



## Bike Patrol 1992



Captain John Becker



Sergeant Mike Siefkes



Officer Jim Ashley



Officer Mark Domangue



Officer John Hartman



Officer Charlie Marti



Officer Goeffrey Marti

# Bike cops on a roll in downtown

by Diane Mullins  
Neighborhood Extra reporter

The Lincoln Police Department's bicycle patrol unit is quickly becoming a legend in its own time.

Better known as the Bike Cops, they're quick, sneaky, free-wheeling and usually invisible.

And, as a law-abiding citizen, it's a rare event to see the bike cops leisurely cruising around downtown.

Trying to find one of them is like playing a three-dimensional, hidden picture game. A closer look will reveal them peering through bushes, hanging over the side of a fourth-story parking garage while peering through binoculars or just hanging around in some dark alley.

But, break a city ordinance and watch them appear instantly before your very eyes. Ever try to outrun a 21-speed mountain bike?

"We come upon people so

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quickly that we catch them off guard," said Sgt. Michael Siefkes, who took charge of the Bicycle/Foot Patrol Unit in January. People are accustomed to seeing the blue-and-white cruisers, not mountain bikes.

## New bikes

For the past three years, the Cannondale mountain bike has become a cost-effective tool for the Lincoln Police Department to maintain order in the downtown area, said Capt. John Becker, Northwest Center Team supervisor. Originally, the bikes were donated to LPD by Bike Pedalers and KFOR radio through a special promotion.

One bike cop can do the job of

All six officers are anxious to break in the new black bikes.

## Public image

At about 9:45 p.m. last Saturday, LPD dispatched a call to Officer Charles Marti, one of two free-wheeling officers on duty.

The manager of a downtown

theater called to complain about a street preacher who was loudly voicing his pro-life viewpoints to a long line of teen-agers waiting to buy movie tickets.

Officer Marti, sitting at 15th and O streets, zipped through the back alleys, riding over broken glass, pot holes and dodging cars to

avoid one-way streets and red lights. Minutes later, he arrived at 13th and Q streets to handle the situation.

Before he could put his foot on the pedal to leave, a college student approached him about losing his wallet in the theater. After a case number was assigned, an-



MEET THE MEMBERS of Lincoln Police Department's Bicycle/Foot Patrol

## Bicycle/Foot Patrol Unit —

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name basis. This allows the public to see an officer as an individual and not as a symbol," said Sgt. Becker. "We have proof every day that we are more effective than officers in the cruisers."

## Personnel

Day-shift bike cops on duty are Officers James Ashley, John Hartmann and Sgt. Michael Siefkes. Officers Charles Marti, Geoffrey Marti and Mark Domangue handle the night calls.

It's no doubt these cops are in

tip-top shape. Siefkes said they learned in the beginning to eat low-fat, high-carbohydrate meals to keep their energy levels going throughout their shift.

Five of the officers are planning to attend a three-day training seminar in Boulder, Colo., for "Policing by Mountain Bikes" in June. They will bring back to Lincoln the latest in police tactics, bike safety and professional cycling techniques.

And, when they do get back, they will become even quicker, sneakier, and free-wheeling.

One bike cop can do the job of seven officers on foot patrol, and bikes can go places cars can't, said Siefkes. Each cyclist usually logs 35-50 miles a day on one shift. The last day a beat cop walked the streets downtown was March 15.

On a recent "busy" Saturday night, a misdemeanor arrest occurred every 20 minutes, he said. Misdemeanor arrests include drinking in public, riding bikes or skateboarding on sidewalk, trespassing, panhandling and urinating in public.

Because of its success, and to keep LPD on the "cutting edge" of crime prevention, 12 new mountain bikes have been added to the force's inventory at a total cost of \$8,590.55.

Last week, a fleet of Yokota Yosemite Comp mountain bikes with all the accessories rolled off the assembly line at Blue's Bicycle Shop, 436 S. 13th St.

Besides a good price for a high quality bike, owner Jim Carveth landed the bid because of his equipment maintenance program, said Vince Mejer, city purchasing agent.

"These bikes are built to last a long time. The retail value is about \$1,200 (each)," said Carveth.

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# Cannondale cops control downtown

BY DAWN WINSLOT  
Staff reporter

Lurking in dark doorways, peeking around corners or searching the downtown streets for crime in progress, the bike cops are on a nightly patrol.

Officers Mark Domangue and Charlie Marti are part of the Lincoln Police Department's bicycle division. Five officers and one sergeant make up the unit that can be seen riding Cannondale mountain bikes throughout the year.

