

Police say growth requires increased patrols

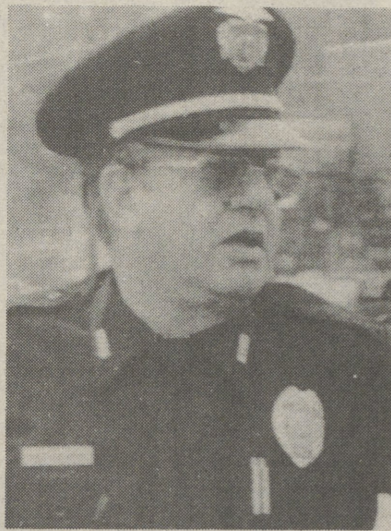
By CHARLOT M. DENMON
Staff Writer

In the past few weeks, observant motorists have noticed an increase in the number of cars pulled over to the side of the highways by the local police in the Back Mountain. Those seeking a mysterious or sinister reason for the increased activity will be disappointed by area police chiefs' explanation.

Kingston Township Police Chief Paul Sabol explained that in the past year, his department has put on a traffic cop to control traffic on the Back Mountain highways.

"There is always a traffic increase during the summer months," said Sabol. "And since the increase in development back here the traffic has become heavier than ever. An example is we had 59 arrests in 1980, 50 in 1988 and 89 arrests to the end of June this year."

"The arrests are for different reasons such as recklessness, speeding, and suspicion of alcohol or drugs. Most of our arrests are in



the daytime. We have no quotas, we don't need them for one, and besides it is illegal to set quotas."

"Our responsibility as policemen is to maintain public safety and that's what we try to do, protect the people," Sabol said.

Dallas Borough Police Chief

John Fowler also said the area's growth is a factor in his department's patrols. "Dallas Borough police have always patrolled but there is no doubt that with increased growth back here, the traffic is heavier, drivers become impatient and become more reckless and more are driving too fast."

"We've had Vascar for a long time but we have been picking up more drivers recently. In some instances cars are pulled over for other reasons such as an expired inspection sticker, no license plate, erratic driving and in some of these cases they are merely warned and let go as long as they take care of the violation right away," Fowler concluded.

"With the increase in traffic, especially motorists driving into and out of the valley from work, drivers have a tendency to speed in order to get to work or to get home on time. Many of them become impatient and take chances they wouldn't take ordinarily. Their recklessness causes more accidents, many of them only fender benders, but it still ties up traffic," Dallas Township Carl Miers said.

Miers said the increase in enforcement has a tendency to make drivers slow up. "The rewards are a decrease in accidents as the word spreads. With the increase in accidents this summer, our men started heavier patrolling but, as a rule, they issue more warnings than citations," he said.

"After a while the men get to recognize the first offender or the person who unknowingly starts to drive too fast. It becomes easier to know the continuous offender compared to the once-in-a-while offender."

All three departments use new technology to catch speeders. "Vascar has been a big help in catching offenders. Kingston Township has two cars equipped with Vascar, Dallas Township has two and Dallas Borough has one. Our men are out there trying to protect the people, that's our job. In the state of Pennsylvania quotas are illegal and trying to do that could get a department in trouble," Miers concluded.

So, a warning to drivers-obey the speed limit, drive safely and stay alive and out of court!

Fines

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was going. The preliminary fine is \$35. Added to that will be a cost based on the speed. There is no additional charge for the first five miles per hour over the speed limit; after that, the fine is two dollars for every mile an hour above the limit.

The CAT Fund is then added in. This charge also varies according to the speed. It is \$30 for traveling up to 15 mph over the speed limit; \$40 for 16-25 mph over the limit, and \$50 for going more than 25 mph over the limit. This money is used for the Catastrophic Loss Trust Fund for the state.

Next is added the EMS charge of \$10, used for Emergency Management Services, and court costs of \$17.50 for work done by the District Magistrate's office.

