

N E I G H B O R H O O D W A T C H T A L K # 1

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NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH IS A "WIN - WIN"

Through the persistent efforts of our local Block Captain we now have a Neighborhood Watch up and going in the Sutter St area, from Union Square, south to Tennessee Street at the 7/11 Store. We in our area are most appreciative of the initiative, persistence and dedication of Mr. Antonio Thomas.

We do not share the Mayor's "I feel helpless about crime on the streets, too" (01/22/88, City Hall). We do not share the Mayor's view that "There's very little can be done about daytime burglaries where everyone in the neighborhood goes to work." (City Council, Community Forum, 03/01/88). Insistence seems to be on discouraging the populace.

That "forever" den of drug dealers housed in the second floor of 1705 Sutter is currently pretty much cleared out since mid-February. We'll keep watching it. "The price of freedom (from drugs and crime) is eternal vigilance." Maybe we should run Chief Galvin for Congress.

It seems to me Neighborhood Watch Program is one of the best ways for the free and the self-governing people of our City to take matters into our own hands. So far City Council is not considering an ordinance to require us to have a permit to have a Neighborhood Block Watch. When and if that ever happens, we best show up en masse at City Hall to protest. Do not forget, we represent a very large voting block.

Since Maryjane Szalan, Vallejo Police Dept, telephone #s 648-4338 & 648-4397, first introduced us to Neighborhood Watch on 01/28/88 we have become much more skilled at working with the VPD, helping the police. AND their help to us has been real.

After two months of "trying", owner of 1710 Sutter has the traffic of the criminal element coming and going there into that apartment AND the basement presently controlled. That criminal group was the second tenant in a row dealing drugs out of that place. The owner has other rentals. 339 Illinois continues with its high volume of bodies in and out of the place.

We are becoming better at giving police the information they need in order to identify what we see, eg red jacket, white cap, heavy or light weight, bearded or not, gender, height, color of skin, color of shoes, etc. We are getting better at assisting them to identify who we have spotted, where we have seen the criminal continue to return as if to a stash, what part of their clothing we have seen them reach into, license plate numbers of "support" and repeated visit cars coming through.

Now we are working on identifying which houses these social vultures are using for their roosting perches. I recall mid-January one Saturday night about 1:00 AM a younger female no more than 19 years old, if that, in the middle of the heavy rain wanting to head into 739B Indiana (facing Reo Alley). Her black 6'-2" slender "supervisor" at the door was heard telling her to get back out on the street. She unquestioningly obeyed, rain, cold night and all. Now that is some kind of obedience.

1911-1915 Sutter and 1919 Sutter St remain rampantly, flagrantly criminally oriented and dominated, drug dealing volume undiminished to the eye of the passerby. Saturday 03/06/88, 3:45 PM, 1MZF633, new Corvette, Mexican male driver, 2 "NM" passengers, stopped center of street, arranging something with those on foot there. Several other witnessed events also personally recorded.

We now have 3 block watches & captains, neighbors actively observing, calling in to the Vallejo PD at 648-4321 when needed. A 4th group is being spawned and a 5th looks like it has been conceived. One added City streetlight is promised by City for heavily trafficked corner. "Neighborhood Watch" street signs are up.

Many of us have our local maps made and are using them. There are seven new sets of personal porch lights going every night and more coming. AND members of our watches, to date, have been out 3 times on neighborhood clean up walking "sweeps" of our street locally.

