

# LOCAL

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JOHN GROGAN  
Commentary



## Test could be life or death matter

In retiree-heavy South Florida, calling for mandatory testing of elderly drivers has all the popularity of calling for random executions.

With few exceptions, older drivers fiercely defend their right to drive at any age. They condemn age-based road testing as discriminatory and unfair.

But had there been such a test in place, perhaps Flora Lennon, 77, would be alive. Perhaps Nurith Cohen, 85, and Max Mondshine, 85, would still be breathing, too.

And maybe their friend, Lea Blum, 79, would be at home where she belongs instead of lingering in a hospital trauma unit.

Maybe Cosmo Dariano, 71, would not be sleeping at night with the deaths of his acquaintances on his conscience.

The five shared a bond: Each had recently lost a spouse. They had come together in sorrow, and together they searched for ways to go on without the partners with whom they had shared most of their lives.

On Aug. 11, the five were returning together from a grief therapy session in Delray Beach. Dariano had volunteered to drive.

From the opposite direction came a Lincoln Town Car driven by an 83-year-old Tamarac man.

Dariano turned left directly into the path of the Lincoln, which police said had the right-of-way.

**No undoing the damage**

Perhaps Dariano misgauged the approaching car's speed, perhaps he hesitated too long before accelerating. Perhaps he just did not see the big car coming. But there is no denying the magnitude of the mistake, no taking that split second back.

Could a mandatory test, beginning at age 70, have made a difference? Not necessarily. People of all ages cause accidents. But a test could have caught age-related problems with depth perception, reaction time or mental acuity before it was too late.

I found Dariano at his home in Delray Beach on Friday. Less than two weeks after the fatal crash, he is behind the wheel again and said he has no plans to give up his license.

On his lawyer's advice, he would not talk about the crash but made it clear he has no second thoughts about his abilities.

I asked him how he drives today compared to 20 years ago. "The same," he answered without hesitation. "There's no difference. My age doesn't affect driving skills at all."

"Not with me," he said.

For Dariano and Florida's 1.3 million other licensed drivers age 70 and older, we will just have to take their word for it.

**No test, no problem**

As the system now works, a driver can renew a license at, say, age 75 and not have so much as an eye test for another 12 years. Think how much can change between age 75 and 87.

Many seniors say teen-agers are the real menaces on the road, and often they are. But teen problems of immaturity and bad judgment are best caught through stepped-up enforcement. Elderly problems of failing competency are best caught through regular testing.

When a couple of brave legislators tried to introduce such a test a few years ago, the outcry from the powerful senior lobby was so loud the bill never had a chance.

Despite what the protesters say, elderly driving tests are not about discrimination; they are about a simple premise: When you get too old to drive, you shouldn't be driving.

Meanwhile, the tragedies continue to pile up. In 1995, one in every five fatal crashes in Florida involved a driver 65 or older.

Is a 20-minute test once a year too much to ask?

For a group of grieving widows and widowers this month, it very well could have made the difference between life and death.

John Grogan's column appears every Sunday and Wednesday. Write him at 200 E. Las Olas Blvd., Fort Lauderdale, FL 33301, or by e-mail: (jgrogan@aol.com).

# Hollywood sweeping prostitutes off streets

## 11-month police crackdown reaping results

By DAVID FLESHLER  
Staff Writer

HOLLYWOOD — During a recent prostitution sting, Hollywood police provided an unwelcome courtesy to the customers.

They telephoned their wives, explained why their husbands had been arrested and asked them to come by to pick up their cars.

One woman drove up, rolled down her window and said, "Tell your wife. You can keep the car, and you can keep him."

The sting was part of an 11-month crackdown that has quieted Federal Highway and driven remaining prostitutes onto residential streets and to the west side.

Police, hoping to press their advantage, are leaning on motel owners to shut their doors to the sex trade. And they are exploring a range of strategies used up and down the South Florida coast, from displaying customers' names on billboards to having convicted prostitutes sign agreements to stay out of certain parts of town.

