

# Six nights with a Police Task Force team.

**J**ERRY SIMANDL has a different job than most of us. He doesn't sit at a desk. Or buy or sell things. Or write articles such as this or dictate letters or build buildings or tear them down or drive a truck or transact "business."

On his working days, or nights, Simandl buckles 9½ pounds of equipment around his waist, kisses his wife and three small sons, gets into his car on Chicago's Northwest Side and drives six miles to war. His partner and good friend, Norfie Diciolla, makes the same journey from his apartment five minutes away.

The young men probably would object to that word "war," and so, certainly, would their superiors. But stripped of semantic camouflage, that's what it is. War.

Simandl, 24, and Diciolla, 29, are members of the handpicked all-volunteer organization of 771 men within the Chicago Police Department known most commonly as the Police Task Force, altho its official title was recently changed to Special Operations Group. And the Task Force, designed to provide quickly maneuverable overlays of police strength wherever most needed, is engaged in nothing less than a never-ending war. Strange, occasionally boring, often savage, always unpredictable war, waged with the usual

paradoxical objective—keeping the peace.

Simandl and Diciolla work out of the Maxwell Street Police Station, a crumbling relic on the Near Southwest Side which in addition to housing other subsections of the department is headquarters for Area Four Task Force—86 patrolmen, nine sergeants and two lieutenants charged with beefing up the battle against crime in the 10th, 11th, 12th and 13th Police Districts on Chicago's West Side.

Area Four focuses particularly on the 10th and 11th Districts, which cover a decaying, overcrowded, mostly black, gang-riddled piece of the city extending raggedly from Western Avenue to the Belt Railway tracks at 4600 West, and Chicago Avenue almost to the Stevenson Expressway. These districts, especially, make it the busiest, most dangerous police area because startlingly large numbers of residents here not only devote themselves enthusiastically to stealing from, robbing and raping the others [and strangers who wander in] but frequently settle even the slightest disputes—ownership of a bottle of beer or a hot dog sandwich—by beating each other's brains out. Or, over and over, resorting to a gun.

How do you find out what it's like to be a police officer in an urban sprawl like Chicago these days? More specifically, a cop trying to enforce the law in the worst, most restless part of the city in a time of growing lawlessness and bitter racial tensions? A cop, who, in a period of increasing irresponsibility coupled with encouragements to violence by some "intellectuals," lives on a front line of hatred as the visible symbol of authority in a seething metropolis?

You find out—find out best—by spending working hours with police. By riding with them thru the dirty streets and glass-littered alleys of the human jungle which is their beat, to see what they do. And what people do to them.

That's how you find out. By living,

as nearly as possible for a time, their lives.

## The first night

**T**en minutes after roll call, Simandl and Diciolla had Car 6464 ready. Target for the night, the 11th District.

Jerry had loaded the short-barreled shotgun and locked it in the trunk. He'd tried the Mars and flasher lights, inspected the tires, moaned the siren briefly. Norfie had looked under the rear seat to be sure nothing had been shoved down there by any prisoner picked up by the day watch. Both men had checked the equipment on their belts, the Mace canisters, handcuffs and keys, batons or nightsticks, extra ammunition. And the handguns. Simandl carried two, a regulation .38 revolver and a 9 mm. Browning automatic, a cannon-sized pistol with 14 slugs and another 14 ready in a belt clip. Diciolla favors just a .38—except weekends. Then he adds a .357 magnum with punch enough to crack an engine block.

We were on our way. North to Madison Street, and west. Past Skid Row with its winos clutching their endless bottles and telling each other their endless stories, then past the younger, even-more-lost dope addicts who infest Madison around Damen. Both watched the blue-white car roll by, the winos vacantly thru their numbing fogs of alcohol, the junkies with hate in their eyes.

"You hear strange stories here if you listen," Norfie said. "Remember, Jerry, a year ago? The Colonel?"

"We got to talking to this guy one night, and he told us he'd been a full colonel in the regular Army, with a family and everything, until he'd gotten onto drugs. Now he was nothing. Zero. And it wasn't long after that we stopped seeing him. Don't know what happened, you usually don't. But there was a neatness about him, for a bum—you had a feeling he really had been somebody once."

"Shots fired," the radio said. "Shots fired at Adams and Wood."

Car 6464 rocketed around a bus, made a tire-squealing turn into a side street and seconds later slammed to a stop in the middle of the Adams-Wood intersection. Nothing. Nothing but a 12-year-old black boy standing on the curb, looking at us and listening to the rising wail of sirens speeding our way—within 90 seconds five more uniform squads and a detective car were on the scene.

Jerry eased 6464 over to the boy.

"Anything here?" Jerry asked.

"Like what?"

"Like shots?"

"I just come from the store," the kid said, staring coldly at Simandl. "I just come from the store and don't know nothing." He walked away, small, shabby, totally unafraid of the men behind him. Totally uncooperative, too. Jerry sighed.

"Sometimes, you get one alone, you get information," he said. "You tell him, 'Don't point—you know where they are, just look there with your eyes.' But there's danger for an informer. And some people just won't cooperate anyway."

A prowler thru the neighborhood turned up nothing. No armed men, no wounded ones. And nobody, nobody who knew anything he was willing to tell.

But that first "shots fired" call, 19 minutes after 6464 had begun its 6 p. m.-to-2 a. m. patrol, set a pattern for the coming hours and the nights on the West Side. Call after call would involve firearms—"Man with a pistol . . ." "Shooting reported at . . ." "Man shot . . ." "Woman shot . . ." And, too often, the worst call, "Man with a shotgun. . . ." Shotguns are indiscriminating weapons which, unlike other guns with one-piece bullets, cut swaths thru anything—or anybody—in the way.

"You hear more gun calls on our main radio band because it's City-wide Two," Simandl explained. "It's used for all Task Force divisions, ▶

and run-of-the-mill stuff isn't put on it.

