Excuses, Excuses

A Chevy Chase Policeman Recalls Some Strange People, Funny Excuses, and Awful Drivers

By JOHN W. HOFFMAN

For more than six years I worked as a police officer for Chevy Chase Village. One of our daily duties was enforcing traffic laws along a 3,050-foot section of Connecticut Avenue, which meant there was always something to do.

My first impression of Montgomery County was that everyone was in a hurry and nobody obeyed traffic laws. I quickly learned that if I was the first car at a red light, I should count to three after the light went green to allow all the red-light runners to clear the intersection.

In Missouri, where I lived before moving to Washington, cops would begin writing speeding tickets after motorists were clocked at 10 mph above the speed limit. If the 10-mph rule had been used in Montgomery County, it often seemed that most motorists would have had to be stopped.

In Chevy Chase Village I normally would give people 20 mph over the limit on Connecticut Avenue. In 1995, as a captain on the police force, I lowered that margin to 18 mph.

Many people complained that the 30-mph limit was too low from Chevy Chase Circle north. However, between Chevy Chase Circle and Bradley Lane, the lanes are only 8 feet and 9 feet wide, compared with the normal 12 feet.

We often worked accidents involving bus and truck side mirrors striking other vehicles. Along with the narrow lanes, the number of hidden driveways, side streets,

and stopped motorists waiting to make left turns all would make a speed limit above 30 mph unsafe.

Maryland Highway Administration traffic counts show that almost 50,000 vehicles a day travel down Connecticut Avenue into DC. In 1995, 175 auto accidents occurred along the 3,050 feet of Connecticut Avenue between Bradley Lane and Chevy Chase Circle. To put that number into perspective, Virginia highway officials recently issued a warning of dangerous conditions along Route 28 after 93 accidents occurred in one year on a 23-mile section of the road.

After six years I had written more than 4,000 traffic tickets along Connecticut Avenue and nearby side streets. The most common excuses offered by speeding motorists:

“I’m late.”

“I wasn’t paying attention.”

“I’m not from around here.”

“I was just keeping up with the flow of traffic.”

There are other excuses all cops get tired of hearing. They include:

“I know you just have to meet your quota. That’s right. Five more tickets and I get a new toaster.

“You’re just raising revenue.” All money from speeding tickets in Maryland goes to the state’s general fund and not to the communities where the tickets are written.

If you ever drove too fast on Connecticut Avenue, you might have met John Hoffman, a Chevy Chase Village police captain.

“You’re stopping me because I’m driving an expensive car.” This is usually heard from Porsche 911 drivers traveling slightly under the sound barrier when stopped.

Also high on the excuse list were people who believed that when they were clocked by a laser beam at night from 1,000 feet up the street, I could clearly see who they were and was stopping them because of their race.

The “You’re stopping me because I’m a....
(fill in any ethnic group)” complaint was used even by whites, who would claim they were being singled out because the police were afraid to ticket minorities. The motto in traffic enforcement is that police react to “actions, not actors.”

Drivers who would claim they were speeding because they needed to go to the bathroom would rarely accept my offers to take them to a nearby public restroom. Crying is another ploy used during the traffic stop. I would always ticket criers after I overheard a woman at a party brag that she got out of a ticket by crying.

Sometimes an attractive woman’s blouse would have way too many buttons open. I always wrote attractive women tickets on the theory that at least three other cops had already let them go.

The worst traffic violators to deal with are people who have absolutely no excuse, so they have to attack you verbally. We had several streets with DO NOT ENTER and NO TURN signs liberally placed to try to stop people from using residential streets to avoid traffic on Connecticut and Wisconsin avenues. Drivers would stop at the signs, look down the street in search of a police car, and then proceed. When we would step out from a driveway to flag them over, the abuse would start.

Southbound motorists on Connecticut Avenue would pass 11 “30 mph” speed-limit signs, starting at East-West Highway, before being clocked speeding. Then they’d say they didn’t know what the speed limit was.

Here is a sample of the dangerous drivers, people who refuse to accept responsibility, and just plain-unsual folks I dealt with for six years along that 3,050-foot section of road.

