

POLICE IN ACTION

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INTRODUCTION

On February 19 1978 we began our three week Town Study Project. The concern of our topic was the work of the Department of Public Safety on Moen, Truk. We focused our investigation of the Department of Public Safety on the relationship between the police and prisoners, the community and the court.

For the purpose of gathering our information, we divided into two groups. One group was concerned with the police and their relations with the prisoners. Much of their time was spent with the prisoners in the lock-up and with the police on patrol. Our photographers were assigned to this group. The other group interviewed the community, businessmen, and various civic department heads, in order to get a fair understanding of the island's appraisal of the police.

In this report we have compressed the findings of three weeks work into a one week diary. Thus incidences related may not have occurred on the actual day under which they are reported. However, everything contained within this diary did take place during our twenty-one days of investigation. It is our belief that it offers a fair picture of a typical week in the life of the Moen Police.

SUNDAY
19/2/78

At 1:30 P.M. we left Xavier and headed for the Base to prepare for the Town Study Project. On our way we picked up a group of boys who hitched a ride with us from the Truk Radio Station to our Headquarters. We observed that one of the boys was drunk but he was not causing any trouble, so we took him. The boys, however, didn't get much of a ride, for no sooner had we hit the road, when one of our tires went flat. We had no spare, and as we tried to decide what to do a police car pulled up. We thought the police were going to help us, however, we were mistaken, for they went over to the drunk boy and arrested him. We realized that our Town Study Project had started already! Half an hour later we got help and went on our way to drop the drunk's friends at their homes.

By 3:30 P.M. we were settled into our headquarters and started on the road again, this time on a taxi. The driver was drunk and the car was going faster than the speed limit. As we were speeding along, we passed a police car. We thought our driver was going to be picked up also, but fortunately, the police only smiled and went on their way. The drunk driver dropped us off at Stop N' Shop where we met another drunk. He was worse off than the taxi driver for he was cursing everybody in sight. However, he didn't stay long because he soon was spotted by police binoculars. As soon as the police car came into the drunker's sight, he took off behind the houses. The police, however, didn't waste much time tracking him down. They cornered him, handcuffed him and took him to the station.

At 6:30 P.M. we returned to Xavier to get some forgotten duds. On our way back we passed a patrol car. No sooner had we passed it when we heard the siren. We stopped to see what was going on, but were surprised when the patrol car pulled up to our side and two plain clothes men got out. They asked for our license, and also checked our lights. They informed us that our tail light was out. They, however didn't give us a ticket, they only warned us. Later we learned that the plain clothes men were prisoners patrolling.

MONDAY
20/2/78

At about nine o'clock in the morning we walked to the police station to introduce ourselves and our proposed project to the police. However, soon after we got inside Chief Boisse's office he told us that we were under arrest. For what reason, nobody knew because he refused to tell us. Without any further word he called the jail supervisor and instructed him on what to do with us. Then, the jailer led us into another room where he explained the prison regulations.

After he briefed us with the regulations he took us to another room and asked us to take off all our clothes, except our underpants. While we were led to our cell all the prisoners inside stopped whatever they were doing and stared at us. Even those who were lying down reading, sat up and looked at us. They were all puzzled because it was very unlikely for a group of Xavier students to be arrested, but there we were, right in front of their eyes, walking in with only our underwear on. As for ourselves, it was obvious that we were very scared. Every once in a while we would turn to the jailer and asked him how long we were going to stay there.

While we were in the cell one of the prisoner bosses came and asked why we were there. When we told him that it was part of our project, he laughed and said that it would be hard for us to obtain the whole information if we were not treated like the prisoners and get the taste for ourselves.

During our stay, this fellow told us about prison life. He told us that the prison now is better than it used to be. The prisoners, he said, are more cooperative with the policemen. He gave examples of how unlike before the prisoners rarely violate prison regulations.

During working hours everybody is prompt in doing his job. When the policemen are in need of help the prisoners are always ready to give them a hand. In fact, he said that they are happy because they are freer than they used to be. Now they can play cards or guitars in the prison. Likewise, they can go outside anytime they want, but with permission from one of the jailers. During friday nights they can watch movies. On weekends they can do anything they want, provided they don't go beyond prison regulations. Aside from cutting grass and collecting garbage in the community he said that the prisoners now have additional work such as farming, building houses and making handicrafts as part of their rehabilitation.

Every once in a while one of the prisoners would come and converse with us. By doing so, our fears were calmed. At 12:00 the jailer came back and unlocked our cell; it was time for lunch. When we got outside, the food was already prepared for us. It was a meal of beefhash soup and rice, with water to drink. However, we didn't enjoy much of our meal because we were only wearing our underwear. After lunch we played volleyball.

