

inside car 901

Pittsburgh cops have made national headlines recently with their "handling" of demonstrations by black groups demanding construction jobs. Some white construction workers have even been convinced that the police were protecting their jobs. But, like always, the pigs were just protecting the bosses. This article shows how the cops handle white kids in Pittsburgh who step out of the very narrow lines set up for them.

Chris Tillam is a local filmmaker. He recently spent five weeks riding police patrol cars in Pittsburgh.

by Chris Tillam

WELCOME TO PITTSBURGH - NATIONAL POTHOLE CAPITAL - bumper sticker

Pittsburgh is divided into nine police districts: the largest is District Nine. District Nine is bounded on the east by a bank of slaughterhouses, on the west by the prison and sewage plant; the cobble streets in the ravines are lined with liver-brick and dank timber tenements, with funeral parlors and abandoned churches. Nine is a part of the old Pittsburgh, and old Pittsburgh - Steel City - was interred ten years ago by the city fathers and the Mellons. A "Pittsburgh Renaissance" is shaping the city into a headquarters for corporations, medical research and higher education - none of which plans have much relevance for the people in District Nine.

On the north side, there's 901 and 904 - I can't get enough calls to those cars. District Nine Inspector. The rest of the cars you can keep, but in my book, those boys can do no wrong... They're good policemen.

The "good policeman" is a hunter; he makes arrests. If there are no arrests to be made, he will sit on an intersection and write traffic tickets. If traffic is light, he'll comb back alleys for stolen cars. He will pick up drunks, move the kids off the corner, go around the block and move them off again. He will quell a domestic argument by threatening arrest. His business is making arrests. And within the limits imposed by sharp lawyers and soft judges, he will turn those arrests into convictions in court.

4pm
Flashlights?
Two.

Shotgun? Yeah. They fix them brakes? Tom, they're self-adjusting. Yeah. These new Fords ain't worth a shit. 901 checks out before leaving the station. Take a run up Perry and East - I got my eye on them kids.

901 is engaged in a campaign against the white teenagers in their sector; they have a specific hunting-license in the form of a letter from a number of residents of the Woods Run and Perry St. areas, complaining of teenage drinking. The crew is the biggest and reputedly the toughest in the station. At first, they suspect the film crew of being spies from the brass. Later, they relax and talk. It isn't often that they have an audience.

One thing, John (the cameraman) - ya don't take this job home with you. I been on the force fifteen years, and I tell you, it's the only way. The minute you walk out the station, forget it. Eight hours a day's enough - more'n enough for most men...

At the end of the shift, Appitsch takes off his belt, puts on a sports shirt and tucks a small revolver in his hip pocket.

I come over here on a Saturday, buy lobster down on East Ohio. Couple of weeks back, I'm coming out of this place with both arms full, and there's six of these young punks standing around. They know me. I put down three of the lobsters and take out the gun - walk past 'em, don't even look at 'em. My wife reaches out of the car and takes the lobsters. I walk back in, pick up the other three, and walk through 'em again. Nobody says nothing - not a word... Ya don't take chances in this game. They're punks, the lot o' them, but ya don't take no chances.

Appitsch speaks slowly and with venom. He will not subscribe to the common philosophy - with which many policemen confront the limitations on law enforcement - of, "you can't win 'em all." Any lawlessness within the district Appitsch takes as a personal affront.

These kids, they got no respect for nothing. For nobody. You know what they call me? - APE-itsch...

Come from good homes, too... Ya see that school? Every fucking window in that building's been broke. Every fucking window. And ya can't catch 'em - they'll be gone before you get the call... 901.

901, go ahead. Go to Woods Run and Brighton; a disorderly gang. 901 received.

Near the intersection, at the top of a hill, stands an abandoned movie-house. The last posters have rotted away long ago, and the boarded doors are covered with graffiti. Most hours of the day, the steps and ticket booth are occupied by teenagers, sitting with bottles of pop and a radio. It is a forlorn scene.

901 slows to a stop. Looking straight ahead, Appitsch puts his arm out the window and jerks his thumb, once.

The kids stare resentfully. **Get Going.** They get up slowly. A couple of them are



grinning. *You, and you - go home. And the rest of you, get lost. Move!* They saunter off, and 901 moves on. **Wait a minute Bill. Back up... There!** *Ya see that?*

Above the ticket booth, in heavy black letters, is a new inscription: **901 SUCKS**

There is also an elaborate drawing of 901 with a neanderthal cop mousting "Duh... duh... duh... Move on!"

901 doubles back, does another U-turn, and double parks in front of a part of the former gang. Appitsch jerks his head; a straight-faced youth comes to the car.

You tell the one that did that, if I find him I'll crucify him. Spread the word - I'll crucify him.

The radio is a dominating presence. **751, Homestead and Bush, a man down. 751 received.** **What five car can go to Terman and Bles-**

sing, a fight in a bar?

502. 523's going. 502,523,804? 804. 804, 150 Climax - a bad domestic.

The radio is a conditioning device. It isolates the men in the car from the scene outside; it is the voice of authority. No call can be ignored. It is the source of life - in its periods of silence, cars all over the city click their mike-switches to make sure that the world is still on the air.

901 is moving north through Manchester, the black neighborhood in District Nine. Appitsch reaches his gun out of its holster, and puts it in the glove compartment.

We don't patrol Manchester no more. 901's patrol sector was changed to a white neighborhood - where their heavy-handed style is still, for the present, tolerated. Perry and East looks much like Woods Run and Brighton: the kids here sit on

the steps of a pizza parlor. 901 double-parks. Appitsch stands in front of the kids, hands on hips. *I told you enough.* The kids sit, silent and resigned.

Call a wagon. A couple of girls peer out of the shop. Ya wanna go to jail too? . . . Then get lost.

