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Cops: Know Your Rights

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Radars beeped, and the siren was ready for use. Taking the passenger seat in the Iowa State Campus Police car, flashbacks of “Reno 911” episodes ran through my mind as I imagined all of the sweet moves that would be thrown down on every freshman traveling with a backpack full of Keystone. Roaming through Campustown, we drove slowly, circling the mass of students traveling between parties and bars.

It’s been a long week and you are incredibly relieved that Friday has arrived—taking shots tonight is a major improvement from that impossible organic chemistry exam. Everyone at the kegger you ended up at is too drunk to man the cups and your best friend is already throwing down YouTube worthy dance moves. The free drinks are flowing and that shit week is finally in the back of your mind when, an instant later, there’s a knock at the door and you’re cuffed, cited and carried off to jail quicker than you can say “Miranda rights.”

For many students, the Iowa State University and Ames Police Departments are a mere nuisance—a group of people in black uniforms whose sole purpose is to dole out fines for being normal college students enjoying a night off. Obviously tickets suck, but they always come with reason. Citations are a form of disciplinary action that discourage citizens from breaking the law. When it comes to underage drinking, citations are served to discourage students from drinking beyond their limits.

The ISUPD recognizes a positive relationship between itself and the students the officers protect. They don’t wear beer goggles on weekends like those who end up in the backs of their cars. As the intoxicated make their way across Campustown, officers carefully watch for subtle movements the impaired don’t notice themselves. They see the slight trip of a drunkard, almost landing in traffic, or a moment when a black-out student has lost their group of friends and is puking their guts out on the side of a house. It can be tough for officers to watch the oblivious actions of those they’re trying to protect. “Officers sometimes snap because other people can be oblivious to their situation, for example, if a drunk driver was on the road next to them,” said ISUPD Captain Darin Van Ryswyk.

These actions may seem small and irrelevant at the time, but the campus police officers have witnessed how these small mishaps can lead to disaster. Almost three years ago, Jon Lacina drunkenly wandered into an abandoned building south of campus and injured himself. His body was found three months later. That same semester, Raven Gileau was left beneath the railroad tracks north of campus while walking home from a night of heavy underage drinking. Her roommate reported her as missing at 3:19 a.m. and her body was recovered near the train tracks about two hours later. She had been hit by a train.
Haunting memories of avoidable accidents like these drive police officers to protect and serve. Officer Doug Hicks of the ISUPD was a member of the search party for Gileau. He will never forget the rumbling sound of the train engine that was going over the tracks where Gileau was last seen. He later learned her body was found and she had been hit by a train. For all he knows, the engine he heard earlier that morning could have been the train that killed Gileau. An autopsy later revealed that her blood alcohol content was more than twice the legal limit when she died.

From a student’s perspective, a couple shots may only lead to a nasty hangover, but officers in Ames have witnessed how dramatically a night can change when alcohol consumption passes the point of responsible fun.

One In A Million

People pour from every exit, empties fill the once green lawn and music blares ten times louder than it does from the average frat guy’s subwoofer. Shortly after, the police arrive with plenty of pink slips and keen eyes that have no remorse for the underager hiding behind the couch. It sucks being the one person who gets cited, but that one person is the officer’s golden ticket to the source, according to the Nuisance Party Ordinance of the City of Ames. The ordinance requires officers to cite one of the first violators they see for them to be able to charge the party throwers with a nuisance party violation.

Last year, the ISUPD issued a total of 437 Possessions of Alcohol Under the Legal Age (PAULA). Considering that many people are usually out drinking in Campustown on a Friday night and that roughly half of ISU undergrads are underage, 437 PAULAs spanning 365 days is a small number. Most of the PAULAs were issued during VEISHEA and out of the 124 people who were arrested during last year’s festivities, only about one-third were Iowa State students.

Officers don’t get adrenaline rushes by busting parties like we may have suspected. “I’ve never smiled after writing someone an
underage ticket,” Van Ryswyk says. Choosing
the career path of an officer is driven by a want
to protect the public by enforcing laws. Van
Ryswyk explains, “[People] don’t become an
officer to write PAULAs”. Handing out citations
is a simple way to remind people of the laws
that exist for their own safety.

When an officer intervenes at a party, they’re
not just giving students a hard time for having
fun; they’re trying to save anyone there who
may be having a negative experience. Some
may be having the best drunken stupor of their
lives, while busting a party could stop a rape
from happening in the back upstairs bedroom
or permanent damage from alcohol poisoning.

For this reason, officers must have an
aggressive strategy to break up a party. “It’s
easy to give a warning to a speeder, but giving
a group of underage people a warning is
difficult. How do you choose who gets a ticket
and who gets a warning?” Van Ryswyk asks.
When busting a party, the first law breaker
to catch Van Ryswyk’s eye is the first to get a
ticket; it’s ultimately a random process.
Officers have to deal with a variety of people
on a daily basis, the unruly, the intoxicated,
the testosterone-driven bad asses and the Fast
and Furious wannabes. In order to enforce
laws, the officers have to maintain an alpha
dog persona in all situations, a stereotypical
attitude taught to everyone who goes through
officer training. Their boisterous voices and
gun holstered to their side are intimidating,
and images of dirty cops in movies and on
television don’t reduce the fear that officers
may be abusing their power in any situation.

Brandon Singleton, a Des Moines police
officer, was found with meth, marijuana and
drug paraphernalia for personal use in his
patrol car after crashing into a parked car
and fleeing the scene while on duty last April.
Though not under the influence at the time of
the incident, Singleton was tried, plead guilty
and sentenced to one year probation. He was
fired from the Des Moines Police
Department the following May.