At 1:00 P.M. we went back inside our cell again. This time, we had no difficulty in dealing with the prisoners. In fact, we were able to ask them for whatever we needed. It seemed that we had stayed with them long enough to feel comfortable. For the rest of the afternoon we spent most of our time resting in our cell.

At 6:00 P.M. we were led out for supper. By contrast, the supper was a bit better than the lunch meal. We had corned-beef, three scoops of rice, and water to drink.

Back in our cell, we just sat observing the prisoners. Some of them were playing cards; others were entertaining themselves with guitars. Sometimes one of them would come and secretly offer us cigarettes, which is against the regulations. As we were getting to sleep the jailer came and told us that we wouldn't be using any sleeping material. He told us that we were going to be treated like real prisoners and then off he went. After the lights went out, at ten o'clock, we all just lied in silence. The night was very cold and we moved closer to each other to make us a bit warmer.

TUESDAY
21/2/78

Shortly after our release from jail, we were escorted by the Chief of Police into his office. He proceeded to explain why he had put us in the lock-up. He had done so with the hope that we might experience something of the life of a prisoner. Following his short explanation, he gave us an account of the different changes that have been made in the police force. However, he added that in the future he hopes there will be more. The changes included the making of patrol teams, painting of buildings, division of the people into ranks, and the formation of the undercover teams - task forces.

He then enumerated the qualifications needed for the police. He stated that in general the qualifications are being able to write and speak English. However, later in his talk he said that to be a good policeman you need to make quick decisions.

At 9:30 A.M. we began our first patrol around the island. During the patrol we interviewed the policeman. He proudly told us that he enjoyed his work, although he admitted that he didn't like his salary.

At 10:30 A.M. as we were on our way to drop a person at his house, we received a message from headquarters that there was an intoxicated person at Maramar Hotel. The police didn't respond to the message at once. We rushed to the person's house and dropped him off before we made a dash to where the alarm was made. We arrived at the scene 5 minutes later but there was no sign of any disturbance. We concluded that it was a false alarm. Perplexed we got on the patrol car and headed toward Wichap. It was a long and tiresome ride for we didn't encounter any "action". However, we were amazed and a bit nervous by the look some people gave us near the side of the road. The people sneered at us and turned their faces with silent curses on their lips. We later learned that they had sneered because they thought we were prisoners.

At 11:30 A.M. we patrolled up to Sapuk village. It was a quiet run. However, on our way back we came upon an accident, that had just occurred. Two people were injured and had been rushed to the hospital before we arrived. The policemen investigated the accident and we kept on patrolling.

At 7:30 that night we were on the patrol car again; we patrolled all over town but didn't sight any trouble. Although tired, we remained with the car, thinking of any second we'll come upon "action". We were disappointed because nothing happened that night. At 12:45, after checking the government houses, we left for home.

WEDNESDAY
22/2/78

At 9:00 A.M. as we strolled toward the police station, we spotted a row of parked vehicles in front of the station with drivers waiting impatiently for their cars to be registered for 1978. After observing the cars being registered, we got into a patrol car and went out distributing witness summons to people who had to appear in the court. After distributing the witness summons we went on patrolling.

It was 10:30 A.M. when we discovered that some people were dynamiting fish in the area around Penia village. Unfortunately the dynamiters left just before the police arrived. The patrolmen tried to obtain information from the villagers but nobody was interested in helping them. They refused to mention the dynamiters' names or where they came from. As the policemen tried to investigate the incident, the people waited impatiently to go out and gather the dynamited fish floating in the water. Because of the lack of cooperation from the villagers the police left without the needed information.

On our way to the police station around 11:00 A.M. we received a call to go and pick up the prisoners working on the farm. When we arrived, we were surprised to see the prisoners working on their own, with no policemen to oversee their work. We picked up the prisoners and took them to the police station for their lunch.

Back at the station we had an informative conversation with the jail supervisor. We learned that there are four prisoner bosses who take charge of the prisoners. The jail supervisor explained that these bosses are expected to work like other prisoners, however, they have the responsibility to give orders and to see to it that they don't fight or escape. The New Chief and the other policemen think that this will contribute to their daily living after they are released from prison.

We were standing in the doorway of the police station when an undercover agent came in with a young man handcuffed to his wrist. We recognized him because we knew his father, who is a businessman. We learned later that the young man was arrested because he sold liquor to a friend who turned out to be an undercover policeman. When the man was locked up, we went to the policeman and inquired about the incident. He said that he arrested him because he was caught selling liquor. He told us that this was the only information he could give us and nothing else.

