

The 'log' on local agents

By STEVE PEREZ
Sentinel staff writer

SANTA CRUZ — "Yesterday I applied for a job as a 'story analyst' at 'American Detective,' a prime-time 'reality-based' cop show on ABC that I've never seen."

With that line, Santa Monica free-lance writer Debra Seagal begins her article called "Tales From The Cutting Room Floor" in the November issue of Harper's magazine.

Initially, she describes herself as "pleased" that she has landed a job "logging" tape for the program, produced in Malibu.

Loggers help the show's producers keep track of the locations of choice segments of dialogue and video on each tape, so they can be edited together in more coherent, and dramatic sequence.

Camera crews were delivering tape from all across the United States for possible airing on the show — Detroit, New York, Miami, Las Vegas, Pittsburgh, Phoenix, Portland ...

And Santa Cruz.

Seagal eventually was assigned the "beat" of logging Santa Cruz. In the article, she quotes Watsonville police Officer Jay Cooper, and

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'Log' on CNET

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CNET commanders Ron Brooks and Ron Gravitt from the videotape, which she reports having logged on June 10, 1992.

While monitoring a drug buy in Santa Cruz, the agents' attention is diverted to a woman.

According to the story, they begin using language anyone who has spent time in a men's locker room might hear.

Cooper invites the other agents to "check out" the woman's body parts.

Brooks speculates about her sexual practices.

In the article, Cooper is quoted as saying the following, as a photographer zooms to a close-up shot of the officer:

"You don't have true domination over a woman until you spit on 'em and they don't say nothing."

Gravitt, according to the article, says he knows "a hooker who will let you spit on her for 20 bucks."

Later in the article, Seagal writes of reviewing "minute after minute" of raw footage on June 29, 1992, detailing Brooks's efforts to "flip" a marijuana suspect — get him to set up other dope-dealers in exchange for possible leniency in his case.

The suspect is described as a "thirtysomething white male named Michael" busted for sell-

ing pot in the Santa Cruz Mountains.

According to a transcript of the discussion published in the magazine, the suspect asks for an attorney at least three times, at one point saying he is "under too much stress to make a decision like that."

Meanwhile, Brooks continues to remind "Michael" of the alternatives — asset seizure of his house, vehicle and money, sending his girlfriend to prison and his children to Child Protective Services.

Finally, after the suspect insists on an attorney, Brooks walks off in a huff, according to Seagal, and says to his fellow officers:

"That's the first white guy I ever felt like beating the (expletive, expletive) out of."

The writer notes:

"If Michael's case becomes an episode of the show, Michael will be made a part of a criminal element that stalks backyards and threatens children. Commander Brooks will become a gentle, persuasive cop who's keeping our streets safe at night."

In an entry in the article the writer dates July 1, 1992, she describes video of a car chasing, involving the "three Santa Cruz cops."

The chase eventually ends with guns drawn, officers swear-

ing and pointing their guns at the drug suspects.

"Within seconds, the suspects are pinned to the ground and held immobile while cops kick them in the stomach and the face," Seagal writes. "Cooper is particularly angry because his van has bounced into a ditch during the pursuit. He looks down at one of the suspects. 'You based my car,' he complains. 'I just got it painted, you (expletive).' With that he kicks the suspect in the head."

Eventually, the writer reports she quits the show Oct. 19, 1992, because she did not "feel good" about the work, which included viewing footage of prostitutes getting arrested in sting operations in Las Vegas and a murder investigation in Oregon.

Some officers and those familiar with the narcotics enforcement team who have read the Harper's article, privately called it "inflammatory, biased" and presenting a distorted view of what is often difficult, dangerous and thankless work.

Officially, they said "no comment" and referred reporters to local chiefs of police who assign officers to the Santa Cruz County narcotics team and to the state Attorney General's Office, which has said it will investigate the conduct described in the story.