



## A NIGHT WITH THE ANGELS

Guardian Angels try patrols for a third time in Portland.

BY BRANDON HARTLEY



When a drug house opened last summer in Sellwood, resident Michael McDaniel repeatedly called police and took down license plates before cops shut down the operation in November.

But the 41-year-old state worker wanted to do more crime-fighting. McDaniel called a buddy, Marc Wolters, 34, a retail manager just as tired of battling drug dealers and prostitution near his East Burnside workplace.

The two decided to kick-start the long-dormant Portland chapter of the Guardian Angels, a volunteer patrol group founded 26 years ago in New York City to battle street crime.

McDaniel and Wolters contacted the head office in New York and were vetted by the Angels' Western Regional office. The pair ended up getting the all-clear to begin a chapter in Portland, where two prior Angels incarnations faded.

Since February, a half-dozen volunteers have patrolled downtown Portland, as well as the Pearl, Chinatown and Lloyd districts, on Saturday nights.

The Angels' M.O. for handling the unruly varies. If they must hold somebody until police arrive, they handcuff the person. If resistance continues, two Angels will keep the person off-balance in a standing position, or hold them on the ground in the roughest cases.

"We've never had problems with the group," says Portland police spokesman Brian Schmautz. But the ACLU raises concerns about the potential for vigilantism, a frequent criticism of the Angels during the '80s. And TriMet is reluctant to let the Angels work on MAX trains.

"This opens up a lot of issues," says TriMet spokeswoman Mary Fetsch. "What if they restrain someone? That could make us liable."

Oregon law allows citizen's arrest, with force, if the person witnesses a crime.

To get a better idea of what the Angels do, WW tagged along for a four-hour patrol one recent Saturday night. Here's a rundown:

8 pm: Five Angels, wearing their trademark red jackets and berets, line up against a wall at Southwest 4th Avenue and Jefferson Street. McDaniel searches Wolters and the other members for weapons-standard operating procedure-before Wolters searches McDaniel. Each Angel has undergone three months of self-defense and martial-arts training. The closest thing to a weapon they carry tonight is a small flashlight and handcuffs.

8:15 pm: Near City Hall, a transient approaches but is worried the group will attack him because he's carrying a screwdriver and gardening shears. McDaniel assures him the group is more interested in helping the homeless.

8:45 pm: The Angels board a MAX train, not patrolling on the train but stepping off at each stop to scan for trouble. At the stop by Lloyd Cinemas, several groups of teenagers quiet down as the Angels pass through. One teen defiantly tosses a 44-ounce soda cup over the tracks. The Angels don't intervene.

9:40 pm: Back on the west side, the Angels walk through Chinatown. Pedestrians older than 30 offer high-fives and say, "Glad to have you guys back." One woman stops to hug each and offers to send her "spirit warriors" for additional protection. Meanwhile, twentysomething club-hoppers and transients laugh at the Angels. "People are much less confrontational than in the old days," says an Angel who originally joined the group in the '80s. One veteran Angel recalls a night in the '90s when a shopping cart was nearly dropped on him as he patrolled underneath the Burnside Bridge.

10:45 pm: The Angels recognize a disoriented woman near the Grove Hotel on West Burnside Street. The group intervened a few weeks earlier in an argument between her and a "customer" over \$10. "Who are you guys?" she cackles. They chat with her for a minute before wishing her well.

11:15 pm: A drunken man in a rain jacket approaches a woman at a bus stop on Southwest 6th Avenue. The Angels intervene with a polite "How are you doing tonight?" That's all it takes. The man eyes a female Angel warily before turning away.

11:55 pm: After the Angels decide to call it a night, another drunken guy stops them. "I want to join up," he says. "How do I do it?" Before anyone can respond, the guy's girlfriend grabs him by the shirtcuff, starts kissing him and coaxes him down 4th Avenue.

Originally published 6/8/2005

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