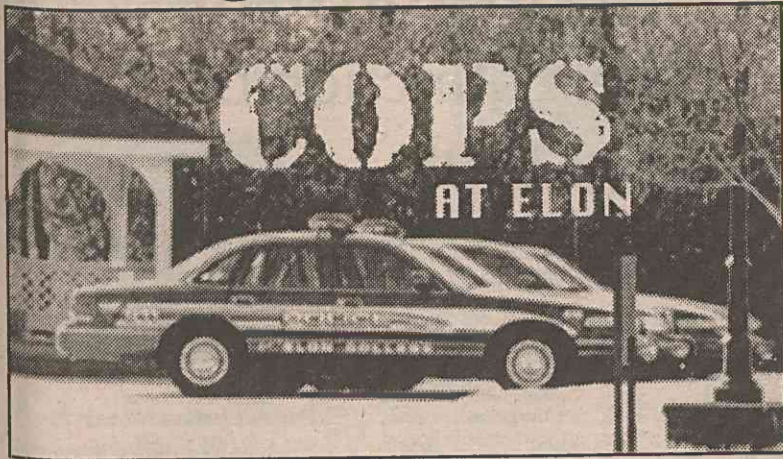


A night with the the Elon College Police



Chuck Buckley
The Pendulum

"Bad boys, bad boys. Whatcha gonna do, when the sheriff done come for you?"

On the Feb. 11, I participated in the "Ride-Along" program with the Town of Elon College police department.

Not exactly sure what to expect, I showed up at the station around five that afternoon and was asked to sign a piece of paper say-

ing essentially that stray bullets are my friends.

After I signed away my life I was told that I would meet the officer with whom I would be riding at the station later that night.

My only clue as to how the evening would progress was told to me as I walked out the door.

"If there is any gunfire you are going to have to stay in the car."

Gunfire! Cool! I'm about to experience a side of Elon that I never knew existed. It's the ulti-

mate reporter dream, bursting open a conspiracy and exposing the seaming underbelly of society. I feel like Nellie Bly!

At 11 p.m., I met Officer Walker, the police officer with whom I would be spending the next few hours.

Walker has been with the Elon College police force for a little over a year. He is married with two kids and he struck me a very friendly guy.

After a bit of paper work the two of us jumped into the brand-spanking-new 1999 police cruiser and took to the streets to fight crime at Elon.

Needless to say, not a whole bunch happened. We got to chase down a couple of speeders, saw a firecracker go off above our heads and made a sorority girl pour out her beer. The highlight was when we got pull over one of my friends. (I of course didn't realize it until the next day, but it was fun.)

Walker and I spent most of

the evening talking about the department.

"A lot of people look at small town police as wanabees or armed security, but we're not, we're real security," Walker said.

Officer Walker said that Elon was a great place to work and raise a family. He did say that it is a fairly quiet town. Most of the calls that they deal with are traffic violations and loud music calls.

When I started to talk about his work with traffic offenses he responded by saying, "One of the most frequent questions asked is,

'Do you have a quota?' No. We don't."

My time spent with Walker just went to back up my theory that Elon really is a safe place on the whole. There aren't that many major crimes that take place here.

