1961 Code, § 16-85.)

CAC Officers of the Month

October Officer of the Month: Officer Sharon Perry

On Saturday, September, 27 about 10p.m., Officer Sharon Perry was dispatched to a report of a man assaulting a woman in the 3700 block of Glen Carlyn Drive, in the Culmore community. Officer Perry arrived on scene and found the woman sitting on the curb, crying. Witnesses pointed out the suspect who was walking away. Officer Perry quickly confirmed with the woman that the man walking away was the assailant and she started to go after him. Her back-up officers were still not on scene, but en route.

Officer Perry walked towards him and detected a strong odor of alcohol about his person. She told him he was under arrest for drunk in public and ordered him to stop. He looked at her, turned away and continued to walk into traffic on Glen Carlyn Drive. Again, Officer Perry commanded the man to stop and attempted to place him under arrest. He broke free from her grasp and ran to a nearby driveway, yelling obscenities at her. In the driveway he continued yelling and ignored her commands. Officer Perry pulled her Conducted Energy Device (CED or taser) and again told him to surrender or be tased. He ignored her commands and she deployed the CED which immediately had the desired effect. He fell to the ground as her back-up officers arrived and he was taken in custody. Neither Officer Perry nor the man was injured. The immediate threat of the man's behavior quickly stopped after the proper use of the CED.

Officer Perry determined the man and woman had been at a night club and got in an argument. The man gave a false identity when he was arrested, however, he was finger printed at the jail his true identity was discovered. Officer Perry found out he was wanted on a 2005 warrant for missing a criminal court date. The man was charged with drunk in public, identity fraud, forging public documents and resisting arrest.

November Officer of the Month: Officer Justin Urbaniak

In the early morning hours of October 15, just as PFC Justin Urbaniak was ending his midnight shift, he was dispatched to a call in the 3600 block of Barcroft View Terrace for a person trying to commit suicide.

The information PFC Urbaniak received was minimal. At the residence, PFC Urbaniak and his back up officer made contact with a man who was completely naked and spoke limited English. The man kept saying everything was okay. PFC Urbaniak then saw a second man with deep lacerations to both his wrists. This man, obviously distraught said, "Look what I did," as blood squirted from both his wrists. Without hesitation PFC Urbaniak took control of the injured man and immediately started applying direct pressure to the lacerations. Despite the bio-hazards and possible contamination risks that this very bloody scene posed, PFC Urbaniak focused on the life-saving efforts this man needed. Upon controlling the man and somewhat stabilizing the flow of blood coming from his wrists, paramedics were brought into the residence. The man was taken to the hospital and his injuries were treated. He survived and his injuries were minimized by the intervention and quick thinking of PFC Urbaniak.

Officer Sharon Perry

Officer Justin Urbaniak

Notable arrests:

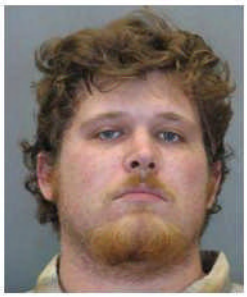
BB Gun Shooters Arrested

Suspects accused of targeting the general public with a BB gun fired from a vehicle were arrested on Thursday, October 16 at 9:30 p.m. Officers of the Mason District arrested three men in the Bailey's Crossroads area following a report of a BB gun shooting.

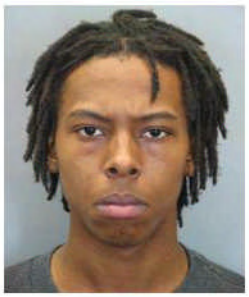
The most recent event took place near the intersection of Columbia Pike and Leesburg Pike on October 16 just before 9 p.m. They have also been linked to a shooting near the intersection of Columbia Pike and Carlin Springs Road and a brandishing of a firearm at 3544 South Jefferson Street. The suspects were seen driving a black 2005 Mercury Mountaineer.