We are proud of our efforts to date but are not resting on any laurels. Our battle cry is "We have only barely begun to fight." We are getting to know each other by name and face, who belongs and who is transient. Some "telephone chains" are in place. On 030788 at 5:30 PM this writer was "met" at his backyard gate by a trio of NM faces new to the neighborhood; sitting, standing, as if waiting for the writer's arrival. I was closely watched and studied with a practiced and studied casualness. One had a face almost identical to Jesse Jackson, mustache and all, wearing a new blue nylon blazer, another kept his face averted, the third about 5'-8", 155 pounds, bushy narrow mouthed mustache. Oakland drug firms (Black Panther participants?) are not going to give up their Mare Island gold mine without some kind of a tussle. Multiple neighbors here are aware of the Oakland ring's

practice of dropping off carloads of "street dealer" kids for a day or so to peddle for them, shiny new cars and all. BUT this time my neighbor saw them and knows what they looked like, too. He watched them watching me. Three between 27 & 35, trim, fit looking. Business like in manner, neatly dressed.

Some of us have been intrigued to see if we could pick out some kind of design as to what is happening locally over the last few years. Looking at a map of our area for the places of high concentration of drug dealing we are impressed by the shape of the picture. Going from GVRD on Amador, north to Nebraska and the High School, then west including Union Square at the north end of Sutter and on the south, Washington Park on Ohio St, City Park facing Veterans Memorial Building, then west, there is a narrowing down at Branciforte and Tennessee. This forms an arrow pointed at the Tennessee entrance to Mare Island. The view of this area is best from the top of Coghlan St.

One local crime prevention resident reports personally writing down inside 3 weeks or so, the license numbers of 300 cars "shopping" around City Park a few months ago, EACH WITH A MARE ISLAND DECAL on bumper. Trusting, enthusiastic, perhaps a bit naive then, this list was shown to a Mare Island employee "friend" after 2 or 3 particular police were not interested. This Mare Islander, "friend" that he was, turned very enthusiastic when this unduplicated list was shown to him. "Here, let me have it. I want to show it to the authorities on Mare Island." The list, however, instead "got lost forever", never was returned to the maker. It appears to have been swallowed up and disappeared into the caverns of the Island. This reminds me of a Mare Island civilian work force saying: "The drug use reporters don't work there any more." Then the question is: Only the drug users stay on? What is the priority of missions on Mare Island? Submarines? Nuclear missiles? Drugs? Protecting the users?

Some of us attended the two hour presentation by members of the Washington Park Neighborhood Association to City Council on 01/05/88. This was about their troubles with the criminal elements that hang out around their area. Some excellent deliveries. Two elements stood out:

- 1) The spokesmen for the Association in their demands, gained agreement from the City Council to look into shutting down business hours for stores in the area of Tennessee and Sutter.
- 2) City Council response was to de-emphasize Crime Prevention, mentioning it as if in passing; use of the words "NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH" were not heard by this writer. This form of Council response was quite similar to that given to some residents from our area almost a year earlier. I had not known about the Neighborhood Watch Program until our own Paul Revere brought the message into our neighborhood. Then I got a hold of a friend who

had spoken in similar despair to City Council about 1-1/2 years ago. That friend told me Neighborhood Watch is up and going AND NOW street events are in decent control where he lives. City Council just does not seem able to communicate effectively about the reality AND effectiveness of "Neighborhood Watch Programs." It is, so far, as if the phrase "Neighborhood Watch Programs" were not on the approved City Hall list of terms to be used in public.

Again, back to the 01/05/88 City Council meeting, while the names of the 2 sworn officers in the prevention unit of VPD were given, there was not one single mention of "Maryjane Szalan", longtime police assistant known throughout our neighborhoods as one of our most valued resources in the VPD. In fact, I do not recall her name ever being mentioned as a source of real help by anyone on City Council. To this writer, it would seem like a natural for the Washington Park Association to get active in this program and get the benefits from it. Both Cimarron Hills and City Park Area to mention only two, have found this program most useful for themselves, improving the conditions on their streets, safety in their homes and therefore the value of their property. Springs Road out by Springstowne Junior High School looks like it would be a real challenger to those people, BUT does not look insurmountable, at least to this writer.

Shutting down businesses and business hours can only favor the criminal elements. Drug dealers want the lights off. So too, do those from Mare Island buying their drugs want these lights off.