Tuesday, November 20, 1990, 10:51 PM: A Virginia motorist driving a Lincoln was stopped for speeding at 54 mph. I was completing a warning ticket that carried no fine or points when the driver came back to the police car and demanded he be given a warning. I tore up the warning and issued him a $45 citation.

Thursday, December 13, 10:33 PM: An intoxicated 60-year-old Bethesda woman was stopped after she was observed driving 15 mph and weaving into the curb for more than four blocks. Once stopped, she at first refused to get out of her car and then demanded to be driven home since she hadn’t hit anybody. She admitted to having two-and-a-half glasses of white wine at a private club’s Christmas party. A breath test showed that her blood-alcohol content (BAC) was .26 percent, or more than twice the legal limit of .10 percent.

Friday, March 8, 1991, 10:11 AM: A woman driving a new BMW was stopped for speeding at 51 mph. She said she really couldn’t pay attention to her speed because she was trying to dial her new cellular phone.

Monday, March 25, 12:14 AM: The driver of a Jeep Cherokee was stopped for going 61 mph in the 30-mph zone. He denied speeding, saying he would not speed because his young son, sleeping in the passenger seat, was in the car. When I returned with the $255 ticket, he said it was a “racist thing” and that he didn’t speed because he was a churchgoer. Unfortunately, he wasn’t a courtgoer, and his privilege to drive in Maryland is still suspended.

Sunday, April 7, 12:05 AM: The driver of a mint-condition 1971 DATSU 240Z was stopped for doing 50 mph in a 30-mph zone. I was writing him a warning when he walked back to the police car and complained about how unfair it was since he hadn’t had a ticket in seven years. I asked him if he wanted me to tear up what I had just written. He replied that he did. I tore up the warning and issued him a $45 citation.

Friday, April 20, 9:09 AM: A Silver Spring man was clocked at 55 mph for blocks north of Chevy Chase Circle. As soon as he saw the police car, he slammed on his brakes, causing the car to fishtail. Once he was pulled over, motorists for the next 60 seconds slowed, honked, pointed at the driver, and applauded. Upon seeing their gle, the driver commented, “Some people drive too damn slow on Connecticut!”

Saturday, April 27, 1:56 AM: A 20-year-old Silver Spring woman was stopped for speeding at 59 mph. As she looked for her license, she flipped past a New York driver’s license in her wallet. It turned out to belong to her sister, who was over 21. When I seized the New York license, she said her sister needed it back for sentimental reasons.

Wednesday, May 15, 11:18 PM: The driver of a white Lincoln limo was stopped after he was observed driving north on Connecticut at 40 mph while two female passengers sat on the roof with their legs dangling through the moon roof. As I pulled the limo over, both women slid back into the passenger compartment. The limo driver was issued a “Negligent Driving” ticket.

Saturday, May 18, 1:56 AM: An intoxicated Hispanic waiter was clocked at 67 mph as he weaved north on Connecticut. When he was stopped, he spoke English. But when he was asked to take sobriety tests, he could not longer speak or understand English. He was arrested for DWI and began to fight when I was handcuffing him. As I held him down on the hood of the police car and applied the handcuffs, he suddenly spoke perfect, although slurred, English and informed me that his sister was a lawyer and would get my ass.

Thursday, June 6, 1991, 12:27 AM: The driver of an Acura was clocked at 57 mph as he crossed south on Connecticut talking on a cellular phone. When he was stopped he said he had been out “whoring” but had not “gotten laid” all night and was now speeding to get to a prostitute’s apartment in DC as she gave him directions over the phone.

Saturday, June 8, 1:05 AM: A Gaithersburg man was clocked at 61 mph driving his sister’s car as she sat in the passenger seat. He said he was driving because he couldn’t stand how slowly she drove.

Sunday, June 9, 3:30 AM: A recent immigrant was stopped for speeding at 53 mph. He was very intoxicated and kept saying, “In my country drink beer and have fun!” He was arrested and taken to a Montgomery County District Police Station where he repeated, “In my country drink beer and have fun. America no good.” His BAC level was .21 percent.

