

ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE

Case Two – Policing Unusual Circumstances

The Streaking Challenge

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 21

Chief Harry Travis was on his way to the golf course on an unusually quiet Saturday morning when he was startled to hear the local deejay announce on the radio that a "streaking challenge" had been issued to all college students in Walnut Grove College. Travis stopped the car and turned up the volume to make sure he heard it right. "OK, guys and gals, this is your buddy, Uncle Bill, asking if you are going to let those 400 streakers in Harvard Hill College set the standard for college boys and girls on the eastern seaboard? That's right, you heard me - are you going to take it? I mean, the Harvard Hill kids actually bragged that nobody was going to put on a bigger streaking show than they would."

Travis paused after the deejay finished and commented to one of the others in the car that was all he needed. "With the first home game of the NCAA playoffs starting next week, I don't need hundreds of naked students running all over campus." "Relax," one of his friends said. "Our students won't take to the streets barebottom. They have more sense than to do something as crazy as that, don't they?"

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 28

The band in a local college hangout, Charlie's, seemed to play much louder than normal as hundreds of students milled about, drinking beer. During a break, the lead guitarist took the microphone and challenged the students, "What are you going to do about Harvard Hill College? Are you going to let that Ivy League school lead the way in the streaking game? Surely you can gather more than a measly 500 naked students, proud to bare their bottoms for the honor of Walnut Grove College!" By this time, the students had consumed a healthy amount of beer and picked up a chant, "We're number one! We're number one!" Thinking that winning needed to be better defined, the band leader shouted, "Let's get thousands on the streets and show them what Walnut Grove College is made of!"

Similar scenes erupted at several of the college bars all over town as students responded to deejay and band leader suggestions that they take to the streets-naked of course.

SUNDAY OCTOBER 29

Late Sunday afternoon, a group of students gathered at a local fraternity to plan the streaking event. "First," observed one senior student, Max Jorden, "we've got to get the word out to all the fraternity houses: Saturday, November 4 is the day! We will start on Cherry Avenue, run past the football stadium, and then move on around the library. We'll end up on Grand Avenue, at the big fraternity houses." Working at a speed that would impress their professors, the students xeroxed notices and sent pledges to deliver them to fraternity and sorority houses surrounding the campus. At the top of each notice the call went out to get, "3,000 streakers! Let's get 3,000 streakers!"

By Sunday evening, Chief Harry Travis had received several telephone calls from his officers who had overheard the "streaking challenge" or picked up one of the notices about the November 4 schedule. Apparently, one zealous pledge took to posting them on telephone poles, street signs, and store windows! Campus officers helped to take the illegally posted signs down, but worried that they would be called on to deal with thousands of naked students.

Still later that evening, Chief Travis called his superior, campus public safety director, Sam Martin. "Sam, we may have a problem on our hands," Travis explained. "Have you heard these radio deejays challenge our students to streak by the thousands?" Sam replied that he had, but attributed it to typical deejay banter. "Surely, they aren't taking them seriously?" "Well," Travis went on, "notices setting Saturday, November 4 as 'Streaking Saturday' have been posted all over town. The fraternity and sorority houses

seem to have taken the lead. My officers have pulled signs down from telephone and street poles all around campus. At least, we should be grateful that they didn't schedule it for the NCAA game the following Saturday. But still, what are we going to do if 3,000 streakers take to the streets?"

MONDAY, OCTOBER 30

Early that morning Sam Martin and Harry Travis met to review the latest reports about "Streaking Saturday." By that time, the local newspapers were picking up on the story - with the two "dailies" giving the item front page attention. "Must be a slow day," Sam observed, "for Langford and Watson (the editors of the local papers) to run this stuff on the first page." To make matters worse, virtually every deejay within 50 miles was periodically reminding his/her listeners that "Streaking Saturday" would soon be here. As one deejay put it, "Are you going to let it pass without you being involved?"

By noon, the university president, Jim Farrell, was on the phone to Martin. "Sam, I have already gotten four calls about this streaking challenge. Many parents want to know what I am going to do to stop it. One minister complained about the degradation of student life and the general absence of morals, while the city police want to know how we intend to handle it here on campus. Chief Lim asked if we would need any of his officers." Sam chuckled to himself about Chief Lim's offer as the university rarely asked the city police for backup. Relying on campus officers from other schools, the university had quietly adopted a policy of keeping on friendly, but distant terms with the local city authorities - the balance between campus and city law enforcement was sometimes hard to maintain.

At a hastily called meeting, the president discussed the situation with his public safety director and chief of police. "I don't see how we can stop them," Anderson observed. "Short of something akin to curfews and house arrest, we can't keep them off the streets." Martin and Travis both agreed, but emphasized that the situation was potentially explosive. Large crowds that could easily get out of control, traffic headaches, angry citizens, and possible injuries to people and damage to property.

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 1

Chief Harry Travis assembled a small group of his staff to plan for security for the Saturday streaking challenge. Following Sam Martin's order to prepare "for a home NCAA basketball game," Travis gathered the heads of his major divisions to prepare for Saturday's streakers. Because the staff did not have a reliable estimate of the numbers of people streaking and watching, they elected to prepare for a large contingent. "Better safe than sorry," Chief Travis reasoned.

Travis reviewed the streaking route outlined in the flyers and the notices distributed all over campus and assigned officers and patrol cars for the start and finish of the parade. Certain points along the route were designated as "possible trouble spots" and officers were assigned to monitor them. Ambulances were put on call and a riot-equipped squad held in reserve in case things got out of hand. Calling off all vacations and leave time, Travis assigned every officer on his roster for Saturday duty.