"Our primary job is aggressive patrol. That means, not waiting for things to happen but looking for trouble, either while it's happening or before it can. So, Citywide Two concentrates on 'in-progress' crime. Major crimes happening NOW—robberies, shootings, gang fights and so forth. This gives us a better chance of getting in and nailing people before they can get away."

That practice of "looking for trouble" which Jerry mentioned regularly puts Task Force men into situations which would be out of the ordinary for most police officers.

The drunk lolling on a late-night elevated train may be a stone-cold-sober Task Force man waiting, gun

ready under his shirt, for a strong-arm robber to try to take him. The helicopter clattering over a tenement area illuminating rooftops with a startling 3,800,000-candlepower searchlight is a Task Force ship looking for a sniper. And chances are the police most likely to be under the barrage of stones and bottles and worse if a riot gets big enough will be Task Force people.

[Item—"A tactical unit like the Task Force is a necessity for a big-city department because it provides highly-trained men to deal with unusual problems, whether they be a sudden rash of robberies or burglaries or a civil disturbance," Police Supt. James B. Conlisk Jr. says. "We must have people who are ready and gung-ho when it comes

to handling such problems to the best interests of law-abiding citizens."]

The hustle that Task Force men take such pride in gets them hurt or killed more frequently than other policemen. Four of the nine policemen slain on duty in Chicago in 1970 were TF members. Which means four of the city's nine police dead last year came from a unit of less than 800 men, while the remaining five were from all the rest of the department, more than 12,000.

Car 6464 stopped a CTA bus on Roosevelt Road. Norfie climbed aboard and, after walking the aisle looking at the occupants, talked with the driver while Jerry, off to one side in the street, carefully watched the passengers, his partner and the bus' rear door. Two minutes later,

cruising again, they explained.

"There've been lots of stickups on buses so our cars stop at least one a night, just to see things are okay," Norfie said. "We check elevated platforms the same way. And we get cards like this, from the bus drivers to prove we did our job."

On the blue card, driver Walter Gray attested that he had been stopped and looked over for trouble by 6464. The card, of course, said nothing about the police teamwork apparent in those minutes.

"You do it automatically," Norfie said. "We've been a team since we came to the Task Force three years ago—they prefer guys who apply as friends wanting to work together."

The hours went by. Car 6464, blue Mars light flashing and siren scream-

After the chase—a search for weapons such as the "Saturday Night Specials," cheap guns used in many robberies and motiveless shootings.



The primary job of the Task Force is aggressive patrol, "in-progress" crime.

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ing in that sobbing wail peculiar to Chicago police cars, answered call after call without running into much. And crept, lights out, thru alleys, crunching over broken glass, looking for car-strippers or anything else. And finding, too often, rats. Unbelievable rats. "One ran over my foot once and, so help me, I thought it was a cat," said Norfie.

And 6464 cruised the streets still congested with humanity. Residents never seemed to go to bed. On a hot night like this, maybe the answer was, why should they? Even a filthy, dangerous street was easier to take than a sweltering, smelly, roach-infested flat.

We'd roll by watching the people, and they'd watch us. Every few minutes we'd spot another police car—Task Force, district, detective, vice—because this was an area packed with criminals and consequently packed with the men who fight them. Sometimes the cars were blue-white like ours, sometimes unmarked ones trying—unsuccessfully on the West Side—to look like any auto. The people knew them instantly for what they meant—Cop!

Then, action.

Jerry was halted for a light at Roosevelt and Pulaski when a woman clutching a small girl ran up. She'd been robbed, she said. Not 10 minutes ago, and her purse taken with all the money she had ["Two dollars . . . one silver dollar and another in change"] and \$4.50 worth of welfare food stamps. Two boys, she said. Boys in yellow shirts who'd grabbed her throat, ripped the purse away.

"Get in," Norfie told her. "We'll look."

We cruised east. We'd traveled one block when the woman cried, "There!"

The squad jolted to a halt. Jerry and Norfie burst out the doors and raced across Roosevelt thru startled, swerving traffic after two fleeing, yellow-shirted characters. An instant later in the car, the little girl echoed her mother. "There," she cried. She'd spotted the purse, tossed in a store entrance. The wallet was gone; so were the money and food stamps. Simandl came running back.

"We lost one, but chased the other into an alley a block down and he's gotta be there someplace," he said. Jerking the squad into gear, he tore down the street and into the alley where Norfie stood guard.

Flashlights on, guns out, the two scrambled up the rear stairs of a pair of scrofulous buildings. Jerry scored at the first porch.

"Freeze," we heard him yell. "Don't move a muscle."

Minutes later we were on our way to the 10th District station, Marquette, with the 19-year-old youth Jerry had found behind packing cases. Back there, staring into a gun muzzle, he was scared; now, handcuffed, he was indignant. He was an "unemployed student," he announced. He hadn't been doing anything. He'd never seen this woman before. The

reason he'd run? Well . . . he'd thought the fuzz were after him for shooting dice.

You had to say one thing for him, this punk; he sure wasn't dressed to go strong-arm robbing. Besides that yellow shirt, he wore shrieking purple slacks, light gray suede shoes and red Sox—he looked like a neon sign. Criminals ought to look like everybody else.

You had to say something, too, for the woman who had been his victim. Her first name was Annie.

"I want to ask that man one question," Annie said, leaning over me in the back seat and glaring at the youth. "Just one question. Our people are always talking about Black Power and the troubles white people inflict on us. Tell me, you tell me right now—was it a white man choked me tonight and stole my purse?"

Yellow Shirt just looked out the window.

While Simandl and Diciolla settled down to the interminable reports involved in an arrest, I talked with Annie and her daughter, Luberta.

The mother was worried. Not about the money and food stamps, but because the wallet also held an identity card which entitled her to needed medical care under the ADC welfare program. Could she get another? Would they believe her?

Luberta, a very little girl with a very big grin, grew increasingly sleepy as the clock moved toward midnight, but she was happy to talk about one thing. About tomorrow.