Saturday, June 15, 1:51 PM: The driver of a Mustang muscle car was clocked at 54 mph. The driver denied doing 54 mph and said, “I was only pushing 50.” I had written him a citation using a reduced charge, which lowered the fine from $105 to $45 and cut the points from two to one. I explained to him that I was giving him a break. He interrupted me and said, “If you were giving me a break, you never would have pulled me over. You just want to stop the hot rod, huh? Why don’t you go out and stop some of these Volvos?” And I told him myself and rewrote the citation with the higher fine and points.

Monday, July 1, 12:55 AM: A Silver Spring man was clocked doing 60 mph in the 30 zone four blocks north of Chevy Chase Circle. The driver said he was speeding because he was lost. Believe it or not, this is a very common excuse.

Friday, July 19, 11:40 PM: A 34-year-old woman driving a sports car at 61 mph had
unbuttoned the entire front of her summer dress, exposing her breasts, when I first talked with her. When I returned with the ticket, her dress had been rebuttoned.

THURSDAY, AUGUST 15, 12:31 PM: A woman driving a new Acura was stopped for speeding at 54 mph. When told her her speed, she replied, “I know. I was just enjoying having a car with acceleration after driving a Toyota Tercel for the last nine years.”

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 21, 7:16 PM: A man who had been stopped speeding in an Alfa Spider sports car said he was late for a performance at the Kennedy Center and urged me to “hurry up” and write him the speeding ticket.

THURSDAY, AUGUST 29, 3:30 PM: A Howard County physician driving a Mercedes-Benz was stopped after being clocked at 48 mph going through the Bradley Lane intersection. He said he had been doing only 38 and then handed me a $50 bill with his license. After returning the fifty, I ran a computer check and found his license was suspended. He watched from the sidewalk, in 94-degree heat, as his Mercedes was towed to an impoundment lot.

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 13, 1991, 5:27 PM: A Chevy Chase woman was stopped for speeding. She asked me if I was a Montgomery County officer or a Chevy Chase Village officer. When I told her I was a Chevy Chase officer, she said, “Whew, I was afraid I’d get a ticket if you were a county officer, but I’m a Chevy Chase Village resident.” She was promptly issued a speeding ticket.

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 6, 3:47 PM: A 73-year-old woman informed me that I couldn’t give her a ticket because she lived in Chevy Chase. She left with a speeding ticket, a “No Seat Belt” ticket and a “Refused to Sign a Citation” ticket.

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 13, 3:48 PM: A man stopped for 55 mph said he had just sped up so he could show his girlfriend how to downshift to slow a car down instead of using the brake.

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 2, 6:23 AM: A tow-truck driver stopped for doing 60 mph told me I shouldn’t give him a ticket because he works at the gas station that fixes the flat tires on our police cars.

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 2, 6:45 AM: A newspaper carrier whom I had cited for causing an auto accident a month earlier was stopped for doing 55 mph. When I walked up to his car he handed me a paper and said he was happy to give me a “nice New York Times.” I handed the paper back and gave him a “nice speeding citation.”

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 9, 2 AM: I stopped an intoxicated Kensington man for lane weaving. His license was still suspended.

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for failing to take a breath test during a DWI arrest earlier in the year. At the station, he again refused to take a breath test. I completed the paperwork that would revoke his license for one year for a second breath-test refusal. I left the room to get another form and returned to find all my paperwork missing and a large bulge in the man’s pants. The paperwork was recovered from his jeans. It was his third DWI arrest.

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 1, 12:35 AM: A woman driving a rental car was stopped for driving 60 mph. When I first talked with her, the woman’s blouse was open, exposing her breasts. She did not have a drivers license or her rental papers. She was ordered out of the car, and it was searched in an attempt to find ownership or rental papers. I found several thousand dollars in $100 bills in her purse and numerous condoms and several vibrators in the trunk. She admitted to an assisting officer that she was an out-call prostitute and was late for an appointment at a DC hotel. She finally found a valid Pennsylvania drivers license in a hidden compartment in her purse. The car’s rental papers were in the trunk. She was released after being issued traffic tickets for speeding and failing to display a license upon demand.