Finally there is a processing fee of \$1.50 for computer use at the state level.

What this all adds up to is large fines for the speeding drivers. For example, a driver who is stopped for going 50 miles per hour in a 35 mph zone will pay a total fine of \$114 when all charges are added.

It can get worse. If a driver is stopped for speeding in a construction area the fine is automatically doubled. And if a driver is going 30 mph or more over the speed limit there will be an automatic review of the driver's license by the state and the person could face a possible suspension.

Many drivers who are stopped and given the fines are obviously not happy with the police officers. But Kingston Township Police Officer Mike Moravec reminds drivers that they have no control of the costs. "It is not an officer, a district magistrate or anyone in between who sets the costs, we just give them out," said Moravec.

He also said that there are a lot of other misconceptions going around about the citations.

"Despite what is commonly said, there is no such thing as a quota for tickets," said Moravec. He added that police are stopping speeding cars for safety reasons.

Moravec also said that tickets are not given to bring money into the municipalities. He agreed that the township receives funding from the citations but he said, "It costs more for the township to send me to a hearing than the money we get back from it."

He added that police officers are better prepared for hearings on a speeding ticket. "District Justice (Earl) Gregory is very demanding when the prosecution is proving its case. We are taking pride in the fact we are keeping the most up-to-date equipment and are better preparing testimony," said Moravec.

He agreed the costs for speeding are high but reminded motorists the best way to avoid paying them is to not speed.

VASCAR

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check speed, Moravec said it often gives the motorists the benefit of the doubt. "VASCAR will give the average speed over a particular distance where other devices won't do that," he said.

He noted that a radar gun gives the speed at one instant. "The radar will sound if a person is going over the speed set on the machine, so if a person is passing another and then slows down the radar will not show that. However, VASCAR will average the speed the car traveled over a certain distance," said Moravec.

Moravec noted that Kingston Township was one of the first police departments in the state to use VASCAR. The department began using the system in 1974 and has continued to use it since. There was a time, however, when municipalities were not allowed to use the device because it was electronic. Those devices were only allowed for by state police.

That has changed and now municipalities are allowed some electronic timing devices, but the state will not allow them to use radar. Only state police are permitted to use that system.

Before municipal police were allowed to use VASCAR, many departments used stopwatches to time vehicles. Moravec said that officers would sit along the roadway and check how long it took a car to travel between two markings. However, that system took a lot of manpower and time which is not needed with VASCAR.

Moravec said that the use of VASCAR is important in the Back Mountain because of the heavy traffic here. "We have a serious problem because we have upwards of 50 percent of the accidents being caused by excessive speeds," said

The device times average speed between two marked points

Moravec. "Although the number of accidents in the township is down, the severity of the accidents has increased." He noted that there have been five fatalities in Kingston Township in 1990.

He said that several factors contribute to excessive speeds in the Back Mountain. "The roadways are part of the cause. Some people believe Route 309 is an interstate system, but it is more like a four-lane city street," said Moravec. "The last study showed that 30,000 cars a day use 309," he added.

The officer also said that an increase in population has brought with it an increase in cars in the area. Another factor, according to Moravec, is the number of young people driving. He said that when school picks up in September there will be another increase in speed violations.

Moravec noted that many of the roads in the area are marked at 35 or 45 miles per hour. Many are reduced speed areas because property lines, businesses, houses or roadways are less than 100 feet apart. He asked that people become aware of the speed limits. Municipal police can stop anyone who is traveling more than 10 miles per hour over the speed limit and most times hefty fines go along with the citation.

As far as VASCAR, Moravec feels that other devices are good, but he will stick with this system to stop those who feel the need to speed.