"It's going to be party day in my class at school," she confided. "And we're going to have hamburgers. I can hardly wait."

Lt. Gerald Creed, the big, capable black officer commanding Area Four Task Force that night, came in wearing a grin of his own. He had Annie's wallet, found not far from the purse. The money was gone but the medical card was there. Now, tho, Annie had a new worry. A snapshot of her older daughter, a teen-ager, was missing.

Creed and other police did their best to explain away her fears. The photo could have slipped out while the purse-snatchers ransacked the wallet, they told her, and was lying unnoticed somewhere. Its loss, therefore, meant nothing. But Annie was afraid.

The Yellow Shirts might have deliberately taken the picture, she thought. Because the girl was pretty. And the missing youth might still have it, and he might belong to one of the gangs, and the gang might track down the girl. Gangs had done terrible things to pretty girls, Annie knew.

It was 1:10 a. m. before the paperwork was done and Leon the Neon was led off to the lockup. Then 6464 drove Annie and Luberta home. The little girl slept cuddled against me. Smiling. Dreaming, maybe, of hamburgers.

Later that night a 15-year-old boy was arrested on the West Side for murder. He'd shot a 22-year-old in a

gang killing, placing his bullet precisely 4½ inches below his victim's left nipple. The fact he'd committed murder at his age wasn't unusual. What was, tho, even for the West Side, was that at 15 he himself had already been shot seven different times in gang warfare.

### The second night

"Plain-clothes." Car 6464 for this watch [the number goes with the men, not the machine] was a dark blue Plymouth, and Simandl and Diciolla were in sport shirts and jackets. But the heavy belts were still around their waists, and that Browning of Jerry's looked more than ever like a cannon.

Past the winos and the junkies again. Past Rosie the Whore who grinned "hello" from her corner as we went by—and we waved because, out here, it's nice to see a friendly face. Past The Bum Wagon, a squad, and its bored policemen, waiting to scoop up the derelicts who would pass out on the street tonight, from booze or worse, and lock them away safely so their throats wouldn't be cut.

The evening was unseasonably cool, however, and the dirty streets emptier, quieter. The radio, mostly, left us alone, and Norfie and Jerry talked. About, for one thing, how they had come to be cops.

"I'd always wanted to," Jerry said. "Well, there was a time in high school—I lived in Berwyn—when I worked in a hospital and wanted to be a doctor. But the longer I was there, the more there was something about medicine I didn't like.

"I knew a sergeant on the Berwyn force—he's my oldest son's godfather—and I talked with him about police work. And with others, and I read up on it and decided it reauy was what I wanted. Only in Chicago, not Berwyn. You could apply here when you were 20, so the day after my 20th birthday—Feb. 28, 1967—I did, and started in the Police Academy that November."

"Me, I never thought about being a policeman until quite a while after I got out of the Army," Norfie said. "First I was an IBM operator, but I couldn't get used to inside work, then I was in construction with my dad but that was seasonal so I drove a bread truck winters.

"Friends, tho, had gotten on the force and liked it. They said it offered security and held your interest—you couldn't believe the things going on, they said. So, in 1967 I took the exams and was called that December. I discovered I loved it—I'd found a home."

Isn't part of the attraction for young men a "cops-and-robbers" thing? The lure of roaring around the city in fast cars with guns, being the good guys chasing the bad ones?

Jerry grinned. "Maybe among some men," he said, "but not many and not for long. Because here you're not playing games.

"There may be a thrill at the idea

of packing a gun before you get it. But when you do—in the eighth academy week when we were there—here's this huge feeling. At least here was for me. You're not God, you think, and who are you to be in a position to take life? And how do you make the decision if you have to? Nevertheless, I like being part of the force."

Thousands of men do, evidence shows. For every opening these days there are five to nine applicants, Patrick V. Needham, deputy superintendent for administrative services, told me later.

"Right now, 900 are on our waiting lists," he said. "They're by no means all the men who wanted to join, but what's left of 6,000 who applied and who, most of them, were screened out for various reasons."

Seventy-five per cent of the 900 are service veterans, Needham said, and between 10 and 20 per cent are black. "They now make up 17 per cent of the department's sworn strength of 13,000," he added.

Supt. Conlisk—son of a policeman, brother of policemen, father of one—says an obvious reason the force attracts recruits today is the much improved salary scale. But that's only one reason, he thinks.

"The fundamental motivation is a desire to serve," he said. "To serve your fellow man, really, in a way that's productive, in a way where you can see you're doing something for your community, for the people around you."

Chicago patrolmen now start at \$10,272 a year. After five years, the basic wage is \$13,224, after 10, \$13,468, and there are no further increases unless the man is promoted or assigned special work. Detectives, for example, make \$800 a year more than uniformed men of the same rank; sergeants range from \$12,422 to \$15,180; lieutenants \$14,472 to \$17,568. Task Force men, strangely, get nothing extra despite the hazard.

Car 6464 responded to occasional minor calls, and between runs Jerry and Norfie went on talking.

They'd both like to be detectives some day. Jerry is studying police administration at Triton College in River Grove, and lectures there on cultural and racial minorities, and Norfie started at Triton last semester.

"That's the name of the game in our job—education," Jerry said. He described a cartoon he had clipped and firmly believes in—it shows, he said, a police club being used as a page marker in a law book.

"Pig," shouted a voice. A half-dozen young black men, most garishly dressed, were on the sidewalk. Norfie waved disgustedly at them.

"You've got lots of good people out here, people who work all day and save their money and try to live nice, then you get mopes like those who prey on them," he said. "Like Annie last night, and that punk we caught."

"It's getting better, tho, because the good people are getting fed up with the mopes. We get better cooperation from the decent folks than we used to, and the reason is they're realizing they, even tho black themselves, are the main victims of the criminals of their own race who live among them. And they're sick of crime, the good people, sick of being robbed and hurt, and more and more they're turning to us because they're coming to understand the police aren't here to suppress them but to suppress crime."