MONDAY, DECEMBER 23, 12:53 AM: A Japanese diplomat was stopped for doing 51 mph. The Christmas spirit overcame me, and I had written out a warning and was explaining it to him. He refused to sign the warning ticket, as it was after midnight and the police shouldn’t bother people so late at night. He was then issued a speeding citation and a seat-belt ticket, for which he signed.

FRIDAY, JANUARY 17, 1992, 2:35 PM: By this time we were using a laser speed gun, which is more accurate than radar and could clock cars half a mile away. One of my first “laser” tickets went to a DC lawyer driving a Porsche, who was clocked 2,108 feet north of Chevy Chase Circle. The man had his window down and was arguing before I could say, “Good afternoon.” The man then admitted he had received another speeding ticket an hour earlier from a state trooper.

SUNDAY, MARCH 15, 9:52 AM: A Bethesda woman took the multiple-excuse route when she was stopped for going 61 mph. She explained that she had never had a ticket before, was driving a friend’s car and wasn’t used to it, didn’t usually drive on Connecticut Avenue, had left her license in a purse at home, and wasn’t wearing a seat belt because she wasn’t in “her” car. She left with three citations. She had pleaded guilty to a DWI two years earlier. Saturday, April 11, 12:17 AM: A 31-year-old Burtonsville woman was stopped for 55 mph. She was clearly intoxicated but claimed she was sober as she had had only four beers. It was her second DWI arrest, and her BAC was .15 percent. While she was failing her sobriety tests, she demanded to know why I wasn’t out arresting real criminals. Gee, some people actually think they’ve said something we cops have never heard before. For 20 years my response to this has been, “Because there are so many more speeders and drunk drivers, and you’re much easier to catch than criminals.” A friend of mine who was a DC police officer would go one step further and tell people, “Are you crazy? Those criminals and bank robbers have guns.”

SATURDAY, APRIL 18, 2:18 PM: A Bethesda man stopped for speeding exited his car, introduced himself as a lawyer (almost always an automatic ticket), and apologized for speeding, adding that he wasn’t paying attention as he was talking on his car phone with his grandmother about how well Ben Crenshaw was doing in the Masters golf tournament.

MONDAY, APRIL 20, 8:58 PM: A 31-year-old Potomac man was stopped for doing 58. He excitedly yelled that he was a doctor and was rushing to an emergency at the hospital. I asked, “What hospital?” He paused and said, “Sibley.” I replied, “Sorry, you’re going the wrong direction for Sibley.” A $105 ticket was issued.

SUNDAY, MAY 10, 7:21 PM: I was driving around Chevy Chase Circle when a 35-year-old Brooklyn woman barreled through two YIELD signs on Connecticut directly into my path. I had to lock up the brakes on the police car to avoid broadsiding her. Despite having passed flashing warning lights, two warning signs proclaiming that YIELD signs were ahead, and two giant YIELD signs, the woman cursed me and said I couldn’t give her a ticket because it was Mother’s Day and she had her mother in the car.

MONDAY, MAY 11, 3:14 PM: The wife of an Irish diplomat was stopped after being clocked by a laser beam 600 feet away from where I was standing doing 50 mph. She denied speeding, saying that she was only keeping up with traffic, that she was late picking up her kids, and that the only reason she had been stopped was because her car had diplomatic plates. You can’t convince people that it is impossible to make out license plates that are more than a block away. As she signed her ticket, she said she hoped I would be treated better by the police in Dublin.

WEDNESDAY, MAY 13, 1:45 PM: A Wheaton man who had been clocked doing 49 mph inside the “reduce speed” zone before Chevy Chase Circle demanded to know how I knew he was speeding, since he was passing other cars. Because the laser beam at 1,000 feet is only three feet in width, compared with 300 feet for a radar beam, laser guns allow us to pick out specific cars in traffic. The more softly I spoke, the louder he got. He eventually demanded to know where my nightstick was and when I was going to start beating him like Rodney King, I told him I was concerned for his safety, that I didn’t want him to get hurt, and asked why he hadn’t been wearing his seat belt. He shouted, “Why don’t you go ahead and charge me for that too?” I did.