Medals

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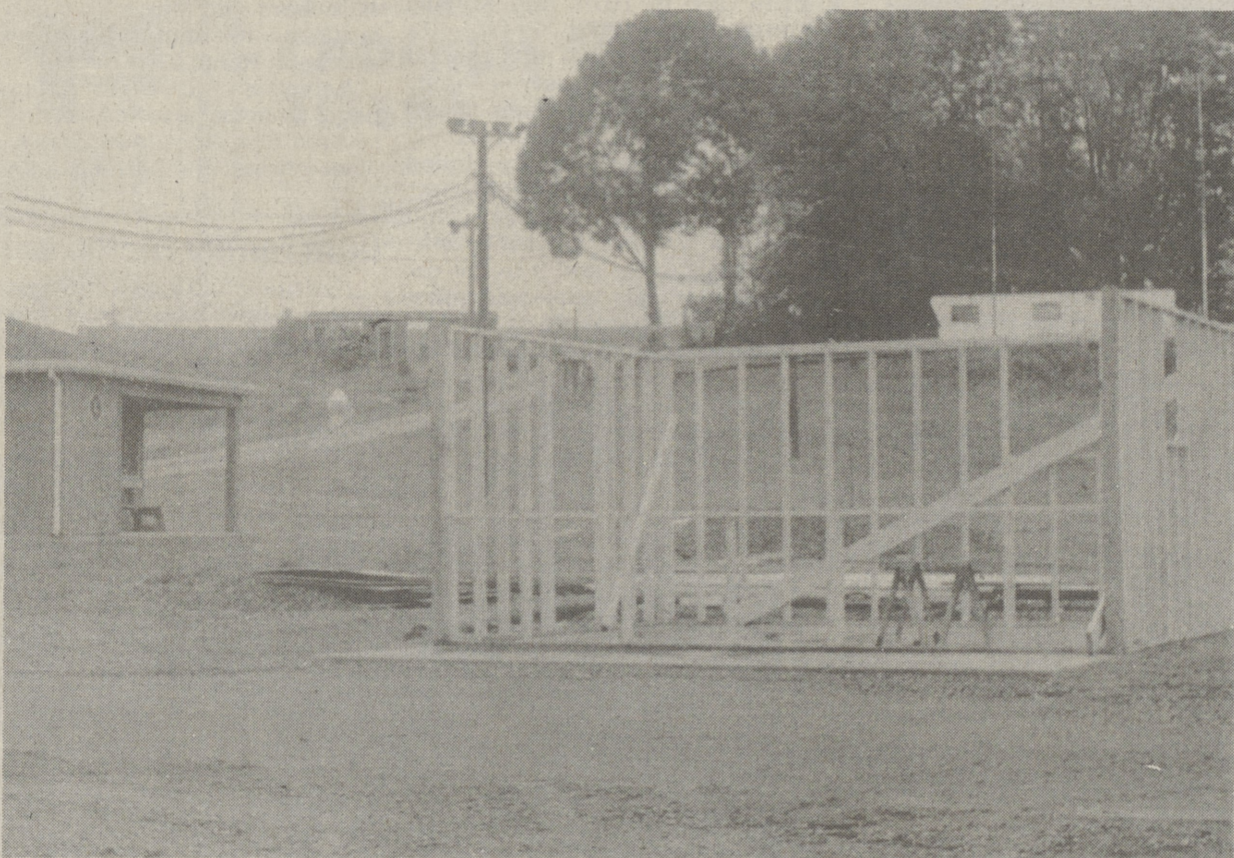
said. She continued to swim casually until last year when she decided to get back into competition.

"I had a lot of people tell me I should start swimming seriously again, and after 23 years I decided to enter last year's Keystone Games," said Byron. She entered the games and won two events.

Since then she has continued training and started entering more swimming meets. On July 28 and 29 she competed in a meet that featured swimmers from all over the Northeast where she placed first in two events.

Her continued success has inspired Byron to become more serious about the sport. "It has given me incentive to continue competing and expanding my training," she said.

As for slowing down, that prospect doesn't seem to be in her future. She and her husband Tom will continue their medical practices and raising their children. Joan will also continue her swimming, and hopefully her success.