From the dingy motels along Federal Highway to the Internet, word is spreading that Hollywood has become a tougher place to buy sex.

"Stings in S. Florida!!!!" warns an Internet notice posted in June after a series of arrests along the city's stretch of Federal Highway. "This is the second sting operation in the same place this month. If you are in this area I would be extremely careful."

Since September, police have issued more than 500 citations to prostitutes and their customers

along Federal Highway. Fewer women are working the street, and those that remain are having a tough time.

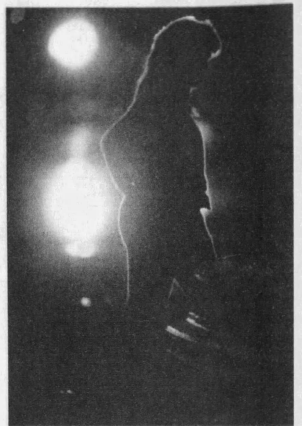
"Hollywood's the worst," said a 31-year-old prostitute named Cynthia, walking the intersection of Pembroke Road and Federal Highway during morning rush hour. "They take you to jail for an open container, for loitering."

She has been arrested 30 to 40 times, she said, often for simply walking along the street.

"Eighty percent of the time I was not guilty," she said. "I'm not saying I'm not a prostitute, but I do other things. I do laundry, I go shopping."

She considered the effect of the crackdown.

PLEASE SEE PROSTITUTION /4B



Staff photo/SEAN DOUGHERTY  
An undercover officer poses as a prostitute during a sting operation on Friday. Hollywood is now known as a tougher place to buy sex.



Staff photo/ROBERT DUVOIS  
Steve Saal, who was left homeless five years ago when Hurricane Andrew cut through his Cutler Ridge retirement complex, now shares a Miami Beach high-rise with his wife Edith and their chihuahua, Skippy.

## 'Things are 100% better'

Andrew survivor replaces old sense of loss, sadness with new life, home, wife

By JODY BENJAMIN  
Miami Bureau

MIAMI — What a difference five years makes.

On Aug. 24, 1992, Steve Saal spent a terrifying night huddled with five neighbors in a bathroom of his Cutler Ridge retirement complex. Outside, Hurricane Andrew buzzed his way through his tranquil neighborhood.

When the storm finally passed, Saal, who had earlier lost his wife to diabetes, was left with nothing but the clothes on his back and his pet cat, Dragon.

He almost lost the cat, too. Evacuation workers initially refused to admit him to a shelter with the animal.

A photograph of Saal sobbing and clutching Dragon published a day later in the Sun-Sentinel captured the hearts of many readers, who sent help.

Today, Saal has his life back. And he says it is better now than before.

He has relocated to a Miami Beach high-rise. And he has remarried.

PLEASE SEE SURVIVOR /5B



Staff photo/ROBERT DUVOIS  
This 1992 Sun-Sentinel photograph of Andrew survivor Steve Saal and his cat, Dragon, captured the hearts of many readers.

## Display of home sanctions urged

Group wants signs at adult facilities

By DIANE C. LADE  
Staff Writer

When state inspectors declare a moratorium on a retirement home, it means they have found problems so severe that no new residents are allowed to move in until the deficiencies are corrected.

But volunteers who monitor what are officially called adult living facilities say too many seniors and their families have no idea when a place is in trouble.

Their solution: Slap a brightly-colored sign on every entrance and exit door.

"We want it to be like a quarantine sign," said Toni Ricke, coordinator of Broward County's Long-Term Care Ombudsman Council. "We don't want to cause problems with the operators. We just want the public to be aware."

The council, a statewide watchdog group that inspects retirement and nursing homes and investigates complaints, will be shopping several bill proposals to legislators this fall. The moratorium sign, however, will probably draw the most discussion.

"It makes sense to me, since the purpose is to make people aware that these places have sanctions against them," said E. Bentley Lipscomb, secretary of the Florida Department of Elder Affairs. "But some people will be opposed."

Those favoring moratorium signs say it's a good way to shame bad homes into compliance.