TUESDAY, JUNE 2, 1992, 6:28 PM: As I issued a speeding ticket to a man in a new Acura Legend, his wife leaned across to inform me that I was ticketing Barbara Bush’s plastic surgeon.

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 17, 10:39 PM: In using laser guns to catch speeders, I encountered a lot of misinformation: that their laser or radar detectors didn’t work. Radar detectors can’t pick up laser beams. Laser detectors often won’t go off before the vehicle is struck by the laser beam recording its speed. In this case, a motorist clocked doing 53 mph challenged the evidence because he had heard laser guns don’t work at night.

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 18, 11:22 PM: I had just clocked a 16-year-old girl in a Volvo at 55 mph when a Ford operated by a 29-year-old male sped up alongside the Volvo and stopped both cars and issued tickets. The man said he had seen a blond in a Volvo and sped up to “check her out.”

SATURDAY, AUGUST 29, 8:39 PM: A DC man wearing a black suit and a Roman collar, stopped for doing 52 mph, asked for forgiveness. I told him I forgave him for the first 19 mph over the limit but couldn’t forgive the last 3.

SATURDAY, AUGUST 29, 9:18 PM: An 83-year-old DC man with a “daylight only” driving restriction on his license was backing down Connecticut from Bradley Lane. When stopped, he said he had been shop-
ping at the Safeway on Connecticut Avenue south of Chevy Chase Circle. On his way home he went around Chevy Chase Circle and stayed on Connecticut instead of turning on Western. He had planned to back up against oncoming traffic for 3,000 feet until he got back to Western. His five-year-old Toyota Camry had 2,500 miles showing on the odometer. His car was towed back to his house, and he was issued a citation for unsafe backing.

**MONDAY, AUGUST 31, 4:30 PM:** A 33-year-old Wheaton man in a new minivan was clocked at 59 mph. Once stopped, he explained he was speeding so he could get around all the traffic and pull over to give his infant daughter her bottle. When I returned, he had the baby out of her child seat in his arms. He refused to sign for the ticket, saying his daughter's bottle was more important. The ticket was dropped in his lap.

**SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 20, 2:55 PM:** A man passing heavy traffic in the lane next to the sidewalk at 56 mph said he had just purchased his first sports car and was a “bad dude.” Three other motorists stopped to complain about the man’s speeding and lane changing.

**WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 7, 6:11 PM:** A Wheaton man stopped for doing 53 mph and passing heavy rush-hour traffic claimed he was only doing 40 mph, which is still 10 mph over the limit. We love to get these confessions, as judges will always find someone guilty if they admit they were over the limit. He demanded to know how I clocked him, and I told him I had used a laser gun. He replied that I couldn’t give him a ticket since he works at GEICO, and GEICO gives laser guns to police departments. As he drove off, he rolled down his window and shouted, “You should be out catching carjackers instead of writing tickets.”

**SATURDAY, OCTOBER 24, 11:58 PM:** A Silver Spring man stopped for speeding at 56 mph was found to be watching the World Series on a portable TV plugged into the cigarette lighter.

**SUNDAY, OCTOBER 25, 6:28 PM:** A 52-mph violator handed me his press card along with his license, as if members of the fourth estate were exempt from speeding tickets. Several months later I had a Washington Post columnist try the same thing.

**WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 28, 12:37 AM:** A Delaware woman who was driving the only car on the road was stopped for doing 57 mph. She explained that she was only going with the traffic. When I pointed out there was traffic to go with, she paused and said, “I guess I wasn’t paying attention.”

**SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 22, 9:40 PM:** An intoxicated man from Greenbelt flagged me over at Connecticut Avenue and Chevy Chase Circle, pointed to his red Mustang with four flat tires, and asked if I could call him a tow truck. He said he didn’t know how he got those flat tires. Inspection of the area revealed he was going so fast he was unable to turn into the circle and had struck the granite curb before going through the center of the circle. After his arrest, his BAC level was found to be .15 percent.

