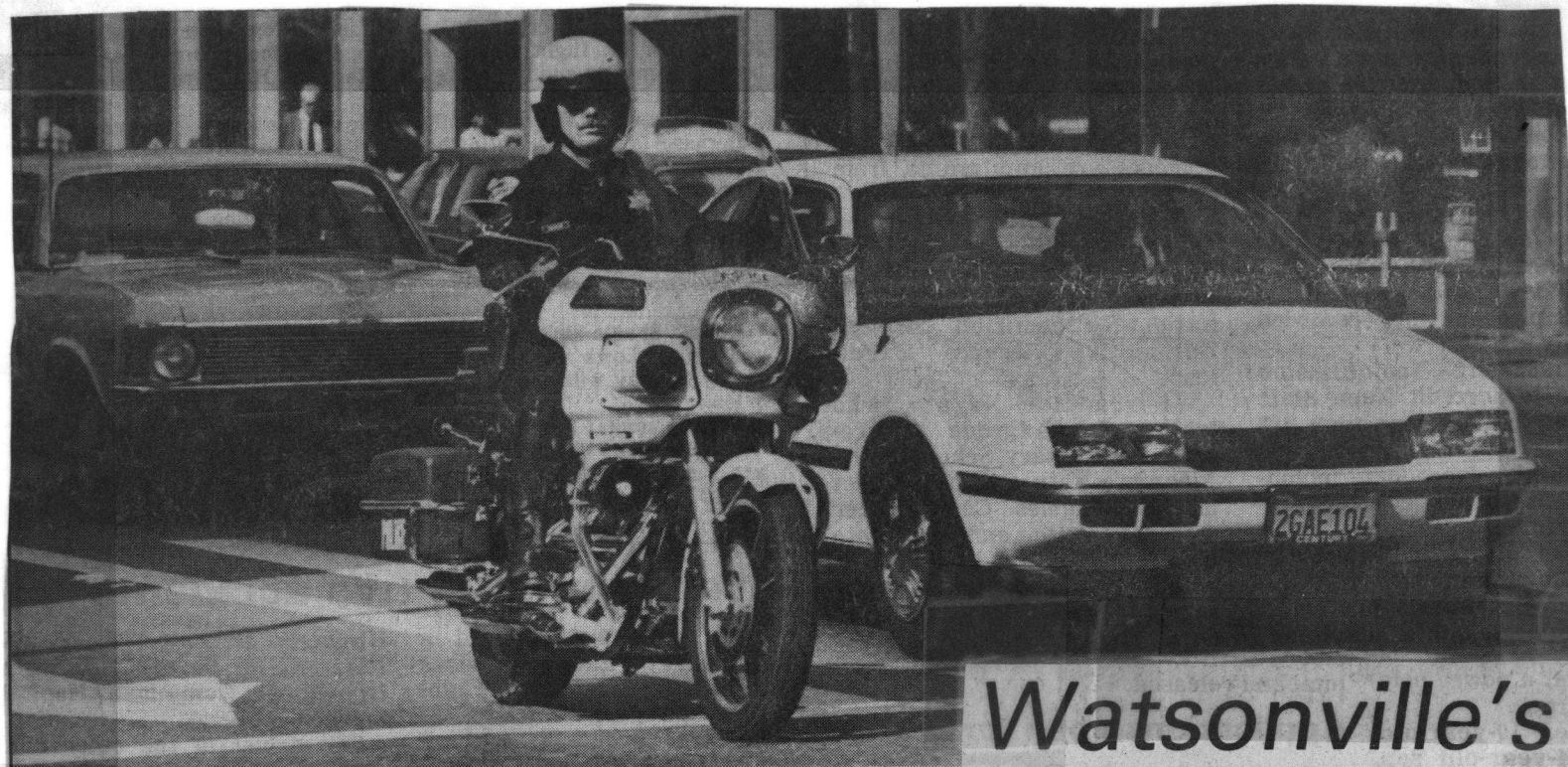


1985-1989



Diane Varni

## Watsonville's new motorcycle cop

Officer Frank Black patrols Main Street on his motorcycle.

By LANE WALLACE  
STAFF WRITER

Watsonville policeman Frank Black can't make himself invisible, but he's done the next best thing — he's switched from a patrol car to a motorcycle.

"I don't think people see me," said Black, who became Watsonville's first motorcycle officer in more than a decade last month.

In October, Black wrote 62 tickets for moving violations, 25 percent of the Police Department's total. He also wrote 56 for non-moving violations.

It's not just the low profile that makes a motorcycle officer valuable, said Capt. Terry Medina.

"A motorcycle can turn

around easily," Medina said. "and can go places cars can't."

Being able to go along the side of the road will be especially useful when an officer needs to get past heavy traffic to an accident scene, Medina said.

Earlier this week, Black chased down two suspected burglars by driving between two cars to get close to one of the men. When he turned on his siren 15 feet from the man, "he stopped," Black said.

The Police Department has wanted a motorcycle officer for several years, but there was never enough money in the city budget for it.

City Manager John Radin had recommended against spending the money for a

motorcycle, Medina said, but changed his mind this year because of increasing traffic problems.

Medina said the traffic problems have been exacerbated by increased "cruising" and accidents and near-accidents involving bicycles and skateboards. Downtown merchants have complained about the bicycles and skateboards, Medina said.

The \$6,400 to buy the 1987 Harley-Davidson came from money left over in the 1986-87 budget for refurbishing police cars.

"We're basically robbing Peter to pay Paul," Medina said.

Black was working from 2 p.m. to 10 p.m. at the beginning of October, but has since been switched to the day

shift. He often spends a portion of the morning keeping watch near schools, especially MacQuiddy and Hyde elementary schools.

The motorcycle has been a good public relations tool, Black said.

"People I talk to are all impressed," Black said. "Owners of Harley-Davidsons tell me it's great we bought a Harley because it's American-made."

Black was selected to be the motorcycle officer because he is interested in traffic enforcement and has experience riding motorcycles while off duty.

"This way I can ride a bike (motorcycle) and not have to buy one," Black joked.

REFERENCE