

MEMORANDUM

TO: The Honorable Judge Ann Lacy Johns
The Honorable Victor S. Johnson, District Attorney General

FROM: Mary Granstaff, Foreperson and Members of the July 1993 Session of
the Grand Jury

DATE: September 27, 1993

RE: Concerns, Commendations and Thoughts on the Grand Jury

Serving on the Grand Jury was a very educational experience. We were given an insight of the magnitude of crime in our community. We were also enlightened about how the justice system works and how, in many cases, it seems to "bog down." To quote one member's evaluation of the system, "The system is overwhelmed by addiction-related crime. It is time for a paradigm shift." At times it was depressing and on many days, we left the jury room emotionally exhausted. Yet, we have a real sense of fulfilling an important duty of citizenship and leave feeling that it was a worthwhile experience.

We began early in our term to list concerns. We are realistic in the knowledge that reports such as ours are all too often simply read and filed away. But we feel it is our responsibility to speak to our areas of concerns as well as to commend and acknowledge excellence where it was observed. This report will be

divided into three sections--Concerns, Commendations and Thoughts on the Grand Jury.

Concerns of this Grand Jury Are:

1. The system needs a better way to deal with the mentally ill. We heard from victims of abuse and assault who were trying to use the system to get help for the perpetrator.

2. The role of security guards needs to be better defined. On several occasions, they seemed to over-step the legal parameters of their job. We do not believe they should act as a "private police" force. We would like to know what are the regulations covering security guards--who makes and/or enforces these regulations--and what are the safeguards to protect the public?

3. There needs to be some way to shorten the time between a report of sexual abuse and a preliminary hearing and a hearing before the Grand Jury. Many of the cases we heard were two years old. This is not fair to the victim or the accused. DHS needs to be more responsive to reports of abuse. One DHS witness knew little of the case being reported and could not answer questions. Two sex abuse investigators seemed to be "burned out and jaded."

4. The Juvenile System needs to be the focus of community

attention. This concern was on our list before the recent ATM murder of a teenager. We are concerned about the increase of juveniles involved in violent crime. The "band'aid" treatment given in the past has not worked. We all know the correct "jargon"--need for early intervention, parenting skills, violence on TV, dysfunctional families, lack of tough love, "I'm OK, you're OK." Simply parroting words or buying expensive games to be played in the classroom does not change attitudes or actions. Professionals, politicians, and parents need to come together to bring about a viable solution.

5. Many crimes are committed by persons out on bail, probation, or parole.

6. The police force is grossly understaffed in many departments.

7. The police need to advertise the need to record serial numbers on home property.

8. Non-violent crimes are punished with non-productive prison time rather than by restitution and fines and, where possible, face-to-face meetings with victims. The assumption here is that victims want their property or its value restored.

Commendations:

1. We would like to highly commend all the members of the "Crime Suppression Unit." The officers working to keep drugs out of our community demonstrated commitment and bravery. They were always well prepared and presented their cases in a professional way.

2. To all MPD officers who daily do jobs that are taken for granted by most citizens we say "Thank You." They are understaffed, underpaid and certainly do not hear the words "Thank You" enough. Kudos to Officer Ernest Cecil, K.M. Pulse, Jr., Det. Al Gray, Det. Larry Flair, Gene and John Donegan, Jamie Donegan and Margaret Postiglione for good investigation of obscene telephone calls.

3. Our thanks to the District Attorneys and Judge John's staff for their support. We have high praise for Sandy Mullens, Grand Jury Administrator.

Thoughts on the Grand Jury:

1. Verification of Grand Jury members that they are who they claim to be.

2. Grand Jury after the preliminary hearing seems redundant. It might be better used for an appeal by victims who find a judge unwilling to

prosecute or by an accused who finds the state too eager to prosecute.

3. Reporting in open court produces no accountability. The practice seems an empty ritual.

REPORT SUBMITTED ON SEPTEMBER 27, 1993.

Mary M Granstaff
Mary Granstaff, Foreperson

GRAND JURY MEMBERS:

Susan B. Valentine
Judith Bark
James P. Callahan
John B. Elam
Deborah S. Hall
James R. Krenson
Paige Y. Peacock
Malcolm H. Perry
Ralph L. Ray
Robert M. Swanson
Starletha Webb
Denise E. Witt

Bobby R. Burnette
Howard R. Claude
Norma J. Dawson
David B. Duke
Suzan F. Lanier
Gerald Roberts
Joyce C. Turner
Eugenia Woodard
Bobby E. Winfrey
Dolly J. Wilson
Ruth C. Webb
JoAnn G. Weaver