At 2:00 P.M. we gave a ride to some Public Works employees up to an apartment for the policemen from the islands in the lagoon and those who have no place on the island. The police themselves are the ones who usually work on the apartment. We were told by the policemen that the employees from Public Works came to finish the remaining jobs and check the house before the police moved in.

At 3:00 P.M., as we were patrolling in Town, we received a message from Headquarters that there was a fire somewhere near Nama Store. We rushed to the scene and found the fire trucks and police vehicles getting ready to kill the fire. We were surprised to find some prisoners helping to kill the fire. After helping to kill the fire, we continued cruising in town. Back at the police station we learned that everytime there is a fire, the prisoners are always there to give a hand.

In the evening, around 6:00 P.M. we caught the patrol car again. We went to the government buildings and checked the offices to make sure that every door was locked. All through the night we patrolled around the island and found nothing, the night was very quiet.

THURSDAY
23/2/78

We decided to use this day for interviewing civic officials and the businessmen of the community. We selectively interviewed businessmen from the ten best-known stores and fifteen civic department heads. Both groups felt that most of the policemen still lack education and training. Seven claimed that the policemen still perform the act of discrimination on arrestees. One of them supported his statement by saying that he had seen one incident where the police obviously showed discrimination in their duty. Just recently before the banning of liquor, he said he was with some outer island friends enjoying themselves in one of the bars when two cops came in and interrupted them. The policemen asked the outer islanders to leave the bar because they had no drinking permits. The man said that he himself didn't have any drinking permit, but the policemen neglected to check him. Obviously, he said, they were afraid to deal with him because he was a high ranking man. However, so far we have not seen any act of discrimination in the work of police.

On the other hand they do feel that the police force has greatly improved in most of its duties since Chief Boisse and Captain Marc took over. Both the arrangement and the structure of the Police Department are more effectively organized. These people concluded that if the policemen continue their present performance, the Police Department will gradually increase in its effectiveness.

At 11:00 A.M. we finished our interviews and returned to the police station. Shortly after our arrival, a call from the WSZC sounded that a stick of dynamite was found in a car parked outside the Radio Station. In less than ten minutes we rushed to the Radio Station with Captain Marc and the Inspector to investigate. However, when the

informer came he told us that it was not dynamite they found. It was a bullet they had mistakenly called dynamite when they informed the police. Disgusted we took the bullet to the police station and cleared the incident. After that we returned home for lunch.

At 1:00 P.M. we resumed our patrolling again. It was another quiet afternoon, though. At 3:30 we went to the airport to assist the firemen awaiting the plane. We cleaned the airport and made sure that no animal or people crossed the airfield. When the plane finally arrived at 2:15, we went to the terminal and waited for the passengers to check in and get their luggage. In one of the luggages the custom inspector found two bottles of scotch and took them. The owner demanded that he have them back. Because the American wouldn't listen to us, the police took him to the police station where the case would be cleared. Chief Boisse told him that he would not put him into custody nor impose a fine since he claimed that he knew nothing about the banning of liquor on the island.

At 5:00 P.M. we were on the patrol car again. We patrolled all over town but did not sight any action. We went and patrolled around Nantaku, at the government buildings where we came across some teenagers drinking yeast. When they saw us they ran into the darkness and we never saw them again. We double-checked the area and the government buildings, but did not find anything. The night was calm and we enjoyed the ride.

FRIDAY
24/2/78

Late in the morning, we were at the police station waiting to go out on patrol. Unexpectedly, we got a message from the chief of Iras village that some men were drinking. We jumped into the patrol car with an undercover agent and three patrolmen and zoomed to the reported area. As we approached the village, we sighted four Moen policemen in the act of arresting the drinkers. However, as we were nearing, the drinkers escaped from the Moen police and each took off into different directions. They were unfortunate because they were too drunk and were outnumbered by the policemen. Two of them tried to hide but the policemen spotted them. Consequently, they were all arrested and brought to the police station.

At 11:00 A.M. while patrolling, we heard of an accident at the Boat Pool. We rushed to the scene and found the car parked in the vicinity. The injured man who was hit had already been brought to the hospital. So, the patrolmen called the police station and informed them about the accident. Moments later, a detective car pulled up with three detectives to investigate the accident. They questioned the people who saw the accident as to when and how it had happened. They detectives were told by the people who saw the accident that the lady who drove the car did not bother about the suffering man after the accident. The puzzled policemen could get little more information on the accident and left unsatisfied.

Back from lunch, we were just in time to catch the firemen and some prisoners going to extinguish a fire on a nearby mountain side. It was fortunate that the fire trucks were ready in case of emergency. Every morning the policemen check their trucks to make sure that everything is ready for use. At the scene, we just stood aside and observed the hard working firemen and prisoners, for we could not lift those huge water hoses. The firemen, with some prisoners killed the fire, while the other prisoners and firemen cut grass nearby so as to prevent it from spreading. Afterwards, we gave credit to the prisoners for working hard like any fireman would have and for cooperating with the policemen.