The Florida Association of Homes for the Aged, which represents nursing homes and adult living facilities, said a quarantine-style banner would humiliate the residents instead of the scoff-law owners.

"I think people who want to comply will comply and those who don't will continue to ignore the requirements," said Mary Ellen Early, the association's legislative director. "Maybe if you make the signs bigger and more noticeable, it will mean just fewer people will put them up."

As of this week, Broward has 10 of about 160 adult living facilities on moratorium. That's more than any of

PLEASE SEE SIGNS /4B

## Actions allow others to speak, new ACLU director says

By NANCY SAN MARTIN  
Staff Writer

Howard Simon can't help but chuckle every time he thinks about the call that put his job as executive director of the American Civil Liberties Union of Michigan into perspective.

The call came during the 1988 presidential campaign between George Bush and Michael Dukakis. Bush had criticized Dukakis for being a card-carrying member of the ACLU.

The woman on the phone called to

complain about a \$500 fine she received for violating a city sign ordinance that prohibited campaign literature. Simon took the case, which ended with the rewriting of the ordinance.

Theingo the ACLU was defending? "Bush for president."

"Even supporters [of ACLU critics] know where to go to protect their rights," Simon, 54, said with a smirk.

That type of irony is bound to repeat itself when he takes his new post in Miami on Oct. 1 as executive director of the ACLU of Florida.

Simon replaces Robyn Blumner, who resigned to join the editorial board and write a column for the St. Petersburg Times. Her last day with the ACLU is Sept. 1.

Simon comes to South Florida with 23 years of experience in Michigan, where he led a number of controversial cases, such as doctor-assisted suicide, abortion rights and censorship of pornography. He also has worked against changing the state's prohibition against the death penalty.

He likely will have to deal with

some of the same issues in Florida. He is preparing for controversial times.

"Michigan, like Florida, I think, is a hotbed of right-wing fundamentalists and religious groups," Simon said.

Before joining the ACLU, Simon was an instructor of philosophy at DePauw University in Indiana. He moved to Michigan with plans to continue his law studies and ultimately teach legal philosophy. The executive director's job with the ACLU was supposed to

PLEASE SEE ACLU /5B

INSIDE

Interactive festival celebrates African influence on South American music. **3B**

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SIGNS

RETIREMENT HOMES CITED

As of Thursday, these Broward County adult living facilities were under moratorium issued by the Agency for Health Care Administration and not allowed to take any new residents until problems are corrected. The homes are listed by the month in which their citation was issued. No Palm Beach County adult living facilities are on moratorium.

**March:** St. Catherine's, Cooper City; Bernadette's ACLF, Hallandale; Santomassino Residence, Margate. **May:** St. Thomas Manor, Plantation; Edwards Loving Home Care, Fort Lauderdale; The Elder Care Village, Pompano Beach. **June:** Shari-Jo Retirement Apartments, Hollywood. **July:** Island Retirement Home, Miramar; Golden Manor ALF, Hollywood. **August:** Crystal Manor, Pompano Beach; Windsor Place, Wilton Manors.

"We just want the public to be aware."

— Toni Ricke, coordinator of Broward County's Long-Term Care Ombudsman Council

If legal action is needed, say some homes post the moratorium papers in dark corners or don't put them up at all. The Broward ombudsmen polled residents at about 15 facilities on moratorium at some point during this year and last, and found that only in one did seniors know what had happened.

Punishment for violators is minimal: about a \$200 fine. A

highly visible moratorium sign would carry more weight, the ombudsman council said.

"I don't think [the sign] is a bad idea," said Pat Feeney, the AHC administrator for Broward. "I think it would prompt visitors to ask questions about what is happening to their loved ones."

Early and others representing the operators think a better solution is to enforce the existing laws and raise the fines "so it's painful if the providers don't comply."

There is no legislative sponsor for a "quarantine sign" bill yet. Sen. Howard Forman, D-Pembroke Pines, said he would be willing to study it, as he is considering other adult living facility action this upcoming session.

"Anything that protects our more vulnerable citizens is worth looking at," he said.