**THURSDAY, DECEMBER 3, 5:44 AM:** Joggers begin running at 5:15 every weekday morning. I would try to do speed enforcement from 5:15 to 6 AM to keep joggers from being blown off the sidewalk by speeders. A 24-year-old Rockville man clocked doing 71 mph said he knew he was speeding, but he was late for work. As I spent five minutes writing out the ticket, motorists kept slowing down and giving me the thumbs-up sign. Several stopped and said how fast the violator had been driving farther north on Connecticut. When I returned to the driver, he acted shocked to receive a $505 citation and denied doing any faster than 45 mph.

**MONDAY, DECEMBER 14, 9:22 PM:** A woman with an arm in a sling and a hospital bracelet on her wrist was stopped for doing 56 mph. She explained that she had sneaked out of the hospital, was under heavy medication, and probably shouldn’t be driving but said her fiancé expected her to pick him up every night at the Metro station. Do you think there’s a problem in this relationship?

**WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 23, 12:03 AM:** At the Bradley Lane traffic light, there was a Porsche in the median lane and an Acura sports coupe in the center lane. I was behind them both in a marked police car. Before the red light changed to green, the Acura driver suddenly floored it. Once stopped, he explained that the Porsche had been beating him in mini drag races at the last three lights and he decided to cheat without realizing a police car was behind him. His BAC level was .11 percent.

**THURSDAY, DECEMBER 24:** Four drivers were stopped for doing between 66 and 70. Their comments ranged from “It’s Christmas Eve and I got five points; how about a present?” to “How about you just let me start slowing down and forget about this?” to “There goes my GEICO insurance.”

**THURSDAY, JULY 29, 1993, 8:28 PM:** A Burbonsville man stopped for 52 mph told me I couldn’t waste his time as he was late for a band job and if he didn’t get there on time he’d lose his job. He added that if I did write him a ticket he’d go to court. People forget that police officers like court. Police officers get paid overtime for going to court. Police officers wish more of you would go to court. I took about 15 minutes writing a ticket that usually takes 5.

**TUESDAY, AUGUST 3, 11:58 PM:** A Germantown man, whose sports car was equipped with a radar detector, denied doing 58 because he had his cruise control set at 50 mph.

**SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 4, 5:48 PM:** A 24-year-old DC woman who was stopped for doing 50 mph in her new Acura Integra sports coupe was in rare form. First she denied speeding. We all know there is a big difference between a car doing 30 mph and 50 mph. The ones doing 30 on Connecticut seem to be almost at a stop. We never even take a speed reading of a 30 mph car. The woman continued that I couldn’t have clocked her because there was other traffic present. Sure there was other traffic present. It was all the cars doing 35 and 40 mph that she had been passing. Next she said she couldn’t have been speeding because she had just been stopped at a traffic light three-quarters of a mile away in DC, and her car couldn’t do 50 mph in 4,000 feet. Finally, when she was presented with her ticket, she demanded that I change the description of her car to something other than “sports coupe.”

**SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 11, 9:30 PM:** A Potomac woman stopped for violating two no turn signs, a do not enter sign, and a one way sign, demanded to be able to take her case to court. Her demands forced me to stop writing the warning ticket and instead fill out a citation, since you can’t take a warning to court.

**THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 30, 7:22 PM:** An Israeli diplomat’s wife demanded that I hurry up after she was stopped for doing 56 mph and cutting off motorists with sudden lane changes. She reported that she was late for a reception at the embassy and still had to change her clothes. I took at least ten minutes to be sure I filled out the citation properly.

**WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 3, 8:30 PM:** A 46-year-old Potomac man was wearing a tuxedo when I stopped him for doing 51 mph. As I wrote the ticket, he got out of his car, opened the trunk, stripped off the tux,
and put on gym clothes. He explained he was late for a volleyball game.

**WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 24, 12:40 PM:** A 33-year-old Potomac man stopped for doing 63 mph explained that his CHECK ENGINE light would go off only when he drove fast.

**FRIDAY, DECEMBER 3, 8:08 PM:** A Chevy Chase woman begged for a warning because she had insurance problems. About a quarter of all the speeders stopped say this. Of course they have insurance problems: They drive too fast.

**WEDNESDAY, JULY 13, 1994, 8:15 PM:** A former Washington Redskin was stopped for doing 51 mph. He made a point of saying he used to play for the Redskins. I replied that I grew up in St. Louis, where we hated the Redskins.

