




Late-night shenanigans

A NIGHT ON THE TOWN WITH CAMPUS 5-0



T

he police. You see them every day, driving, walking, or even biking around town. You see them on TV, and quite likely, you know one or two personally. They represented everything you wanted to be as a kid and everything you hated as an underage teenager with a bottle of booze in your hand. However, despite the consistent presence of the police in our lives, beyond our experiences with the occasional traffic ticket or free ride downtown, very few of us actually know anything about them or the job they do.

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When given the opportunity to tag along with Campus Security Services (CSS) for an evening, it was the unknown aspect of their job that made me say yes. Although initially nervous about the idea of spending six hours with the campus police—feelings only aggravated by the two traffic tickets I received in August alone—Ryan and I marched into Campus Security's office nonetheless.

Surprisingly, the offices aren't nearly as intimidating as expected. Wood-paneled walls and framed pictures make it look more like Archie Bunker's rec-room than the Big House. This tameness, in keeping with the general public view of peace officers as little more than "rent-a-cops," is only reinforced by the two spartan cells deeper in the office.

Although still fitted with heavy prison doors and only a hard bench for furniture, they house bikes and equipment, not crazed criminals.

"We now mostly use them for storage," explains Jesse Howey, a U of A grad in criminology and our officer and guide for the first two hours of the night.

Any pre-conceived notions I may have brought into the experience are dashed when Jerry Donahue, the supervisor on duty when we first showed up, explains just how big Campus Security's job really is.

"We have about 30 patrol officers for 36 000 students," Donahue says. "Many places in the US would have 200–300 officers for the same number of people."

CSS has a big job, responsible for an area that spans from Saskatchewan Drive to University Avenue, 110–116 Street, and all the University's lands across the city. This job is only going to get bigger in the future, with the expansion of the LRT south to the University Farm, and the University's recent acquisition of the old Bay Building (now Enterprise Square) downtown.

However, few of the officers seem all that concerned about the upcoming expansion. This may be due to the extensive training and experience most of them have. Although unable to charge people under the criminal code—as peace officers, they're limited to traffic violations and other minor offences such as public drunkenness—all CSS officers undergo 50 hours of yearly safety

training, and carry defensive batons.

Though this level of training may seem excessive to some, all it takes to understand is a look at CSS's display of confiscated weapons. Like an inventory from the early levels of *Grand Theft Auto*, it contains all the weapons a violent criminal could desire: knives, crowbars, and of course, baseball bats, just to name a few from their very wide selection.

Once thoroughly briefed on the ins and outs of CSS, it was time for me to jump into the car with Officer Howey—and after that little display of weapons, we were ready for some COPS-style action.

Although little happens in this phase of the night—our only stop was for one woman going the wrong way down the one-way bus lane on 114 Street—two important lessons are learned. One, the flashing red and blue of a police car is way more exciting from inside the car, even if it's just for a routine traffic stop. And two, the back seat of a cop car is *not* made for comfort.

Although I ride in style in the shotgun seat next to Officer Howey, Ryan is forced to endure the less-than-ergonomic comforts of the back. Furnished with a molded plastic seat and drains in the floor in case of blood, urine, or Listerite vomit, your worry if you get arrested shouldn't be the upcoming charges, but whether you'll ever feel your ass again after the ride to the station.

Once in the car, Officer Howey explains what we might expect for the night. "We're the first response to everything, from giving first aid to helping people locked out of their office and responding to fire alarms," he says.

Much to my disappointment, he notes that most crime was property-related and usually committed by people not affiliated to the University, meaning that I had little chance to see any classmates getting busted. Suddenly, I start thinking the night will turn out to be more like *To Serve and Protect*.

But just then, we drive by the Delta Kappa Epsilon ("Deke") frat house. A party called "Drink for Charity" was in full swing, and despite common knowledge that frats are lame, I hope that this party is an exception.

Once again, Officer Howey unknowingly destroys those dreams.

"The Dekes are the [biggest] party frat, but we don't usually have to deal with the frats at all," he explains. "Besides, they're off University property, so we can't enforce there."

By 10pm, when the shifts change, there haven't been any disturbances on campus, save for the lost mom driving the wrong way on a one-way. However, at parade, the nightly briefing for the incoming night shift, Ryan and I are given reason to get excited again.

After meeting the officers who make up E Section—one of five shifts of CSS—and being introduced to Sgt Marcel Roth, our escort for the rest of the night, the events of the previous week are reviewed and some interesting numbers brought up:

- 2 B&Es that had been committed since the previous weekend.
- 1 former SU President that was banned from campus.
- 2 robberies committed—one just off Whyte and the other on campus and involving a student whose cellphone was stolen and arm broken.