Identity Crisis
For many, having a fake ID
when underage is almost
as crucial as receiving a
driver’s license on their
16th birthday. Tip number
one when dealing with
police officers: don’t lie about your identity. They
will find out who you are and then slap you with
a ticket for providing false identification. Your
identification is the only piece of information
you’re required to share with a police officer,
according to the Supreme Court.

Student Laura Faber was walking from a tailgate
when she was stopped and questioned by a team
of cops. Carrying an open container and being a
minor, she made the mistake of making it a game.
“I said I didn’t have [my I.D.] because I didn’t want
to get ticketed, so I gave them a fake name and
[fake] information,” Faber says. After running her
information, the officers determined it to be false.
“They took me to jail,” Faber continues. “[They]
gave me citations for possession under the legal
age, an open container, false identification and
public intoxication. I ended up spending 21 hours
in jail.”

Many students use Facebook as an informal
means of communicating with their friends and
pages sometimes show more drinking photos
than you want an officer who could cite you for a
PAAILA to see. With the rise of social networking,
Facebook has become an information gathering
tool for officers searching for a second form of ID.
The ease of logging into users’ accounts via smart
During VEISHEA there are 85-90 officers on duty instead of a normal 20.

437 Iowa State students received PAULAs during the year 2011.

Police officers do not try to enforce laws in a stricter manner during VEISHEA.

During VEISHEA there were a total of 124 arrests, but only 1/3 were Iowa State students.

PAULA: Possession of Alcohol under the Legal Age

A first offense PAULA will cost $314.00. That includes $200.00 for the fine, a 32 percent “surcharge” and the new court costs of $50.00.

A second offense PAULA will run you $500.00, plus the surcharges and new court costs which sum to a total of $710.00.

It is not against the law to drink alcohol at home with your parents.

“It wasn’t my beer I was just holding it,” will not get you out of a ticket.

At the University of Nebraska, police officers pull undercover cops to sneak into parties without a permit or procurement for minors to identify sales and possession of alcohol.

Belittling Words

Being called “sweetie” can feel extremely offensive when receiving a citation, but it’s also language that is completely unnecessary in the realm of law enforcement. Some even question whether a person of high authority using words considered to have a belittling and sexual connotation could be deemed as sexual harassment. Can a police officer call a student “sweetie?” According to Van Ryswyk, absolutely not. An officer speaking to a citizen in this manner is disrespectful and unacceptable, he adds. Van Ryswyk’s best explanation for why an officer may have chosen to speak to this student in this manner is because he thought it was better to keep his appearance of dominance in tact by belittling the student, rather than using a loud, commanding voice. Assault is common in the life of a police officer, so controlling suspects starts with their body language and voice, which is important for their own safety. But when are offensive manners necessary and when are they meant to insult?

Sweet Talk a Cop

The cop reaches in his pocket and pulls out the dreaded pink slip, the suspect in question has a small window of time to find a way out. No matter how unlikely, the thought of weaseling out of the ticket is often an immediate response.

Telling the truth seems logical, but the drinks you had earlier might have brought out your inner-actor, complete with a fictional story that seems like it could get you out of anything. But officers have heard it all. One of Van Ryswyk’s favorites is the whimpering
freshman who claims to be 22 because he just finished a Purple Heart-worthy military term. After years of hearing countless stories from students, who will hopefully never receive a book deal, officers know when to call bullshit. Before you start imagining your next award-winning story, act cautiously. You might get off with fewer fines if you simply admit your wrong doing. Fleeing the scene is one surefire way to receive a ticket. Police officers have an efficient way of working together, and your chances of escaping are usually slim to none. If and when you are caught after running, additional citations are likely to be included for your athletics display.

The third way may be difficult to hear, but no, crying will not get you out of a ticket. Next time you’re stopped, pull back the waterworks—they make no difference, though you may be handed a tissue along with your citation.

Number four is specific to football season—holding a beer in a tailgating lot is one definite way of grabbing police officers’ attention.

The final foolproof way to get a ticket has to do with that “super bass.” Police officers have to be considerate of all parties affected by an event, and some neighbors may not regard blaring rap music as artistic expression the same way that you do, so try to keep the music at a moderate level.

During nightly patrols through Campustown, the campus police aren’t a pack of hyenas circling around innocent Simba and Nala. In a sense, they are truly watching over us so we don’t stumble into a deathly pit in the African Savannah, or more likely in this case, a curb. In many situations, police officers play a much greater role than they get credit for.
Perhaps my Reno 911 skills never got put into action, while doing the rounds with Officer Hicks only four stops were made, one of them an arrest. In the five hour period there were plenty of opportunities where he could have stopped and asked someone what was in their backpack this late at night, but that never happened. Instead, he kept his eyes open for students who were stumbling, watching closely for signs of danger. At one point he even removed debris from the streets to help the next traveler on the road avoid a flat tire. His love for Ames and its residents was obvious as he talked about Cyclone athletics and patrolling the tailgating lots, during which it’s not uncommon for him to grab a hamburger and bowl of chili with one of his past arrestees—one student even thanked Van Ryswyk for arresting him for over consuming alcohol, admitting that a night in jail was the wakeup call he needed.

**PARTY FOULS**

Under the Party Nuisance Ordinance, these eight wrongdoings will land a cop at your gathering:

- Public intoxication
- Unlawful consumption of beer, wine or alcholoic beverages in a public place
- Outdoor urination or defecation in a public place
- Unlawful sale, furnishing, dispensing or consumption of beer, wine or alcholic beverages
- Underage deposit of litter or refuse; the damage or destruction of property without the consent of the property
- Unlawful pedestrian or vehicular traffic; standing or parking of vehicles that obstructs the free flow of traffic on the public streets and sidewalks or that impedes the ability to render emergency services
- Unlawfully loud noise; fighting; or, any other conduct or condition that threatens injury to persons or damage to property is hereby declared to be an unlawful public nuisance