S 641 arrests in county in 1978

Is — a continuing problem

By DAVID BOGGAN

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ing up It's Saturday night and John Doe, citizen of the Bryan-College Stamunity, has just left a party friend's apartment. He has been g steadily all evening, and alh he faintly remembers a telecommercial warning against after drinking, John slowly s behind the driver's seat. I don't get drunk," he reasons to

"And besides, I drive better few drinks.

John starts his car and heads me. As he drives down the he swerves into the next lane jerks suddenly back into his

Almost immediately, John notices e flashing lights of a law enforce-ent officer's vehicle in his rear ew mirror. The officer stops John ut meets him as he is getting out of ar. After observing John and ting sufficient evidence, the ofinforms him that he is being ted for driving while intoxi-- DWL

A drunk in a car is like a person a loaded .357 magnum in a "says Lt. Gene Knowles of

ryan Police Department. n that light, there are untold mil-s of "trigger happy" drunk driv-on the streets and highways of nation. John and the thousands him who do get stopped are in

niddle of the road. But the offi-

Newton says. drunk.

is trouble getting it out of his t, that is still another reason for , but he is going to be ar-and charged with DWI if he

the eyes of the officer, the s drunk, he is arrested and d of his rights. He is then to the Brazos County Cour-

implied consent law. If the person refuses, which he has the right to all, I would say two hours would be do, his license can be suspended by the Department of Public Safety for a good average. "That takes a (patrol) car off the streets for two hours. It takes a two-man unit off the streets, also." It is interesting to note that there

one year upon conviction of a DWI. County Attorney John M. Barron Jr., who prosecutes DWI offenders, explains that, depending on circum-stances, a DWI conviction can be

labeled a felony. 'If we can get the first-time offender to plead guilty, he will usu-ally be put on probation," Barron heavy burden for, say, an 18-year-old who's been out celebrating his birthday to handle," Newton ex-plains. "So no, we don't charge the first offender with DWI in every says. "But we have numerous repeaters. After the first probation, the second DWI charge will lead to a (misdemeanor) conviction and the

next is a felony. Barron says that the punishment circumstance. Now, if there is propfor a DWI conviction can range from three days to two years in jail and from \$50-500 fine. But the offender is not the only one who pays for a DWI conviction.

"DWI is very time-consuming to us in law enforcement," Knowles says, "If he (an intoxi-cated person) is driving, we file says. "When we're fooling around with a drunk, we're not protecting businesses and homes." Cated person/ is driving, we me DWI. It is a time-consuming pro-cess. We may have four officers working on one DWI. But it is our Says Newton, "It takes policy.

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minimum of an hour and a half to Newton finds another reason for process a DWI offender. As a good the difference in the two cities'

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were almost twice as many DWI ar-

rests in Bryan as in College Station

in 1978. This can be explained par-

tially by the fact that the College

Station police do not automatically

erty damage or if it is a second of-

But none of this is to say that we

condone driving and drinking in any

fense, we are going to charge him.

We feel like DWI is a pretty

charge a first offender with DWI.

DWI arrest records.

"There are two totally different environments," the College Station officer says. "College Station has more of a college atmosphere where students party and drink and raise hell. But we don't have a wino situation

"That is not to say that Bryan has a bunch of winos. I just think that there are a lot less DWI elements from a college crowd than there are from an occupational force.

Newton says that the atmo-spheres of the local drinking establishments also have something to do with the difference.

"In our city, students drink, but the majority don't go out to just drink," he says. "They go out to drink and eat, or chase women or play pinball.

And there is always a big crowd, both at clubs and at parties, so everybody doesn't get polluted real bad. They run out of beer before they can.

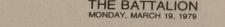
Newton says that he thinks the clientele of Bryan clubs go there mainly to drink.

'I don't think that we have DWI problem that bad," Newton says. "But, of course, one DWI is bad."

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