"We watch people, we hide, sometimes we follow suspicious-looking people for up to an hour," Domangue said. "Sure enough, quite often they will do something wrong."

Marti said the officers in the unit represented a quick response to a problem situation in the downtown area. They are usually only three or four blocks from the incident and can reach the site faster than a police cruiser.

"Officers in cruisers are limited because when they drive around, it's like this big neon sign that says, 'We're the police, we're here,'" Marti said.

The mountain bikes allow the officers to accomplish tasks that no car can accomplish, he said.

"We can go down the steps, we go through yards and people don't always recognize us on bikes," Marti said.

Neither officer was fond of driving a police car because they did not feel the car allowed them to be accessible to the public.

"When we get into a cruiser, we feel like our hands are tied," Marti said.

But being on a bicycle also has its limitations, Domangue said.

He gave the example of being outrun after trying to stop a car for a violation.

"Or when there's something big happening, or an officer needs help and we can't go because of the bikes — that's when we are limited," Marti said.

Domangue said that the bike cops were limited by the amount a bicycle can carry. He said that a camcorder, radar and finger printing equipment were items that could be helpful, but that they were too bulky.

Both officers carry gloves and a headband for cold weather, binoculars, ticket books, an extra battery and a lock and cable for the bike.

Despite the limitations, Domangue and Marti would prefer to be patrolling from 3:30 p.m. to 1:30 a.m. on a bicycle than on foot.

Domangue was placed on foot patrol in 1987 when he had an accident with a police cruiser. He is a diabetic, and the accident was caused by an insulin reaction, Domangue said.

While his diabetes is now under control and he could get a doctor's note allowing him to drive a cruiser, Domangue said, he chooses to stay on a bike.

"I get a lot of enjoyment being outside in the fresh air. I like the exercise and the freedom," Domangue said.

Foot patrol — now known as bike patrol — used to be a public relations job, he said.

"Before we started doing this in 1989, there might have been four or five misdemeanors a month, and that was good enough for the department," Domangue said.

Combined, the officers now write about 50 misdemeanors a month, he said.

Some of the tickets written for misdemeanors include public urination, theft of bar glassware, panhandling and drinking alcohol on public property.

"The department has seen the program as very beneficial. We're getting new bikes, there's a positive influence with bike patrol," Domangue said. "The public has responded positively."

Marti said a bar owner recently

thanked him for the job the bike cops were doing.

Area merchants also seem to appreciate the better control of "transients and drunks," Marti said.

"We have developed a working relationship with the homeless," Marti said. "They know when they are about to push our tolerance too far."

Domangue said transients don't pose the biggest problem to bike cops. Most intoxicated people that the officers deal with are groups of college-aged drinkers.

"They do dumb and crazy things to impress other drunks," Marti said.

Many drunk college students — who have done something illegal — don't know what to expect from the police, Marti said. Often, college-aged offenders will debate their misdemeanor, then try to fight or run, which is when they get into more trouble.

"A lot of times I feel like people think we're a bunch of assholes on a power trip, looking for college students," Marti said. "That's the furthest thing from the truth. We're just a group of people doing our jobs and trying to do a good job."



Officers Domangue (left) and Marti take a coffee break at The Mill at 800 P St. before the big rush at 1 a.m. when the bars close.



Weston Quick is arrested after he is stopped for drinking in public. Quick had a bench warrant for his arrest for failure to appear in court. The charges from the warrant were later dropped, and Quick was fined \$100 for the charge of consumption in public.



Officer Mark Domangue injects himself with insulin during a break. Domangue has been a diabetic for 23 years.



Officer Domangue's shadow is cast along the pavement by a street light. Domangue was watching a group of transients leaving Herm's Liquor Store at 1644 P St.

PHOTOS BY  
SHAUN SARTIN



Officers Scott Rhyam and Charlie Marti along with Sergeant Siefkas (shown from left to right) keep a watchful eye on the activities of downtown Lincoln.

April 8, 1992  
The Journalist



1992 Bike Patrol

Sgt. Mike Siefkes, Officer Harman, Officer Jeff Marti, Captain John Becker, Officer Charlie Marti, Officer Mark Domangue, Officer Jim Ashley



Officer Scott Byram, Officer Jeff Marti



Officer Jim Ashley and Sergeant Mike Siefkes patrol in downtown Lincoln



Sgt. Mike Siefkes and Officer John Hartman  
In a promotional photo for the LPD Annual Report



Officer John Hartman  
At the Teachers Memorial Fountain  
27 & Capitol Parkway