"Yeah," Jerry said, "things are sure friendlier than the week we were rookies at Fillmore, remember?"

"That week" began the day Martin Luther King was assassinated, and dozens of buildings on the West Side were set afire in savage retaliation for what a white man had done hundreds of miles away in another city. Jerry and Norfie had picked paths thru the fires to reach their station, then, with hundreds of other policemen, worked 12- to 14-hour shifts trying to restore order.

"All our cars had holes shot in them, and we plastered the windows with masking tape to keep from getting blinded when bricks came thru," Norfie said. "Mostly we rode four to a car, but one night I was working with just one officer when—Pow! Pow! Pow!—a sniper started putting rifle slugs thru our engine hood.

"Three weeks out of the academy, and I'm crouching behind a garbage can dodging bullets. It was very discouraging."

You get the feeling, tho, listening to them, that cops like Jerry and Norfie would rather take their chances with a sniper than put up with some of the other specimens of humanity they're forced to deal with. The white "hippie" mob, for example, which thinks it's furthering the cause of justice when it throws raw potatoes studded with razor blades at policemen.

"Insults we take as a matter of course," Norfie said. "I figure people aren't calling me names personally. They're yapping about what I represent, law and order. Sometimes they're just kids making noise and having fun getting their pictures in the paper, but when they start throwing rocks and worse, it becomes another story.

"I've seen officers hit smack in the face with bags of excrement. And we've all been spat upon. Those are terribly hard to take, but you do. That's where teamwork comes in—you see the man next to you getting hotter and hotter, and you help calm him down."

[Item—Supt. Conlisk was asked why there seems to be so little respect for police these days, and whether the situation is getting better or worse.

"The question, whether there's respect for police, is a relative thing," he said. "I think that among

great numbers of people there's little respect these days for anything but one's own belly, one's own wants. The Spanish have an expression, 'viva yo' or 'hurray for me,' and I think this is becoming almost endemic in our society. A disregard for responsibility and an avid hunger for rights without the concurrent responsibility which goes along with them is very evident in America and elsewhere. It certainly isn't peculiar to Chicago—it manifests itself in every walk of life, even in the church."]

Car 6464 stopped for coffee. Five minutes after it resumed patrol, it and half a dozen other cars were in hot pursuit of a convertible which had rabbited when a squad stopped it for speeding.

Corky Osleber of Area Four Task Force finally ran down the convertible in an alley off Roosevelt Road. It had been a gleamingly new sports car but now it was dented, battered, leaking water. "The guy roared thru that section of Polk they're digging up for sewers like he was a tornado," Corky said. The car was empty when Corky got there, but on the front seat was a CTA bus driver's jacket. And, interestingly, 50 feet away in a little crowd gathered to see what was going on, was a CTA bus driver.

We saw Osleber later, on a "man with a shotgun" call which happily turned out to be false. "It was the guy," Corky said. "He'd had two tuckets and didn't want another. So he busts his car up and lands in worse trouble. Smart, huh?"

Six minutes after 1 a. m. We do a slow U-turn and slide up beside a small person having difficulty walking. A boy. Thirteen, he says. And there's reason for his trouble—he stinks, overpoweringly, of wine.

Simandl and Diciolla pat him down for weapons [none], find out where he lives, drive him home. Norfie goes in with him, to come out with anger on his face.

"His mother was there," Diciolla said. "She couldn't have cared less—told me she fell asleep, didn't even know he was out."

### The third night

Roll call got rough. Lt. Edward Pleinis, Area Four's other commander, had words for the Task Force men as he inspected them. Blistering words. About, to start with, hair.

"You are police officers, not a rock band," Pleinis said as he walked the lines. "Mustaches will be cut even with the upper lip and sideburns even with the ears, and a lot of you need haircuts.

"If some of you show up tomorrow looking the way you do now, you'll go home and lose a day's pay. And if that doesn't work we'll send your sergeants home and see how they like losing a day's pay."

He stopped before one young officer. "Do something with that cap,"

Pleinis said frostily. "Preferably, burn it."

He halted before Norfie, who stiffened in alarm. Unnecessarily.

"Norfie," said Pleinis with a grin. "You are a picture of sartorial splendor. There, gentlemen, is the way a policeman's supposed to look."

Norfie turned beet-colored.

"Now, something else," Pleinis went on. "Some of you are doing a hell of a job, making good Part One [major crime] arrests, and some of you aren't doing anything. And those men are going to be on the next transfer order. You're here because you asked to be, and if you want to stay, get off your asses.

"One more thing. Tonight we're splitting you between the 10th and 11th Districts. So, remember you've got buddies in each, and if you get any 10-1 calls [police officer needs help] watch for each other at intersections because other cars'll be coming and you'll all be heading the same place.

"Just last night," Pleinis added, "one of you discovered CTA buses don't bend. Right?"

A young cop near Norfie took his turn blushing.

Car 6464 didn't bend anything during this watch, fortunately. Except maybe our sanity. Because this was "crazy night" for us.

First, we almost arrested a stovepipe. On Hamlin Avenue. For burglary.

"Hey," Jerry said to Norfie, who was driving. "Back up to that two-flat. There's a guy crawlin' thru the

first-floor window."

Norfie shot the car backward, and both cops leaped out and ran—thru mud—down an areaway to where, you'd swear, a man's legs and rump hung out a window. Except they didn't—it was a stovepipe, an unexplainable length of stovepipe dangling from the window, going nowhere. We trudged back, thru mud, to the squad.

"Wonder how many cars been hooked on that blasted thing," Norfie said wearily. "It's as bad as the Garfield Park joke, huh, Jerry?"