The injuries have been minor. Detectives believe there are other victims who have not notified police. These victims are encouraged to call 703-691-2131 to file a report.

The suspects have been identified as three Arlington men; Eric Balmforth, 25, and James B. Needham, 18, of 524 North Edison Street and Wendell Peyton, 19, of 1075 South Jefferson Street #526. Each was charged with two counts of brandishing a firearm, malicious wounding and assault. Balmforth and Needham were also charged with carrying a concealed weapon. Needham and Peyton were charged with discharging a pneumatic gun. Peyton was additionally charged with possession of a firearm by a convicted felon.



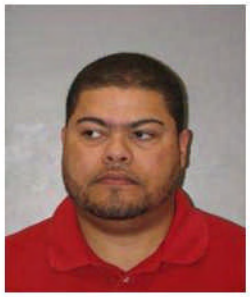
Balmforth



Peyton

Needham

Arrest Made in Child Pornography Case



Douglas

Police were called to the area of Little River Turnpike and Beauregard Street in reference to a 15-year-old, Alexandria-area girl who had allegedly been sexually assaulted. Officers met with the victim and an acquaintance on Saturday, October 4 shortly after 7 p.m. The investigation led officers to arrest the man who had accompanied the victim to meet police.

Don Douglas, 40, of 8823 Winding Hollow Way in Springfield was arrested on Thursday, October 9. He was transported to the Fairfax County Adult Detention Center and charged with custodial indecent liberties and manufacturing and possession of child pornography.

The victim did not require medical attention. The investigation is ongoing.

Holiday Safety Reminders

With the holidays fast approaching Fairfax County Police would like to share some safety tips to help you be safe while you are shopping. These tips should be used not just during the holiday season, but all times you are out running errands.

Everyone is looking for extra money or gifts during the holiday season and that includes criminals. They are out in force trying to separate you from your money and property. Be extra vigilant during the holiday season and keep the following tips in mind:

Personal Safety When Shopping

- Shop during daylight hours whenever possible.
- Know exactly where you park and have your keys out and ready as you approach your car.
- If shopping at night, park in well-lit areas.
- Carry keys, cash and credit cards separate from each other and constantly pay attention to your surroundings. Limit the number of credit cards and amount of cash you carry.
- If you have to carry a purse, carry it close to your body and always zipped or snapped. If possible, carry a backpack or fanny pack.
- Be aware of strangers "accidentally" bumping into you. Pick-pockets use this as a diversion.
- Avoid carrying large packages that block your vision and make you a target.
- Avoid shopping until you are exhausted. You are more alert when you are less tired.
- When hurried or in a crowded shop, make sure you get all forms of identification and credit cards returned to you before you leave.
- Leave the mall/store well before closing time. This way, there is a greater assurance you will walk out with other people. There is safety in numbers.
- Use an escort or mall security if you have too many packages

Fairfax County Community Crime Statistics Information Line

703 – 246 – 7932

This phone number can be used to request crime statistics for any neighborhood within Fairfax County. Callers will be asked to leave full contact information, requests will be filled within 5-7 business days and limited to two (2) requests per week.

FAIRFAX COUNTY
POLICE DEPARTMENT

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Mason Station Events

CAC
Next meeting
January 6, 2009
&
February 3, 2009

Neighborhood Watch Coordinators
Neighborhood Watch Training
February 3, 2009

Child Safety Seat Installations
Various dates throughout the county.
Please call the hotline for more details.
703-280-0559

The Cast of the Mason District Station

Station Commander
Captain Michael Dittmer

Assistant Commander
Lieutenant Rich Perez

Crime Prevention Unit
MPO Chip Conner
PFC Courtney Thibault
APO Mary Nugent

Community Policing Support
CA Jessica Beaty, Crime Analyst II

Join us every first Tuesday of the month for the CAC Meeting held in the Large Conference Room at the Mason District Station.