**FRIDAY, JULY 29, 6:30 PM:** A Rockville man with a suspended license was stopped for doing 50 mph. He didn’t have a license and gave a false middle name and changed his birth date by two days. The Motor Vehicle Administration computer requires an exact match. However, the police computer will find a close match. Since the man had recently been arrested for selling crack in Montgomery County, he was identified.

**SUNDAY, AUGUST 7, 2:50 AM:** I watched an intoxicated Georgetown law student make such a wide right turn from Connecticut Avenue that he almost struck a mailbox on the opposite side of the street. He pulled in front of the house one door from the intersection, and I went over to talk to him. He said I couldn’t arrest him since he had reached his destination and was no longer a threat to anyone. After he was arrested, he said he hoped I enjoyed telling the boys at shift change how I was wasting the taxpayers’ money by arresting a snort-nosed rich boy. He claimed he had only a couple of beers. After his breath test showed a BAC level of .27 percent, he was asked if he wanted to change his two-beer statement. “Hey, we both know I had more than a couple,” he said, “but I’m sticking with two beers.”

**THURSDAY, AUGUST 25, 12:40 AM:** The top diplomat official from the tiny African country of Lesotho was clocked at 53 mph. The diplomat turned onto Bradley Lane but refused to pull over and had to be forced to the curb. It was immediately obvious that he was highly intoxicated. He was issued several citations. A sober passenger with a French license was allowed to drive. It was the diplomat’s second DWI citation of the summer. The State Department later reported the diplomat had been recalled.

**THURSDAY, DECEMBER 29, 2:22 PM:** A 42-year-old Rockville man driving a Mustang GT was clocked at 54 mph as he weaved in and out of traffic. He had a radar detector on his windshield. He spent ten minutes telling me he should get a break. First he said the radar detector was only so he could speed on trips to Ohio. Next he said that a ticket would affect not only his life but the lives of his wife and children. He then said he worked at Channel 9 and that the television station was always helping the police. I told him that I was sure that the Gannett Company had strict policies about how their television stations can “help” the police. Finally I asked the man why I should consider treating him any differently than anyone else. He replied that he had never had a ticket. I checked his driving record and found that just one year earlier he had been cited, and convicted, for spinning his tires. He said that he meant he had never had a speeding ticket.

**FRIDAY, MARCH 10, 1995, 1:37 PM:** A man driving a delivery van was observed doing 42 mph in heavy traffic only 18 to 24 inches from the car in front of him. The man said he might have been following too closely but that he hadn’t “knowingly” been too close. Thank you, Mr. Matlock.

**WEDNESDAY, JULY 26, 4:20 PM:** A 32-year-old Bethesda man stopped for doing 56 mph bragged that he had just talked a Montgomery County judge into waiving the points on a speeding ticket he had received a month earlier. This caused me to obtain a copy of his driving record, which showed 32 moving violations, 26 of those for speeding, in the last 14 years. When he appeared in court, I testified to his speeding and his remarks about his last ticket. I was also able to present his driving record. The judge refused any point reduction.

**MONDAY, OCTOBER 16, 3:15 PM:** A 16-year-old teenager was stopped for going 50 mph in an insulation company truck. The youth had no license but presented a counterfeit INS Resident Alien card. After his real name was determined, the undocumented juvenile said he had paid $170 for the fake INS card and a fake Social Security card. When asked why he didn’t get a fake driver’s license while he was at it, the youth replied that he didn’t know you could get fake drivers licenses in the United States.

**WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 27, 8 PM:** A 19-year-old Laurel teenager was stopped for doing 50 mph while she was in the curb lane passing heavy traffic in the middle and left lanes. When issued a ticket she said she knew she wasn’t speeding because she got speeding tickets all the time so she knew when she was speeding. She described all the traffic she had passed as being “too slow.” Her driving record showed five speeding convictions in the past 20 months.

**WEDNESDAY, JULY 24, 1996, 8:15 PM:** A speeder explained he was late for an Alcoholics Anonymous meeting and that this was the second time I had issued him a ticket at the same location when he had been going to his AA meeting.