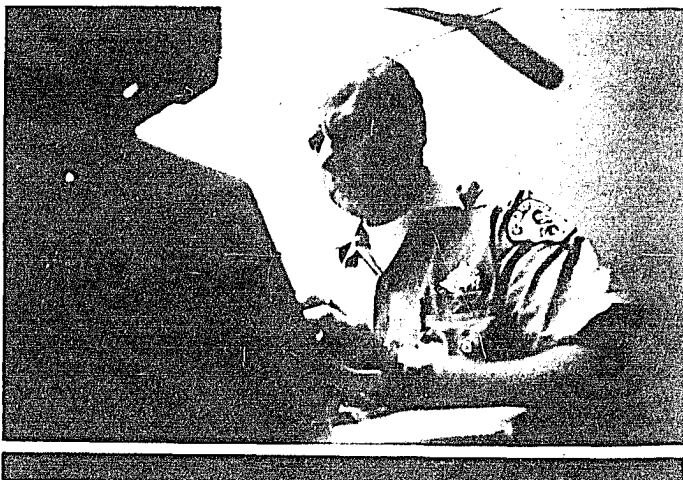
"Every rookie riding West Side gets nailed on this one sooner or later," Norfie explained. "The call comes, 'Man with an ax at Central Park and Washington,' and the new man goes charging into the park—to find the statue of Abraham Lincoln the Rail-Splitter."

An hour later, Jerry found himself playing Abigail Van Buren, lovelorn expert.

People don't write to Jerry the way they do to "Dear Abby." Instead, they leap in front of his squad car on dark streets. At least, this nut did. The guy was drunk and mumbling, and kept trying to give Jerry two bedraggled dollar bills which Jerry kept refusing, and eventually we discovered what he was talking about.

He'd tried to visit his girl friend "in that building over there." But she'd refused to let him in, and, when he'd persisted, she'd slammed the door on his hand. Maybe it was because her husband might have

Diciolla types one of the interminable reports involved in an arrest.



**When the emergency rooms in neighborhood hospitals are filled, you know you've got a bad night.**

come home from out of town. So he was asking Jerry to take these two bucks as a tip for straightening things out with the gal so she wouldn't slam the door on Lover Boy again, otherwise he was gonna say the hell with it and go back to Mississippi.

"Now you're talking," said Jerry. "Have a good trip."

"Boy," said Norfie as 6464 slid past, "we should introduce him to The Electric Lady, remember? This o'd gal came running up just like he did, only with a different problem. Told us people in the next apartment were shooting electric waves thru her wall. She didn't mind the shocks, she said, but the waves kept knocking her out of bed—claimed she was getting all lumped up landing on the floor."

"Shots at Walnut and Sacramento," Citywide Two interrupted. "Shots fired from a blue Chevrolet convertible."

We flipped on the Mars light, cranked up the siren and on the way passed—of all things—a blue Chev convertible going in the opposite direction. A skidding U-turn, a short chase, and the men of 6464 had Willie K—, 28 years old, out of his car and bent over its hood. He was "clean" but the car wasn't—under the seat was a .38 snubnose.

Willie K. had to be [1] the dumbest, [2] most innocent or [3] the don't-give-a-damnedest character Chicago has produced in a long time. He couldn't get it thru his cheerful head that being picked up with a gun was

more serious than, say, being tapped for spitting on the sidewalk.

Would he, Willie wanted to know right off, be free within 30 minutes—he was supposed to meet his wife? Likely not, said the cops. Well, could they make it fast as possible? That they'd do, said Norfie, who had a question of his own. Had Willie been arrested before?

"Yep," Willie said, three years ago. What for? "Having a rifle under the seat," Willie replied.

Going into Fillmore, 6464 paused at a gas station because Norfie needed cigarettes. When he discovered why we'd stopped, Willie leaned forward.

"Fellas, I could use some Winstons long as we're here," he announced.

Laughing, Jerry dug 43 cents out of his own pocket, bought the Winstons, handed them back. "That's us," he chuckled. "Just like our motto says, 'We Serve and Protect.'"

At Fillmore, Willie told a vague tale of how the snubnose happened to be in his car. For "protection," he said. His mother [or was it his grandmother?] owned a store and he wanted to be "ready" in case it was robbed. He didn't know anything about shots fired that night—alho his revolver smelled of freshly discharged powder.

It was a cheap gun, the snubnose, typical of the "Saturday Night Specials" which have become the usual weapon in the armed robberies and the so often motiveless shootings which plague Chicago and other cities. Carl Bakal, an authority on

gun control legislation, wrote in a recent Saturday Review article that one new handgun is sold in this country every 13 seconds and used ones change hands at a rate of more than two a minute. That's 24 hours a day, don't forget.

### The fourth night

Not every West Sider is as carefree as Willie. We found another kind of man tonight, the hard-luck guy who God knows has tried but who's ready to give up.

We happened onto him because of his car. The rear end was crushed in, and—more pertinent to police—it had two different license plates.

"Get that fellow we passed," Norfie told Jerry. "He's got a '71 plate on the back and a '69 on the front."

The driver we curbed was tall, 32 years old, polite and wearily resigned. As tho anything bad that could happen to him usually did.

He hadn't realized, he said, the front 1971 plate was gone. It must have been stolen. The smashed-in trunk? The car had been hit when parked on the street; he couldn't afford a garage. The reason he'd been riding around was he'd been looking for his boy's bicycle, stolen earlier that day.

You couldn't help believing him. Norfie and Jerry told him what to do to keep from getting picked up again. Go to Fillmore, they explained, and report the stolen plate "so you get a receipt showing it was lost."

Later, when we stopped at Fillmore, the man was there and I got to talking with him.

There didn't seem to be any use trying, he said. He could never get the car fixed, not on what he earned in the disabled veterans' store where he worked. And now, the bike.

"You can't realize what it's like, living here," he said. "This is the third time the bike has been stolen—I found it the other two—and it's breaking my boy's heart 'cause he loves it. He's only 9, and I can't even let him ride it in front of where we live unless I'm there watching. If I weren't, somebody'd take it away from him. Right in front of his home."

"I just don't know what to do. Which way to turn. I don't know."

There must be lots of "don't know" guys on the West Side. Guys who, some of them, eventually don't care either. About anything. Maybe that's why life gets so cheap in the jungle which is the 10th and 11th Police Districts.