**SOUTH BROWARD**  
**Broward ombudsman makes welfare of elderly her mission**

By DIANE C. LADE  
Staff Writer

She's worse than a mother who has come to visit, poking her nose into the cupboards and under the beds.

Does the smoke alarm have batteries? Has the expiration date passed on the canned goods? Audrey Bennett wants to know.



Bennett isn't a busybody; she's an ombudsman. And even though it's a word that many can't even pronounce, 81-year-old Lillian Ackerman knows what it means.

"The ombudsman protects the rights of the patients, residents, citizens, whatever," said Ackerman, sitting in her wheelchair at the Colony Club retirement facility in Sunrise. "Someone has to keep their eyes open or people will try to slip things by."

For nine years, Bennett has been a member of the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Council in Broward County and the chairwoman of the group for five years.

ombudsman councils throughout Florida that inspect nursing homes and adult living facilities, and investigate complaints. Bennett, who lives with her husband in Davie, in October will begin her second one-year term as the state-wide chairwoman.

She isn't expecting a raise: With the exception of one paid coordinator in each district, all ombudsmen are volunteers, including Bennett. They apply for the job, then must be approved by the governor.

"It's like having a full-time job," State Ombudsman Gwen Schaper, who oversees the district coordinators, said of Bennett's position. While Schaper finds most of the volunteers dedicated, "one thing I would say that's special about Audrey is that she really is there for the residents."

Easily spotted in her bright red dress and short-cropped hair, Bennett moves through the hallways of Colony Club, pressing hands and asking questions of every resident she sees. "How are you feeling?" she'll ask, scanning them for bruises, wet clothing or other signs of neglect. Making sure a building and its equipment are properly maintained is important; making sure the seniors are properly maintained is vital.

"When you shove someone onto a bed or onto the floor, it's abuse. If you shove someone, it's abuse," said Bennett, 66, who worked for

years as a licensed practical nurse in Broward nursing homes before becoming an ombudsman.

During an inspection of another facility last year, Bennett found a dead rat under a desk when she sat down to write her report.

Colony Club, however, is looking good and Bennett praises the 110-bed facility's turn-around since its management was taken over by HealthTrust America last year.

The company values the ombudsman's approval as much as an OK from the state Agency for Health Care Administration, even though only AHC has the power to close a bad retirement or nursing home.

"After all, AHC represents the bureaucracy," said HealthTrust Vice President Mary Jo Pompeo. "The ombudsman represents the people."

Last year, Bennett and the Broward council's 20 volunteers inspected all of the county's 197 adult living facilities, nursing homes and adult care homes. They also handled about 450 complaints.

The relationship between AHC and ombudsman inspectors, rocky in the past, has grown strong under Bennett's leadership. "I don't know many districts that are lucky enough to have someone as dedicated as Audrey Bennett," said Pat Feeney, AHC's administrator in Broward.

FROM PAGE 1B

**Sanctions against homes must be obvious, group says**

the state's 11 districts, although inspectors say that may be more because of Broward's diligent enforcement than the county having more than its share of shady facility owners.

Palm Beach County has no moratoriums. Three of Broward's offenders have been on moratorium since March — possible because facility owners appealing the action have up to about five months before they must have a hearing.

Inspectors with the state Agency for Health Care Administration slap moratoriums on facilities with problems that endanger the health, safety and welfare of the residents, but are not life-threatening or don't warrant emergency closure. The deficiencies could include anything from unsanitary conditions to poor medication management or bad patient care.

Once flagged, moratorium homes are not allowed to take in any new residents. Owners are required to notify residents and family members of the moratorium, and place a notice in a "place visible to the public," according to law.

Ombudsman inspectors, who report their findings to the state

PROSTITUTION

FROM PAGE 1B

**Hollywood police keeping prostitutes off their streets**

"It's working, yeah, but they're doing it the wrong way."

Cynthia's photograph appears in a booklet of known prostitutes that police distributed to motel owners last month.

"Permitting these subjects to remain or enter upon your property will be prima facie evidence that prostitution activity is conducted," Sgt. Joseph Healey wrote. "And nuisance abatement and/or seizure proceedings will commence."

