



Cops on two wheels

Cannondale Cop searches streets for trouble

By Robert Richardson
Senior Reporter

ark and I met on our mountain bikes about 10 p.m. Tuesday, between O and P streets on Centennial Mall. Our plan was to look for trouble — anything out of the ordinary that didn't look quite right.

By 1 a.m., we had seen quite a bit of trouble that resulted in five confrontations and one arrest — and Mark said it was a slow night.

Mark is Lincoln Police Officer Mark Domangue, badge number 303 of the foot patrol division. He is commonly referred to as a Cannondale Cop.

Domangue became a commissioned officer in January of '78 and has been on the foot patrol division since 1987. Two years later, bicycles were introduced to the Lincoln police force. Domangue said the Cannondale bikes were a gift from a Lincoln business, Bike Pedalers, and a local radio station that helped coordinate donations and

fund raising.

The result was an increase in the popularity of the foot patrol division. According to Domangue, several officers that have applied to work the division in the past have been denied because of space limitations.

One of the main problems that concerns Domangue about his downtown route are the teen-agers who park along O Street between 17th and 27th streets. Domangue said there is no ordinance that prohibits them from "hanging out," but that some of the teens, litter and break bottles, which annoys business owners in the area.

That was to be our first stop. But en route to the area, Domangue noticed a group of transients hanging around Herm's Liquor Store, 1644 P St. We quickly biked down an alley and watched as they got their money together for a bottle of alcohol. Domangue figured they were on their way downtown to drink their bottle — and consuming alcohol in a public place is illegal.

We tailed the foursome — always at least a block behind — to an apartment at 18th and M streets, where Domangue questioned them. One member of the group, Anthony, walked away, and Domangue followed to question him. Domangue called the station to inquire about Anthony and found he had six outstanding arrest warrants ranging from consumption of alcohol on public property to assault.

As Anthony was being handcuffed to wait for a car ride downtown, he figured me to be a college student and addressed me in a drunken, toothless slur: "I hope your professor gives you an 'A,' then looking at Domangue, 'A' for asshole like you."

I witnessed this verbal abuse directed toward Domangue all night and wondered how he was able to ignore it and not take it personally, day after day.

"You just have to have patience," Domangue said. "A lot of patience." Another thing that helps Domangue

keep on the job is that he knows he's an effective part of the police force.

"I think it (having bikes) has helped tremendously," Domangue said. "For one thing, the officers are more interested in riding bikes downtown. We get around a lot faster than on foot and usually better off than a cruiser downtown, because of all the traffic and restrictions on a car."

But no matter how effective bikes are downtown, there are still a few things they just can't do, like carry a radar detector.

While riding down O Street, Domangue and I witnessed a motorcycle speeding down the street at more than 40 miles per hour. With Domangue unable to chase the rider, the unknown man never knew how close to being caught he was.

"There are times when a cruiser would come in handy," Domangue said.

At no time did Domangue show a hint of disgust for wrongdoers. He handled them all with respect and kept

his cool despite the adverse conditions he constantly faced. Domangue left most of his customers with smiles on their faces — all except Anthony.

"I like all the people I get to contact and talk with," Domangue said. "Some are negative and some are positive. I try to make more positive than negative. You know even when you have to write somebody a citation it doesn't have to be a real negative encounter."

In fact, Domangue said that having the opportunity to meet a lot of people is probably the best part of his job.

"I guess riding a bike and covering the area downtown and talking to all the people, watching the people, is a lot of fun," Domangue said.

Domangue's shift ended about 1:30 a.m. That is when the Cannondale Cop went back to the station and I went home.

I know the next time that I'm downtown I'll look over both shoulders before urinating in an alley.



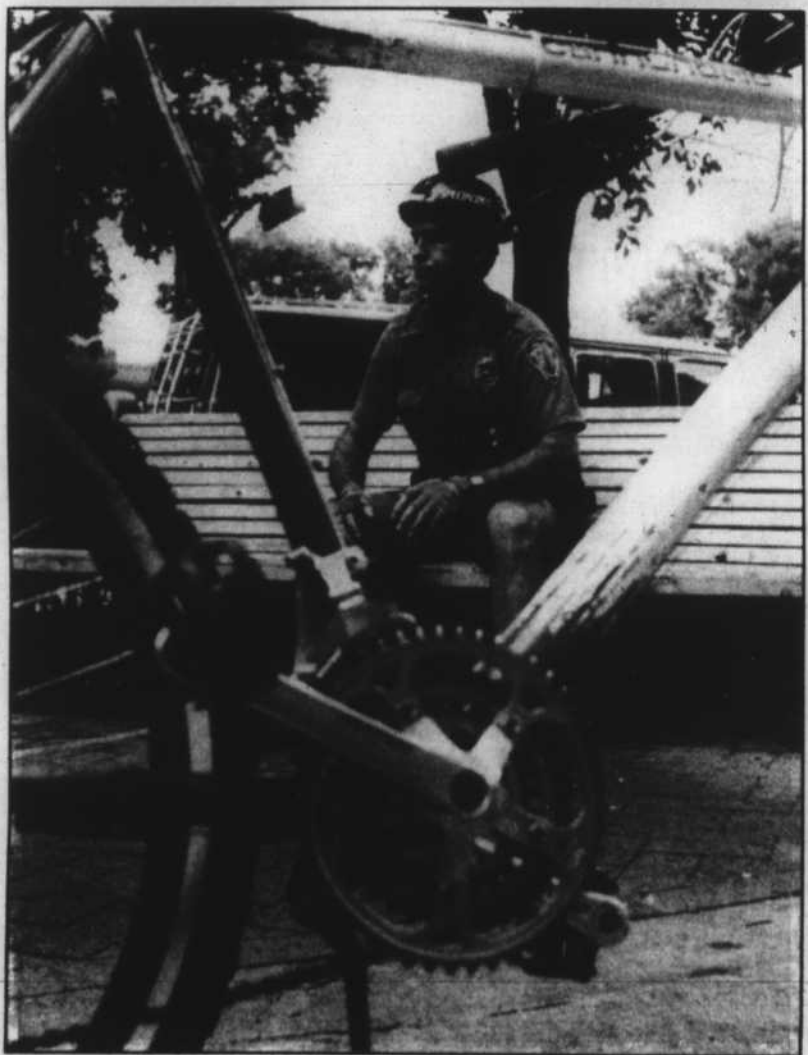
Clockwise from left: Domangue takes a break during the afternoon while on patrol in downtown. Domangue is one of six bike patrol officers.

plates Domangue discovered the motorcycle was stolen. The suspect was then arrested and a cruiser picked him up.

Officer Domangue watches O Street for anything out of the unusual.

Two unsuspecting pedestrians (who wished not to be identified) crossed the street against the light without realizing officer Domangue was waiting for them. They received a warning for the violation.

After pulling the suspect over for having no



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