"It's hard to believe if you don't actually see it," Norfie said later, "but they kill here for nothing. Something as unimportant as a drink. You go into a joint on a shooting call, and there's a dead man on the floor and another with a gun, and the guy with the gun tells you, 'He took a drink outta my bottle.'"

"We went into one saloon and—honest to God!—there was a man dead of gunshot wounds near the bar and, in a back room, a guy and a girl having intercourse on a pool table. Nobody else. When we asked what'd happened, the guy said he didn't know—"The man just walked in and lay down and died," he said.

"And, would you believe it, the guy we're talking to never stopped, with the girl I mean, while we're questioning him. Never stopped, so help me. Right there on a pool table with a corpse a few feet away."

"You know you've got a bad night when they announce on the air the emergency rooms at Garfield Park, Bethany and Mount Sinai Hospitals can take no more cases," Norfie said. "Go to County until they clear, you're told. Then you know the crap is hitting the fan real good."

The dismal stories police tell of what they encounter on the West Side match the dismal look of the area itself. Almost everywhere we rode are windowless, often partly burned, abandoned hulks of apartment buildings, hundreds of them.

Sometimes attempts have been made to board them up but mostly the boards have been ripped off and the structures stand open, gutted, desolate. Dangerous, too, because they're used as "shooting galleries" by junkies and, worse, as sniping positions for potshots at police.

[Item—Judge Franklin I. Kral of Housing Court says: "The owners simply walk away, give up. They reach a point of complete defeat. They're losing money; they can't borrow funds conventionally for repairs because of the condition of both

Roll call and inspection can be rough. Blistering words. About, to start with, hair.



the buildings and the neighborhood: if they do get money they have problems getting trades people to work in the area, and if damage is fixed new damage is inflicted. So they just walk away, and mortgage holders won't spend the money it takes to foreclose so the buildings stand until the city eventually pays to have them knocked down.

[“There's no easy answer to this problem, no 'pill' which will correct it. What we need, in that area and others like it, is to stimulate a pride in living.”]

Often the abandoned tenements, as well as occupied buildings, are defaced with scrawlings as depressing as the buildings themselves.

The old Midwest Athletic Club on Madison at the western edge of Garfield Park, once a plush establishment, bears this inane boast on an exterior wall, “Gangster Souls Rule the World.” In the 3800 block of Roosevelt another wall proclaims, “Maniac Cobras.”

Just as silly a sign, altho more neatly lettered, stands at California Avenue and Roosevelt Road. It says, “This is Lawndale, Part of Chicago's Model Cities Program—Mayor Richard J. Daley.”

You wouldn't want to stand there

money intact. And nearby her eyeglasses, undamaged.

A black woman smoking a Cigarillo stepped up. She'd seen the three run, she said. “Look over my shoulder at that project building half a block down,” she told us. “They're in front now, mixed in with other people watching you. You can see the guy with the red shirt.”

You could. But how do two uniformed cops go about capturing three men half a block away, who, the instant police started for them, would disappear into a rabbit warren of a building? Jerry went to 6464.

“He's going to ask for a detective unit to roll up quietly from the other direction, and maybe it can get 'em,” Norfie said. “A plain car might have a chance before they noticed it.”

It was stupid night at Chicago's police communications center, how ever. First thing, we hear sirens screaming, and everything—*everything*—but the one unobtrusive squad we wanted came charging down upon us. Uniform cars, squadrols, even a canine unit with two dogs and their handlers. Redshirt, et al., disappeared into the building with the first siren. And nobody in the group at the entrance had the honesty or guts

## **Everybody gets out of the way when the canine unit arrives. “Those dogs are something.”**

long admiring it. Particularly after dark. You'd get mugged.

### **The fifth night**

**S**peaking of Hizzoner, 6464 just rescued Mrs. Daley's cousin, Mrs. Marcella Matz, 67, was on her way to her South Side home after visiting a hospitalized daughter when she was grabbed by three strong-arm robbers in the elevated station at Western Avenue and the Eisenhower Expressway. If we'd come along 30 seconds sooner, we'd have had her assailants cold turkey, in the middle of the Western Avenue overpass with no place to run. As it was, we'd just turned onto Western heading south when an elderly woman, mouth bleeding, waved at us.

“Three Negro boys grabbed my purse, and when I tried to hang on they knocked me down,” Mrs. Matz said. “One wore a red shirt. It happened just seconds ago.”

So few seconds ago, search disclosed, that the three must have been spooked by the squad. Ten feet away we found Mrs. Matz's purse,

of the cigar woman. No, they said, they hadn't noticed anybody with a red shirt. No, they hadn't seen three youths running into their midst. No . . . no . . . no . . . Sullen and uncooperative, they hardly stepped aside for the police running into the building, except when the canine unit arrived—then they moved.

“Everybody does,” said Norfie as 6464 drove Mrs. Matz home. “Those dogs are something. If we're searching a building, for a sniper maybe, and they bring in the dogs, we've all got to get out because those mutts go after anybody but their handlers.

“During trouble at the Amphitheater a canine man was knocked cold by a rock and other police couldn't help because his dog stood right over his body, guarding him. That's why, now, they work in teams of two dogs and two men, so if something happens to one man, the other knows and can control the injured one's dog.”

The Eisenhower Expressway figured in a later incident. Siren screaming and Mars light twirling, 6464 roared west on it, dodging hair-raisingly thru traffic at 70 miles an hour re-

spending to the air's most urgent call—"10-1": police officer needs help.

Keeler and Van Buren was the target, and we saw other Mars lights coming as we raced nearer, and it turned out to be a tavern with squads all over the street and a sergeant waving newly arriving cars to resume patrol because no more help was needed. "Maybe we'll find out later what happened," Norfie said disappointedly.

He cheered up, tho, as he thought of another subject: Jerry's pipe, and the "peril" Norfie insisted it poses during high-speed runs. Jerry smokes cigars sometimes, but it's the pipe, Norfie said with a grin, that has him worried.