Waiting for the wagon, Appitsch contemplates his captives with contempt. The wagon arrives, they file in - the frisk turning up one small pen-knife - and are driven off to be booked for loitering.

There is a departmental policy against making arrests for loitering; this appears to be outside Appitsch's world view. Nor does it matter that these kids are being punished for someone else's non-crime - the account for the "901" signs is now squared.

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Pittsburgh cops on a busier day.

OLD MOLE

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MISS AMERICA
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SEPTEMBER 13 - 26

p.5 MISS AMERICA

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**BLUE CROSS/
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AMBASSADORS 6**

IRELAND

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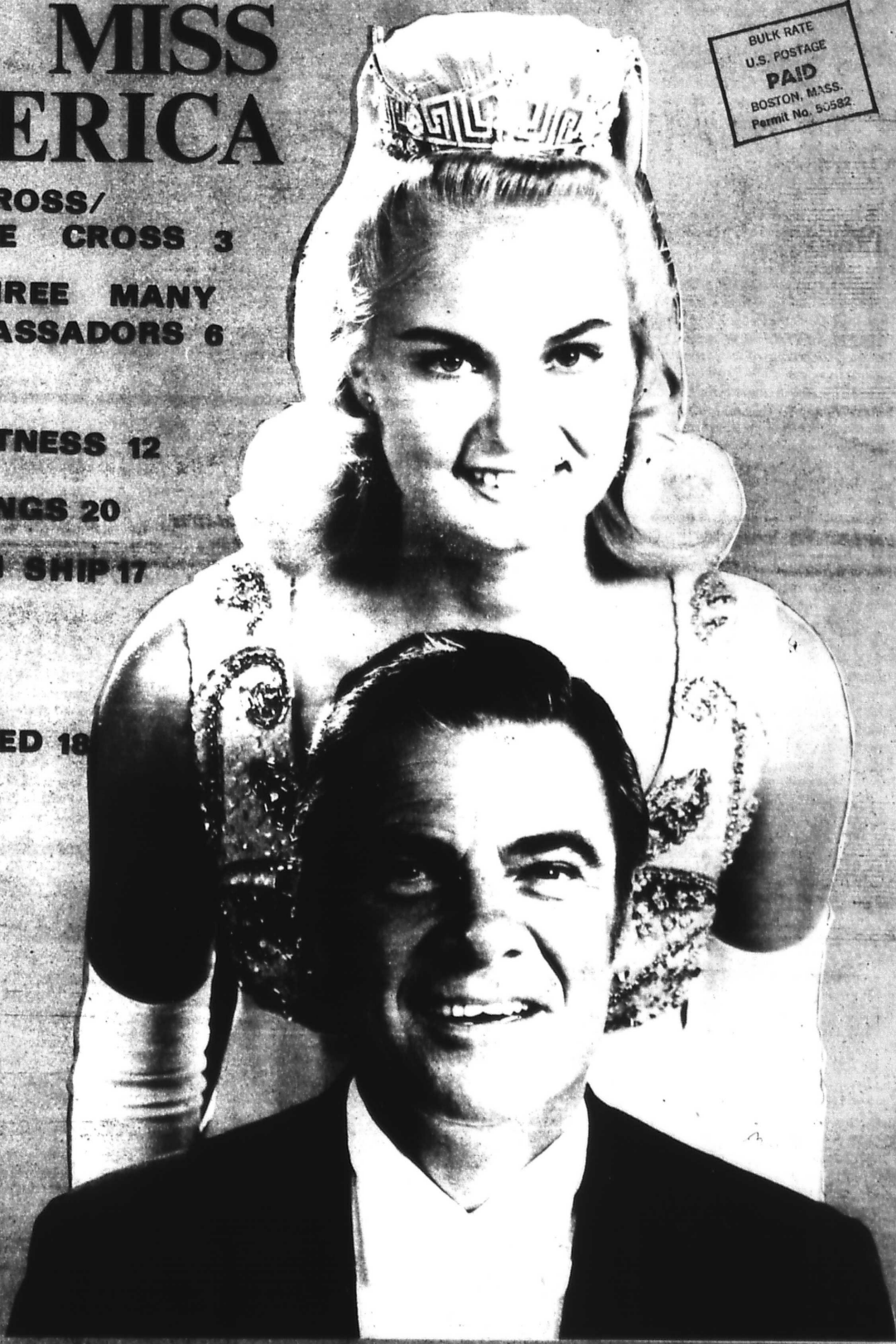
HAPPENINGS 20

ABANDON SHIP 17

MEN

**DON'T
GET**

RAPED 18



Date: 2020-10-23 10:09

From: crog52@oracletelecom.net.au

Attachments

[Tillam1969_Inside901.pdf](#)

(~3.3 MB)

To: info@der.org

Dear staff at Documentary Educational Resources,

Herewith two matters concerning the credits for this series:

please correct my credit to "Chris Tillam" (see attached pdf);

and

I request that you include Dennis Sweeney as camera assistant.

In the summer of 1969 Dennis and myself worked on what became *Three Domestics*, *Inside/Outside Station Nine*, and *901/904* and possibly others: I haven't viewed the whole series.

You could verify Dennis' participation with Connie Field: Connie was his girlfriend at this time. She visited us in Pittsburgh during a weekend off filming.

I appreciate that Dennis has been persona non grata: but he has served his time and has apparently recovered his mind. John would not have had the quick changes he needed if D. had not mastered, among simultaneous other tasks, the knack of loading Eclair coax magazines with the requisite loop of extra frames--I forget how many.

Still in your archives and maybe worth resurrecting... the footage of a building search, shot during a rebroadcast of the moon landing.

Trusting this finds you all well and vote-ready.

|

Best wishes,

Chris Tillam
Bundanoon 2578