

Police clear up confusion about traffic stops

Sean Carroll
Reporter

Ask any Elon student, and they'll likely be able to tell a tale about a friend who's been stopped by area law enforcement officers for a violation of some sort. These stories can often assume a sort of urban legend status.

Elon Police Chief Dan Ingle and his first sergeant, J.F. Villanova sat down recently to talk about traffic stops.

One of the most popular urban myths about police procedure in traffic stops is that a police officer can pull a motorist over for any reason at all. These rumors often spread after an individual has the unfortunate experience of being pulled over for what seems like no reason.

When asked how many motorists are estimated to be pulled over on a typical Thursday, Friday or Saturday night, Villanova answered, "a lot, really."

"A police officer can pull a motorist over for any motor vehicle violation," Villanova said. These violations can range from driving on the wrong side of the road to having a burned-out license plate light bulb.

The technical term for what someone can be pulled over for is "articulable suspicion." This is where a police officer that pulled a motorist over must be able to appear in court and verbally explain what dictated that the motorist should be pulled over. Villanova tried to simplify the idea of articulable suspicion as "a little more than a hunch."

Many motorists, especially students, believe that police officers intentionally look for the small motor vehicle violations in order to have a reason to pull a motorist over. However, the hard facts demand that there must be a legitimate reason to pull over a driver.

"If you want to get creative, then there's an entire chapter on motor vehicle violations," Villanova said as he thumbed through a large blue police manual. Inside the manual were a number of violations for which a police officer can halt a vehicle and question the driver.

There is slightly more needed in order to search an individual however. According to Villanova, an officer needs to have "probable cause" to search an individual during a traffic stop. Probable cause was then broken down to "having the elements of a crime," such as seeing marijuana cigarettes in the driver's ash tray or smelling alcohol on the driver's breath. The police cannot search an individual without a reason. An officer can, however, ask an individual to step out of his car for any reason at all.

When a motorist, or even a passenger, is asked to step out of the car, the police have a right to detain the person. The police can detain an individual for a limited amount of time without arresting the individual. According to Villanova, detaining an individual is for "the protection of the police and the individual."

When an individual is detained, he is not placed under arrest. Therefore, it is not necessary for the officer to read the individual his Miranda rights. There is a lot of confusion regarding when an officer is required to read a detainee his rights. Many people assume that they need their Miranda rights read to them as soon as they are handcuffed. According to Villanova, this is untrue.

"As long as you're not in custody, you do not need to have your Miranda rights read to you," Villanova said. In fact, Elon Police officials report that until an individual is charged with a crime and is faced with the chance of incriminating him or herself, that individual does not have to be mirandized.

Some Elon students have a problem understanding just why many traffic stops are made.

"All I know is that it seems like a lot of students are pulled for absolutely no reason, and furthermore, it doesn't seem like the cops ever explain what's going on when you get pulled," Elon junior Chris Emerick said. This seems to be the attitude many students have about the police of the Town of Elon. Ingle and Villanova say they hope this information will allay some of the confusion surrounding this topic.

Hill shares an experience of activism

Jessica Vitak
Copy Editor

Environmentalist and activist Julia Butterfly Hill spoke to a capacity crowd in Whitley auditorium Nov. 1 in an event sponsored by the Liberal Arts Forum. Full of energy and enthusiasm, Hill shared her experiences surrounding the amazing journey leading up to her two-year stay in a California redwood.

In a discussion to raise environmental awareness among students and have them assume responsibility as global citizens, Hill stressed that she was not there to lecture, only to share her experiences and offer a new perspective.

"I want you to leave feeling as if you have experience something," she said.

Offering nothing more than her story, Hill captivated the audience of students, faculty, staff and community members for more than two hours. While her discussion covered many topics, the message remained the same throughout - "the answers are within ourselves, not outside of ourselves," she said.

Hill's story began when she was a college student, a business major. After graduation, she worked as an independent consultant for restaurants and bars. Quickly rising in the field with a reputation for success, her career dreams were crushed when a 1996 car accident injured her so badly that it took a full year to recover.

It was during this time in her life that Hill made a realization that changed her life forever.

"Our GNP goes up every time we hurt the planet," she said. "It is no longer money going to save life, but instead life is going to save money."

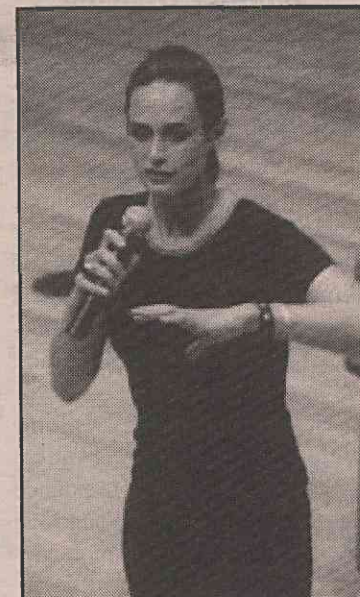
Between the discovery of corruption within political and corporate powers and her first rainforest experience in the redwood forests of California, Hill became an environmental activist and never looked back.

The forest she saw was more alive than anything she had seen before. Hill felt a deep connection to the plants, which she tried to convey to the audience. "We've all been conditioned that the environment and nature are out there," she said. "But we all have roots...and they are all deeply connected to the earth."

Hill quickly became involved in local environmental protection groups. Her earnest desire to make a difference led her to the deed that has ultimately made her a household name across the world. On Dec. 7, 1997, Hill climbed 180 feet in the air and began a two-year vigil that only ended when an agreement was reached protecting "Luna," her tree, and a three-acre area of forest around it.

Hill says the experience taught her a lot about herself and the world. "When people can get fear out the way, they can do anything," she said.

Although the company clearing that area of forest tried starving her out, blowing her out with gale-force winds from a helicopter and waiting her out, Hill persevered. After living for 738 days straight in Luna, Hill climbed down knowing she had made a difference. She had saved her tree, and she had brought environ-



Emily Hudson/Photo Editor

On Thursday, Hill visited campus to tell her story of inner strength and living in Luna.

mentalism to the attention of people around the world.

Hill says the experience taught her so much about herself and the world. "For two years and eight days, I went without everything I had always taken for granted," she said. "I realized how blessed we are on this planet."

Hill says the most important lesson she learned was love. Watching the forest being cut down all around her was like "watching my loved ones being murdered." She encouraged everyone to take a more active role in protecting the environment.

"The power is right here in our minds, our hearts and our souls...to change anything," Hill said. "I want us all to lead a life of example."

Tune in this week to ESTV...



Touchdown Phoenix Football
Monday-Friday
11 p.m.

Win Stuff
Monday-Saturday
2 p.m.

Phoenix Report
Monday-Friday
8:30 p.m.

An Invitation to Speak with President Lambert

Students are invited to join Dr. Lambert in the Hearth Lounge in Moseley Center on Wednesday, Nov. 14 from 4 - 5 p.m. for refreshments and conversation.

Please come with questions, ideas or concerns you would like to discuss with the president.