"First time we were on a chase when he was smoking it, I couldn't figure what was happening," Norfie said. "Jerry's driving, see, and puffing that pipe like a steam engine, and sparks are flying all over the car. I just know one of these days they'll be making out an injured-on-duty report on me 'cause it's gonna set me on fire. I worry more about that pipe than the call we're going in on."

Norfie had another worry. His weight. Rather he was worried be-▶ 40

cause his wife was convinced that, at 180 stockily-put-together pounds, he was overweight. He talked about it at 6464's lunch break when Jerry and I were digging into house specialties in an Italian restaurant and Norfie had—miserably—a chicken sandwich, hold the mayo. After all, who could blame a hearty young man whose formal name is Donorfrio Diciolla for being partial to pasta?

"We bought bicycles," Norfie said. "On days off Terry [Theresa, his wife] and I go riding, which helps," Norfie said.

He and Terry wouldn't do any riding the coming Sunday, tho, Norfie said. They'd be standing up with Jerry and his Natalie while the newest of the Simandls' three sons, Michael, was baptized.

"I'm going to be godfather," said Norfie happily. "That means I can take the kid away from him if he's not nice to it. If I see any baton

holes didn't hurt. The worst was, I could smell burned flesh—my flesh—scorched by the powder.

"My wife was in her eighth month, and the baby came three weeks early. She doesn't like me to be on this job but she's never asked me to leave."

### The sixth night

**T**his was a good night. And a bad one. Real bad.

First, Car 6464 by special permission of the watch commander took time out to make a social call. At Jerry's home, so I could meet his wife and youngsters and Norfie's Theresa.

The brick bungalow, located in a German-Irish-Polish neighborhood with, I was told, "lots of police around," was purchased by the Simandls last spring, and we talked,

## The sixth night started out a good night. Later, after midnight, it became a bad one. Real bad.

marks on Michael's little butt, that'll be it."

Later that night, much later, when 6464 and other cars responded to a robbery call, I met Gaffney: Daniel Gaffney, 26 years old, Area Four Task Force, who by practically any odds shouldn't be alive today.

He came up to our car because he said he had something to show the TRIBUNE man. It was a police cap badge, with a .45 caliber hole drilled precisely thru its center.

"I carry it with me because I still can't believe it," Gaffney said. "That cap was shot off my head in 1968 without the bullet ever touching me. A robbery suspect it was, lying down in an alley, and as I came into the alley he fired at me."

Eight months later Gaffney's protective angel goofed.

"I was working alone out of Fillmore when I saw three guys in an alley off Roosevelt," Gaffney explained. "I got out of the car and walked in, gun in hand, and asked what they were doing. One man, he had a crowbar, showed me a police star and said they were officers on a raid.

"I said, 'Okay,' and started out of the alley when something, I don't know what, made me look back. The crowbar guy had a gun out, and as I turned he shot me twice in the chest. I tried to grab him, and later I managed to get back to the squad and radio for help. You know, it's funny. I was bleeding bad but the

first in the backyard while Snoopy the cocker pup and the Simandl kids played and later over coffee around the dining room table.

Natalie Simandl, 24, a brunette, went to Morton West High with Jerry, married him soon after they graduated and he was working for a radio firm, and saw him begin training at the Police Academy when their first child, Jerry Jr., was 3 months old. He is 4 now, and Billy is 2½. Michael, who'd be baptized Sunday, was then a 7-week-old, 10-pound mite.

What had Natalie thought when Jerry told her he wanted to be a cop?

"I was proud," she said. "Mainly, I think, because I'd been raised with the idea a policeman is somebody you respect."

Was she—it was difficult to ask such a question of a pretty girl offering you homemade cookies—frightened of the work Jerry did? Of the dangers he and Norfie faced every time they stopped a car, prowled an alley, responded to a radio call?

Natalie answered slowly. "Cautiously" might describe it better.

"I had apprehensions at first," she said, "but they were secondary. I wanted him to do what he wanted to do, and, as I've said, I was proud of him."

She said something more a few minutes later. She said: "You don't think about it all the time. If you did, you couldn't be fair to your husband. You just live with it." ▶ 41



Natalie Simandl can be forceful, however, when she feels the occasion warrants it. On June 24, 1970, a photograph of her appeared in THE TRIBUNE, taken as she and other police wives staged a protest in Civic Center Plaza against use of one-man squad cars in high-crime areas after a patrolman had been shot to death as he sat alone in a car filling out a report. Little Jerry Simandl, who marched with his mother, wore a sandwich-board which read, "Protect My Daddy While He Protects You." Squad cars in high-crime areas now carry two men.

Theresa Diciolla, 27, a slim blonde, married Norfie 18 months ago when he already was a Task Force man.

"I know he likes the work, so I try not to mind too much," she said. "I worry about him, sure, but I always have a feeling he's going to be all right."

[Item—"I made a grievous mistake once which I'll never repeat," says Father Donald Gaugush, chaplain of the police department. "I wanted a certain policeman and his wife to take part in some event we were having, I forget what, so I telephoned his home. And, not knowing the man was on duty, when his wife answered I started by saying, 'Mrs. —, this is Father Gaugush.' That's as far as I got. She burst into tears. She thought I was calling to tell her . . . well . . . you know what. Now when I make such calls I always ask for the man."]

Both women, and their husbands,

were angry about a piece in McCall's Magazine last March which claimed Chicago Task Force police spend hours in bars after the late watch "to pour warm whisky on their shrieking nerves," and added that wives who don't meet their men for such late-night boozing see very little of their husbands.