At the Ventura Inn Motel, a one-story complex across from the Church of the Little Flower, owner Winnie Provenzano Jr. said it is difficult to keep prostitutes out.

"Lots of times it's impossible for us to know," he said. "A businessman comes here with a tie on his rental car, checks in with a credit card. Many times the [prostitute] is not the one renting the room."

So far, he said, the police crackdown is working.

"Normally this time of morning they'd be real active," he said. "Now is the calmest it's been in a long time. So far this morning, I haven't seen one."

But he doubts the calm will last. Having run the motel for 21 years, he has seen prostitutes driven off for a mile then driven back, as police in Fort Lauderdale or Hallandale operated their own crackdowns.

"Let's face it," he said. "It's something that's never going to be stopped."

Hollywood police hope to prove him wrong. They have coordinated their work with the Broward Sheriff's Office in Dania to prevent sting operations from simply moving the prostitutes a few blocks north or south. They also are taking the fight to the demand side by threatening the customers to their families and the public.

When police called customers' wives, the most common reaction, predictably, was anger, Healey said. Police dropped that tactic, finding it a cumbersome way to deal with the cars. But this month, they mailed 120 letters to the arrested customers' homes, warning them of the risks of illicit sex.

Hollywood police are considering putting customers' names on billboards, running them on cable-access television and displaying them on the city's Web page.

The Sun-Sentinel and The Miami Herald refused to run ads listing the names of arrested customers — a decision that annoyed police.

"I think it's incredibly hypocritical that they take ads for strip clubs and escort services, and not from the Police Department," Healey said.

Sun-Sentinel spokesman Rich Pollock said it is up to law-enforcement agencies, not newspapers, to enforce the laws.

Herald President Joe Natoli said, "An arrest is not a conviction, and names in the ads may be mistaken or common to many

people." Miami, Boynton Beach and West Palm Beach have tried that technique, with billboards, television and newspapers. All have stopped.

"We didn't notice a decrease as a result of the implementation of those things," said Delrish Moss, spokesman for the Miami Police Department, which once displayed names on billboards and ran them on cable television.

Boynton Beach Police Chief Marshall Gage said the arrests prove traumatic enough to most men to keep them from returning to his town for sex.

"We don't see a lot of recidivism in johns," he said.

Hollywood police are considering a strategy recently implemented in West Palm Beach and Lake Worth. It's called "stapping-out," and here's how it works.

Arrested prostitutes plead guilty, receive suspended sentences and sign agreements to stay off the streets they usually work.

If they violate the agreement, they could be jailed immediately for the full sentence. In West Palm Beach, that's a 60-day term. Meanwhile, police refer them to social agencies for intense counseling to break the drug addictions that have driven many prostitutes to the streets.

"We're not just going to boot them from West Palm to Riviera to Lake Worth," said Officer Thomas Hall, who coordinates the program in West Palm Beach.

In the residential streets of Federal Highway in Hollywood, residents support any strategy that may work, including embarrassing the customers.

Far from being a victimless crime, they said, prostitution has brought drug dealers, robberies and theft to their neighborhood.

"These girls have drug habits," said Suzanne Kincaid, prostitution specialist at the Hollywood Lakes Section Civic Association. "When they can't make the money to support their drug habits or their boyfriends' drug habits, that do they do? They break into houses, they break into cars."

With the pressure on Federal Highway, prostitutes have moved onto 19th Avenue and other side streets. Some have moved across town to State Road 7, particularly south of Washington Avenue, where police ran a sting operation Friday evening.

Under a steady rain, they set up tables and folding chairs at Wesleyan Church of Beverly Park. The plan was to detain the prostitutes, then deploy two decoys to net the customers.

Within a few minutes, they had their first catch: Tina Presti, 27, who allegedly offered an undercover officer oral sex for \$20 and intercourse for \$40.

Presti, handcuffed to a chair at the command post, was questioned by police. An officer asked her address.

"I don't have one," she said. "You live on the street?" She nodded.

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