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Annual Police Report Shows 10 Per Cent Of SC People Ran Afoul Of Law In 1954

Some 2200 persons—the equivalent of 10 per cent of the city's permanent population—ran afoul of the law last year in Santa Cruz, the police department's annual report to the FBI indicates.

If you think that's a frightening percentage, consider this: crime was down in 1954 compared with the previous year.

Now, before you load the shotgun, bolt the door and begin muttering that your suspicions of the neighbors have been confirmed, be assured that Santa Cruz is really a peaceful place.

Most of the 2176 lawbreakers were garden-variety motorists whose timing was bad—they drove too fast, parked in the wrong place or made the wrong turn when a policeman was there.

Drivers who got themselves tangled up with the men in blue numbered 1573 and the charges against them ranged from overtime parking to drunk driving.

The second most popular form of lawbreaking was larceny of all types, with 258 cases reported and 80 persons arrested. Next came burglary, with 58 cases and 28 practitioners taken into custody.

The facts and figures covering all crimes and offenses are compiled for the FBI's "Uniform Crime Reports" by Captain Elmer Geyer and forwarded to Washington each January. The nationwide crime picture is assessed through FBI study of similar reports from all over the country.

The FBI divides offenses into two categories, and the first of these—embracing seven classifications—is the real measure of criminal activity in a community. These classifications and their incidence in Santa Cruz in 1954 follow:

Criminal homicide (1), rape (5), robbery (6), aggravated assault (2), burglary (58), larceny (a) over \$50 (24) and (b) under \$50 (234), and auto theft (18).

The total of "big seven" crimes adds up to 348, or 25 per cent fewer than in 1953, when 432 such offenses were recorded. Geyer attributes the drop to "crime prevention activity on the part of the department."

A look at the figures shows that 234—or considerably more than half of last year's criminal activity—fell into the relatively minor category of "larceny under \$50."

The report lists 121 cases

"cleared by arrest"—a misleading figure, according to Geyer. Some of the charges later were dropped and some cases were cleared by means other than arrests, he said.

As examples, Geyer mentioned theft and bad check victims who refuse to press charges when restitution is made and complainants who find "stolen" property actually was mislaid or taken by family members.

The number of persons placed under arrest for all reasons was 732, or 10 per cent fewer than made the trip to headquarters in 1953. A disturbing aspect is the number of young persons 18 years old or under taken into custody—215, or 29 per cent of all arrests made in the city last year.

Burglary, larceny, car-stealing and liquor law violations are the teen-agers' favorite ways of getting into trouble with the police.

Geyer laid a good part of the city's juvenile troubles on youngsters who come here during the vacation months to make whoopee. "They come here to have a good time and some of them get into trouble," he said.

Out-of-townners—transient burglars and thieves—also are blamed for many of the burglaries and thefts that take place here.

The one homicide that took place in Santa Cruz in 1954 was the fatal shooting last January of Edward Anderson by John Maag following a drinking bout.

Maag was acquitted of murder and a companion charge of assault with a deadly weapon by a jury which felt the shooting of Anderson and wounding of a bystander were done in self-defense. Maag, who freely admitted the shootings, had been mauled by Anderson.

An unusual case turned up during the year in the person of a burglar with a literary bent. Detectives investigating a burglary found a diary telling—in the suspect's handwriting—details of the job and the name of his accomplice. He saved the state the expense of a trial by pleading guilty.

Looking on the brighter side of the coin, eight policemen were cited last year by Chief Al Huntsman for exceptional performance under hazardous circumstances.

Seven men received official pats on the back for their part in the capture of Thomas Diamond Marshall, who barricaded himself in a room and fired at police sent to question him after he threatened his landlady.

Police fired one shot, which wounded Diamond and ended his resistance, Huntsman congratulated the following men for effecting the capture with a minimum of violence: Assistant Chief Ben Krupp, Sergeants Gene Pini and Ernest

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Marengi, and Patrolmen Jesse Bucholtz, Charles Scherer, Doug James and Ed Smith.

The eighth citation went to Detective McKinley Reed, for his "confidence and courage" in capturing an armed robber without bloodshed.

The bandit, gun in hand, was intercepted by Reed as he ran down an alley from a cigar store stickup. The men faced each other and Reed called for him to throw down his weapon. The bandit at first refused, but finally did so, thereby probably saving his own life since Reed is a crack shot.

Geyer is pleased with the overall drop in the city's crime rate this year, and says the police department will continue to exert its utmost efforts in the direction of crime prevention.

"It may sound strange," Geyer said as he got ready to drop his report in the mail, "but in our line no business is good business."

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