

Riding with the Redcoats: A Psychologist on Patrol in "D" Division

by Dr. Lawrence Breen

For some time now I have been acting as a consultant to both the RCMP "D" Division and the Winnipeg Police, conducting numerous In-Service sessions. As I frequently lectured on the phenomenon of stress in police work, a number of police officers suggested that I should actually go out on patrol with the police to find out what it's really like. Consequently, in a moment of false bravado in front of approximately 100 policemen, I said, "why not", and found myself on April 29, 1977, out on patrol with the Winnipeg Police.

Prior to this time S/Sgt. Ron Osika, "D" Division Training Supervisor, had encouraged me to do the same thing with the RCMP. Unfortunately my time schedule was somewhat restrictive, but things (mostly scheduling on my part) fell into place in July. On the evening of July 7, 1977, I was in Emerson, Manitoba, about to begin my work experience with Emerson Detachment, under the command of Sgt. Clifford Tessier. That evening I met with Sgt. Tessier and we planned for the weekend.

As an aside I should mention something about Emerson, Manitoba, for those not familiar with it. It is somewhat unique in that the town contains two United States-Canada border crossings, one to North Dakota, the other to Minnesota. Because of this close proximity to the border there is, of course, constant concern with possible drug smuggling. Also, the RCMP must be vigilant for "border jumpers" (e.g., people who take one of the many side roads into Canada, omitting to check with Immigration). Additionally, the Roseau River Indian Reserve is in the



Dr. Larry Breen and Cst. R. Digby on patrol.

territory of Emerson Detachment, where some weeks prior to my arrival there was a brutal murder.

For the first few hours of the next day things were very quiet, what Dr. Phillip Mann (consulting Psychologist to the Austin Texas Police Department) calls a "routine day." Under the impression that I had come to see something exciting, both the Winnipeg Police and the RCMP made frequent apologies for the fact that there "wasn't much doing." My goal, in fact, was to observe routine police work as well as the more "exciting" events. These routine days enabled me to generate copious verbal notes on the tape recorder I had taken with me.

But not all was routine. Shortly after 10:00 a.m. we received our first call. A border jumper was believed to be heading to Winnipeg. I must admit I was somewhat uncomfortable cruising along the highway at a high rate of speed. At the same time, however, with siren and dome