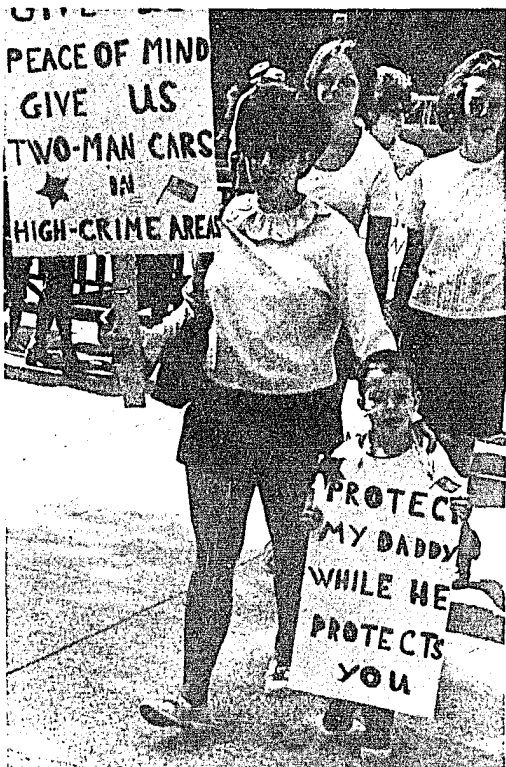
"That's nonsense," Natalie said. "We don't meet our husbands in bars, ever. Sometimes the four of us get together here and have a pizza, but that's about it."

That was the good part of the night, the visit to the home, meeting the wives and the kids and Snoopy the dog. The bad part came later. After midnight, in a smelly, rat-infested alley. This was the night of the shotgun.

We were idling eastward in Roosevelt Road when, far back in a vacant lot, Norfie noticed a truck. It seemed in the almost-blackness that there was movement around it. We loafed on east to the first side street, then Jerry floored the accelerator and we swung the corner picking up speed, squealed into an alley behind the lot and sped toward the truck 200 yards away. As our lights hit it, two figures leaped away from the cab and jack-rabbed down an alley at right angles to the one we were in.

Car 6464 skidded to a stop and Jerry and Norfie, guns ready, jumped out amid yelps from the truck driver. He was elderly, alone and so excited he could barely talk.

"They were trying to rob me," he



In 1970, Natalie Simandl and her son, Jerry, took part in a protest against one-man squad cars in high crime areas.

cried. "They came out of nowhere and tried to stick me up with a shotgun. A shotgun—God, I was scared."

"Stay here," said Jerry. "We'll need you later."

And 6464 slammed down the alley the two had taken until it joined an intersecting alley, then Jerry and Norfie started searching on foot. Five minutes, and Jerry spotted the shadowy figure with something in its hands, and told the shadow to drop the gun, and waited, and the gun—the toy gun—clanged to the pavement. Fifty feet away behind garbage cans, the officers found the second shadow.

Two boys. Sullen, unafraid, almost arrogant black boys. The older, a tall 16-year-old who could be mistaken by anybody for a full-grown

cruising east again in Roosevelt, heading for Maxwell, we saw three boys coming out of another lot. As soon as they spotted the squad they started walking in different directions, and the instant they did, 6464 bounced over the curb, shot across the sidewalk and stopped in the midst of them.

They hadn't done "nuthin'," they insisted. They'd just been "out." "Looking at the moon, huh?" Norfie said sarcastically. "Yeah, the moon," they agreed. There wasn't any moon.

"Let's see those arms," Jerry said. "I'm taking treatment," said the oldest boy, maybe 19. "Honest, getting cured."

"These are old tracks, man," said another, 18, reluctantly rolling up his sleeves.

## **Complainants often disappear in this area if they have time to think things over. They're afraid.**

man in a night-time alley, particularly with that "shotgun" in his hands. The other, 11.

Back in the car, Norfie exploded with anger. And, probably, relief.

"You fool," he told the bigger boy, his words hard, grating. "You're gonna get yourself killed, and a policeman in jail.

"We walk into the dark and see somebody with this [he shoved the toy under the youth's nose]. What would you do? You're gonna end up with this in your hand and a .38 slug in your head.

"And that'd be the end of you, and us, too. I can imagine how the papers'd print it. 'Police Kill Boy Over Toy Gun.' And how would we explain it, and who'd listen? Who'd know what it's like, really like, to be a cop at night out here on the West Side?"

We drove back to where the truck had been and it was gone. Complainants often disappear in this area if they have time to think things over. They're afraid—justifiably—that should they press charges and should the culprits have gang connections they could get their heads caved in.

The squad car stunk. Norfie had stepped in dog dung and it was all over one shoe. "I almost got bit by the dog, too, except he was more scared than I was," Norfie said. He was tired. "And I stumbled over a broken bottle and tore my pants."

"You know something?" said Jerry. "You got to laugh it off, what happens on this job. If you don't, you'll go nuts."

"Youth night" wasn't over. We'd no sooner dropped the toy-gun team at the nearest district station than,

Simandl turned his flashlight onto the kid's right arm. As we watched, blood seeped from a puncture hole inside the elbow, dribbled down the skin. The "old track" was so fresh the vein hadn't closed.

The third youth had nothing to say. He just stood there, unresisting, head down, eyes glassy, as the flashlight swung to him. On his left arm was a red-purple swelling, an angry, sickening, boil-like eruption rising from the flesh like half a golf ball.

He'd hit a bad needle on some recent journey to the Land of Nod. ■

*As you read this, Jerry Simandl and Norfie Diciolla may be buckling on the heavy belts again. Kissing their wives goodby. Heading for another night in the jungle, another eight hours of cruising dirty streets, hearing "pig" shouted from the dark. Hours of crunching over broken glass, listening to scurrying rats, scrambling up stairways never knowing what might be waiting at the top.*

*Hours of doing a tough, discouraging, dangerous job which must be done—maybe must be done more than any other job—if society and the city are to survive. A job, moreover, for which the men who perform it can expect little or no praise if they do it right, and savage, vituperative, unrelenting criticism if they err.*

*Many years ago, when I was a young reporter in Chicago, an old desk sergeant told me, "Remember, kid, for a cop, no bands play in dark alleys."*

*They still don't. Believe me, they still don't.*