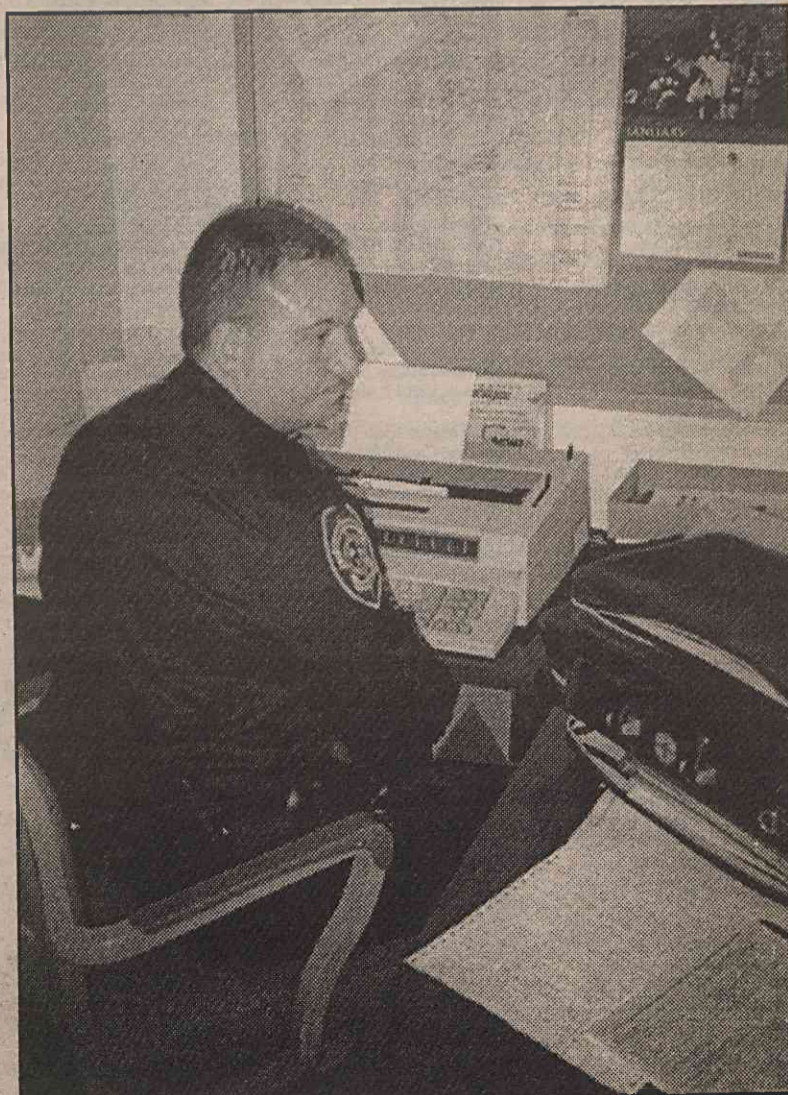
And if something should happen I know have the confidence to say that the Elon Police can deal with it. With the exception of a certain problem with his cupholder, Walker handled himself in a most professional manner. Overall, I had good, if quiet, time on Thursday.



Chuck Buckley/The Pendulum

"Elon isn't a bad place to work," says Officer Walker

Just another typical Thursday night for Officer Walker, with all the typical paperwork.



Civil liberties under fire

Jeff Angel
Contributing Reporter

I think it would be safe to say that we all want to see the really bad people amongst us put in jail. You can define "really bad" however you want, but for the sake of this article I'll include murderers, rapists, the occasional thieving crackhead or anyone who is making life miserable for at least one other person.

Every day thousands of these people are put in jail and we never hear about 99.9 percent of them because they're not ex-football players or members of that fun-loving Kennedy family.

I would even wager to guess that most of us don't really care about these jailed criminals. Criminals belong in jail, right? But there's always an obstacle getting in the way of putting all of these bastards in the big house: those pesky civil rights. United States prosecutors didn't have to deal with such nuisances in the past, but now the rights of suspects are always interfering with putting close-enough-to-guilty criminals in jail.

Probably the most important rights of suspected criminals are Miranda rights. If you don't know what Miranda rights are, think back to the rerun of "Miami Vice" you were watching the other day. The

right to remain silent, the right to an attorney and the warning that anything you say can be used against you in court of law are supposedly rights that are guaranteed to criminals. But not anymore, at least not in Maryland, Virginia, West Virginia, South Carolina and, of course, North Carolina. These are the states that fall under the jurisdiction the Forth U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, which ruled last week that confessions given prior to the reading of Miranda rights to a suspect are admissible in court. Many of you are probably still unconcerned. If a person confesses to a crime then what difference to a few obligatory statements about rights mean. Actually, they mean a lot.

Confessions are very important to cops and prosecutors. They make trials quick and simple, saving taxpayers money, which, as we all know, is the primary goal of all civil servants. If a confession is so prized, don't you think some rules might be bent or broken to get them? Forced confessions are in direct violation of Fifth Amendment, which states "no person shall be compelled in any criminal case to be a witness against himself." What is more "compelling" to a person being interrogated as a murder suspect than four or five burly cops with southern accents telling you repeatedly to confess. After a few hours of that, I think I would confess to be-

ing Fidel Castro.

Miranda rights protect people who are ignorant of the law or just too distraught to think straight while being questioned. A lawyer would tell a suspect not to answer certain questions that could incriminate him. Without these rights thousands of people could be imprisoned each year unlawfully and unfairly.

I thought our country had progressed from its "separate but equal" past. Now instead of blatantly abusing other races, our government is taking rights away from the only Americans left that the majority of the public doesn't care about. Everyone wants criminals in jail. That's where they belong. But one of the core beliefs of our country is "innocent until proven guilty." By taking away rights from suspected criminals, we're slowly reversing that statement.

Other countries have used the "guilty until proven innocent" theory in the past. There was one in particular I think you are all familiar with. If that country's suspected criminals couldn't prove themselves to be innocent, they were sent to gas chambers.

Without Miranda rights, American citizens will be unfairly treated by our already corrupt legal system. Sure, they're just criminals, but maybe someday it'll just be you.