On the commercial side of events, as compared to residential, Lieutenant Paul Lindemann of VPD Crime Suppression, telephone #648-4616, met with a small group of business owners and residents from around Tennessee and Sutter on 2/26/1988. Attending were 2 of 3 emissaries from the Washington Park Neighborhood Association. So at least one trio there knows about the NHW Program. Officer Phil Jordan of Crime Prevention, telephone #648-4344, also met with some of the same business people on 03/04/1988. Looks like the blocks adjacent to the 600 block of Tennessee Street businesses are going to join up with "Commercial Watch." 600 block of Tennessee is more "civilized" at this point in time.

One last item from Neighborhood Watch talk. We heard again something most of us already knew but had forgotten we could use to our personal ethical and anti-crime advantage: THE OWNERSHIP OF PROPERTY AND REAL ESTATE IS PUBLIC INFORMATION. You don't know who owns a house? Call County Assessor Office, Fairfield, 429-6474. Tell them you are from a Neighborhood Watch Program, Vallejo and need to know the ownership of a piece of property and where and to whom the tax bill is sent. They probably will not balk. If they do, then GET THE NAME of the person you are talking to and then talk it up around

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your Area, in your block. Tell your Area Coordinator or get the name and telephone number of another area and ask around until you do find someone who knows how to get the assessor's office personnel to respond with the information. Don't forget! The people in the County Assessors Office have the data available to pull up on computer screens right there in their office. Generally, once you have established contact with someone there, you can just ask for your contact, tell them who you are and what you want. Be reasonable when you talk to them. Blechschmidt's Office has a lot of other things to do.

Public Information:

We know who the owner of record is of 339 Illinois. Take a look at it! We know who the owner of record is of 1710 Sutter. Take a look at it! After two months, the trash "neatly" piled up against the backyard alley fence at 1710 Sutter is finally gone. For 7 weeks it did not seem to get any farther than inside against the fence. Garbage trucks came and went on their regular weekly pick ups. Trash stayed "safely" INSIDE the fence. Safely guarded from the garbage man?

Second floor of 1705 Sutter used to have a flock of "drugheads" hanging out there. Not now for 4 weeks. We know who owns it and which Vallejo Real Estate firm "manages" that property, who does the screening of those rental applicants. One property owner I know owns over 150 other rentals in town. But one fourplex in a high drug sales area? He tells us he just cannot seem to get it under control. He assures us he's trying. Yes, sometimes those who "are trying", get to be very trying to the rest of us. How can you have 150 rentals and not recognize trouble?

We in our neighborhood south of Union Square in the Sutter St. area down to the 7/11 Store on Tennessee St. are pooling our information about those landlords and real estate personnel who have participated in these rentings. DO NOT FORGET property ownership is PUBLIC INFORMATION. Once the landlord has been identified from public records you can call up his property managers to notify them of your Neighborhood Watch's concerns. Find out who you are talking to there, who they name as being the responsible person to contact in that firm.

I would encourage each Neighborhood Watch Area in Vallejo to begin to compile its own Register of houses sheltering the criminal elements. These lists from each area can then be brought together.

There is no legitimate reason why a city wide VALLEJO "REGISTRY of HOUSES OF SANCTUARY FOR ELEMENTS OF CRIMINAL ENTERPRISES" (Vallejo HOSFECES REGISTER) can not be established and maintained by our voluntary group. It can be mutually shared among all the NEIGHBORHOOD

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WATCHES throughout Vallejo. I am sure some very interesting patterns will begin to emerge. Yes there might be static from officialdom, BUT if they did object who would they really be protecting? The drugs and thugs in Vallejo may have some form of highly placed protection in order for crime to continue to flourish. Local housing for the criminal element is one of their Achilles Heels we can take aim at.

"Neighborhood Watch Talk" welcomes comments from others in Vallejo.

Call me at 643-6611. Write: F H Ernst Jr. MD, P O Box 3009, Vallejo.