SETTING UP FOR THE FAIR - The Lake Silkworth Lion's Club is constructing this building for the Luzerne County Fair which is scheduled for September 5-9 at the fairgrounds in Lehman. This building will be only one of many changes that visitors to the fair will be able to see. (Post Photo/Rich Johnson)

Improvements planned for this year's fair

By RICH JOHNSON
Staff Writer

The 28th annual Luzerne County Fair is fast approaching and final preparations are being made for the event, which this year will feature new attractions for the thousands who attend.

The fair, which is scheduled for September 5-9 at the fairgrounds in Dallas, will take on a new appearance. Visitors may not notice the change to the grounds, but they will probably walk right over it.

The largest improvement will be paving the main exhibit circle. Hugh Woodward, president and general chairman of the fair, said

that the paved area will benefit everyone, but especially handicapped persons who enjoy the fair.

Other changes to the grounds are underway also. New office facilities are being built and the Lake Silkworth Lion's Club is in the process of constructing a permanent building for their booth.

Woodward also said that there will be some first time volunteers at the fair this year. The softball team from College Misericordia will be helping out to raise money for a trip to Texas. Also, a new first aid facility is being erected. The facility will be operated by the Luzerne County sheriff's emergency service division throughout the duration of the fair.

Besides the new ideas of the fair, Woodward said that there will be plenty of entertainment and fun for everyone. "This looks like it is going to be an excellent fair," said Woodward. "We have tried to stick to the theme and come up with old-fashioned country programming."

The theme of the fair is "A Good Old Country Classic" and it will feature the music of Vern Gosdin and Dave and Sugar. Woodward noted that the fair committee has spent more money on entertainment than in the past.

"This is a hectic time right now," said Woodward, "but we seem to be in fairly good shape and will be ready for a good fair."

Pools

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said that some families are not cooperating, but the township is keeping an eye on the issue and will take appropriate action if necessary.

Stager said that the township will remain firm on the issue. "If you can afford the luxury of having a pool in your backyard then you can afford a fence to go around it," said Stager.

In other business at the meeting, the supervisors noted that the township sewer project is being extended to include Newhart Road.

Pub

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urer. No changes in corporate officers appear to have been filed in Harrisburg since that time. The Post has learned that Dorothy Chaney has paid property taxes for the building. Sales taxes have been paid by Richard Chaney, according to Luzerne County officials.

John S. Fine, Jr., Dallas Borough's solicitor, had filed the action in an effort to have the dilapidated building torn down, saying it was dangerous and a public nuisance.

Following a story in last week's issue of The Dallas Post, Borough Solicitor John Fine told council members Thursday night that he

filed a Certificate of Readiness in the Prothonotary's Office that morning. That information was confirmed by The Post on Tuesday, August 7. The Post learned that Fine did file the certificate August 2, but it had not yet been placed on the docket and could be before the beginning of Equity Court, October 29.

In the meantime, business people in the area of the Hearstone are anxious to see the building razed.

"I'd like to see it torn down and a community park in that area," said Dr. Gerald Reisinger, who lives

at 66 Main Street, a block from the former nightclub. "It would be in the center of Dallas and an ideal spot for a park."

Joseph Hand of Sue Hand's Art Studio across the street from the building said, "It's a fire trap and should be torn down and something with a good tax base constructed in its place. It's dangerous and if a fire started it could take this whole section, especially if the wind was blowing a certain way."

Jim Eason, who owns Dallas Centre Hardware, across Mill Street from the pub, also is concerned

about the danger of a fire. "I know it's a hazard. If a fire starts I hope I have enough insurance."

Dallas Police Chief John Fowler said the police try to watch the building to prevent vagrants from getting in and using it as a temporary sleeping quarters.

"It's dangerous. I hate to think what could happen if several children get in through the holes in the building. The place is in such poor condition that they could fall through holes in the floor and their bodies never found. I hope they do something soon," Fowler said.

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