A major decision confronting Travis and his staff was to what extent they would enforce the law. As Travis pointed out to Martin, they could, theoretically, arrest any stalker for indecent exposure, but such an action not only was impossible but also highly likely to incite the crowd to violence. Officers, Travis emphasized in his instructions, were only to make arrests for two things: obvious safety violations and violence directed at people or property.

With officer assignments in place, traffic control outlined, arrest instructions clarified, and emergency crews prepared in reserve, Travis held his breath and waited for Saturday. Although one student had taken to streaking at last year's commencement, no groups of students had run through the town barebottom before, so Travis had no idea of what to expect.

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 4

The student organizers had set the streaking event for 11:00 a.m. At approximately 8:00 a.m. the day's temperature was 68 degrees and the forecast called for sunny skies with virtually no wind. Although inclement weather would have created its own set of problems, clear skies were not exactly a blessing, at least in Chief Travis's mind. By 10:00 a.m., crowds of spectators had begun to gather at the key vantage points along the well-publicized route. These included the starting point on Cherry Avenue, the football

stadium, the bridge near the library, student center, and the parking lots at the route's closure point. As Chief Travis looked over the crowds, he was amazed to see that a variety of local citizens were present. The crowd clearly was not drawn from the student ranks. Standing near the library bridge to observe was the president of the local chamber of commerce. Near the football stadium were several ministers from local churches, some were with their families. City council members, campus faculty, some prominent merchants, and even some "basketball fans" were gathering to watch the show. Sam Martin commented to his officers, "You can't have a show without an audience." An audience was certainly gathering for the Walnut Grove College streakers.

As the starting time of 11:00 a.m. moved closer, Travis reviewed his instructions with his field officers and reminded each that arrests were only necessary for obvious safety violations and violence directed at people and property. Although several citizens had called in to suggest massive arrests for public indecency, the department had no intention of such sweeps. Selective enforcement was also inadvisable because it would be hard to justify one arrest out of thousands. Such an action would also be likely to elicit an averse reaction from both the streakers and the crowd. Travis responded to one citizen complaint, "the law does prohibit public indecency. But what can one police department do with 3,000 streakers?"

A campus patrol car moved ahead of the streakers as they gathered at the sorority and fraternity houses - moving slowly along the route that had been closed to traffic two hours earlier. Immediately behind the car was a female horseback rider with flowing black hair. Of course, the press dubbed her "Lady Godiva" and photos of her ride made excellent frontpage coverage in the next day's newspapers. Local editors, however, were cautious and allowed for closely cropped photos that focused only on the hair and head! Running after "Lady Godiva" were approximately 3,000 streakers. Primarily undergraduates, they moved along at a fairly good clip, although the balmy weather was not an incentive to haste. Perhaps a lingering sense of modesty prompted some to move hurriedly, but the majority ran at something less than a full jog. As the stream of students ran through the campus, the crowd sent up a huge cheer. For their part, the students seemed like young children at Christmas - elated with the attention they were receiving and somehow delighted at the novelty of a new toy.

Chief Travis's police officers watched cautiously, although many had difficulty suppressing grins at "Lady Godiva" and other participants. However, as the streakers wound their way through campus, several officers noticed a couple riding on a motorcycle. Obviously participating in the streaking show, the young man and woman rode at the end of the crowd, bringing up the rear. Enjoying some of the notoriety of "Lady Godiva," they waved to the crowd and drove carefully along the route - relishing the attention the crowd lavished. As the pair approached the end of the route, one of the officers noticed that they were not wearing helmets - an obvious violation of a city safety ordinance. At the end of the route, the pair was pulled over and issued citations. As it turned out, their tickets were the only ones issued that day.

EPILOGUE

Chief Travis relaxed Saturday evening - grateful that "Streaking Saturday" had come to a close with no serious injuries and no serious problems. Although he was not convinced that the resulting publicity would be favorable, he was relieved that they did not have to call on reserve riot personnel or ambulances. Furthermore, he was glad no one got hurt, intentionally or inadvertently. The ticket issued to the motorcycle pair could have been avoided, he supposed, but the couple did not seem disturbed and the crowd chuckled when the officer issued helmet violation tickets to a couple with no clothes.

The week after the "show," Sam Martin was still getting calls about the university's failure to enforce public decency laws and its general inability to prevent the entire spectacle. Talking to one agitated parent, Sam explained that there were several prominent citizens in the crowd. "Ministers, priests, rabbis, council members, lawyers, doctors, businessmen - they were all there. Some of them even had their families with them! If you don't have an audience, you don't have a show," he insisted and explained that when the campus police were faced with such public support for streaking, there was little the university could do to stop it. "We can't be parents, cops, and moral guardians all at the same time," he emphasized. "You have to realize that sometimes it is impossible to enforce the law; maybe even safer not to. With a situation like this, you have potentially explosive problems. We elected to handle them quietly and cautiously, in the hopes that nothing serious would erupt. Fortunately, it worked for us. Really, what would you do with 3,000 streakers?"

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS – Use a separate sheet of paper to answer the following questions.
WRITE THE QUESTION – Fully explain your answers.**

1. What problems did the Campus Police Department have to deal with? – Several issues here!
2. What similar problems might police departments occasionally face today?
3. How do you think this law enforcement situation was an unusual occurrence?
4. What facts made it hard to take strong measures against the streakers?
5. What demands does the situation make on the police agency?
6. What demands does this situation make on the individual officers?
7. What problems would the police have encountered if they had tried to stop the streaking?
8. Should the police have issued tickets to the two on the motorcycle?