Returning from the fire, around 2:00 P.M. we decided to continue our interviews with the people of the community to learn how they felt about the policemen. From the approximately 200 questionnaires we obtained from the community, the people felt that the police department has changed and improved. They said that the policemen are active and sticking to their assigned work now a days. However, they felt that discrimination still exist in the work of the police. Sometimes policemen don't arrest their friends, relatives, or high people. They only arrest the people whom they do not have close relationship with. The people said that, another thing that still exists in the work of police today is that when some of them arrest people whom they don't like, they tend to treat him roughly. But so far we have not seen any arrestees who have been treated roughly, unless they turned against the policemen.

At 5:00 P.M. we resumed our patrolling but again we didn't come across any action. As we returned to the police station around 7:00 our prisoner friends came and told us that they were just about to watch a movie and asked us to join them. Without hesitating we went with the prisoners. During the movie, we sat with the prisoners. They made us feel at home, they treated us like brothers. After the movie we felt like going to bed so we said good night to the prisoners and some policemen and left for home.

SATURDAY
25/2/78

At 9:00 A.M. we arrived at the police station to interview the former Police Chief. During our short talk he confessed that things were tough when he was the chief. The crazy 8 arrest irritated the community, he added. However he thought it was the best thing to do to scare trouble makers. He further explained that he received many complaints from the community, especially because of the crazy 8 form of arrest. He went deeper into this subject and stated that since the community was not supporting them, their work would not function well.

After the short confession, he proceeded into the changes that had been made in the police force. He admitted that these changes couldn't have been made if the new chief had not taken over. He approved of these changes. However, he doesn't approve of the prisoners driving police cars, nor of prisoners patrolling. He still insists that prisoners should not patrol. He stated that this is the only change he doesn't agree with. He felt that the prisoners are freer than before.

At 10:00 A.M. the same day we were amazed at how the prisoners worked. Instead of the usual things such as cutting grass around the island, they were cleaning the patrol cars and working on handicrafts which they consider to be one of the most important projects they have as part of their rehabilitation.

At 11:30 when the prisoners were working, the police received an emergency call from Sapuk. We dashed over. Although going 50 miles per hour, we were late. The intruder had taken off. Nevertheless, the police asked what had happened. After they had gather the information they set out on foot to track the intruder down. At 12:35 they had caught him and returned to the police station.

At 3:00 P.M. the jailer was replaced by another. One of the new detentioners who had just been captured walked out and asked permission to go and smoke. The new jailer not knowing that he was d detentioner, let him out. The detentioner did not return. The policemen went out and looked for him, but it took them the whole day to find him. They brought him back to the prison.

At 5:15 P.M. we were still chatting with some of the prisoners. Our conversation was suddenly interrupted by a shriek from the prison. We rushed to the prison and peered inside. Two of the prisoners were beating up a new prisoner. Alarmed, the jailer rushed to the chief of police who was present in the police station and informed him. The chief of police quickly grabbed a revolver and rushed to the scene. Upon reaching the prison he questioned the prisoners about the incident. The prisoners, however didn't give much information. Seconds later we heard a slap, because the chief had been annoyed and had began to slap the prisoner who had started the commotion. After the chief had cooled down, he spoke to them and left.

CONCLUSION

We have tried to present through this diary a profile of the Truk Public Safety Department. The diary represents three weeks of close association with and investigation of the Police Department. We have attempted to give a fair and impartial picture. We began our three week project with many pre-conceived ideas of what it was like to be a policeman. Our ideas were influenced by movies we had seen and books and articles read. We had expected the life of a policeman to be a glamorous one. We were disappointed in our expectations. The life of a policeman on Moen is not "glamorous." A policeman's life can be exciting and filled with 'action' - sometimes. However, most of his work is taken up with routine procedures. At times it can be most unexciting. We did learn, though, that the jobs performed by the police are necessary to the welfare of the island community. The police do help to maintain "peace and order". The Moen police force has undergone many changes in the past year. It will continue to undergo many changes in the year ahead. The best way to describe the police force is to say that it is going through a period of experiment and change. So far the changes seem to have brought about good results. The police force is far from being perfect, and it still has many problems to resolve. However, it has changed and it seems that it will continue to do so in the future.

We would like to extend our gratitude to all civic Department Heads, Businessmen, Community, Police and Prisoners. And a special note of thanks to Chief Boisse Correa and Captain Marc Greenwell who generously helped us during our project.