

Volusia County (Florida) Telecommunicator Is a Card

By Rick Arndt • APCO Bulletin Assistant Editor

Patti Cantrell, a Telecommunicator II (radio operator) at the Volusia County, Florida, Communications Center (VCCC), thought it would be tough to be more honored by her superiors than she was when nominated by one of them in 1993 as Telecommunicator of the Year. They did a good job of trying when Mrs. Cantrell's superiors informed her she would soon be a card.

The card Mrs. Cantrell has become is a SheriffStars Card. The SheriffStars Cards follow the eminently collectible manner and style baseball cards do in portraying heroes. A photograph of each card's subject in his or her work environment appears on the front



of their card, along with their work title and name. The back of the cards contain the subject's motto, statement of work-place and a short, personal and professional biographical statement about them. The cards are given away for free by their subject to anyone who wants one. Although similar programs exist in other parts of the country, this is the first instance of a Central Florida public safety agency adopting a trading card project.

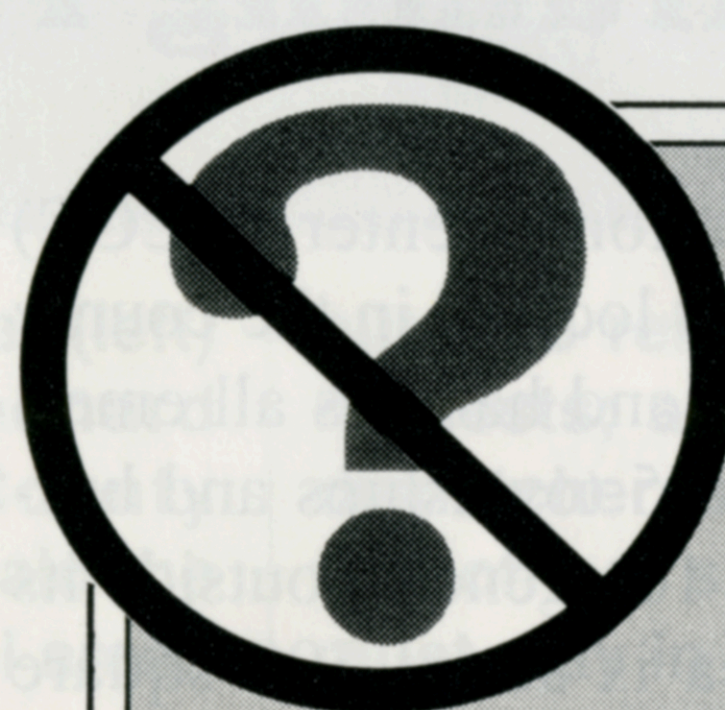
Using "hero" in reference to a public safety card, as the author did previously, is something at least Mrs. Cantrell, in her eighth year as a telecommunicator with the Volusia County Sheriff's Office (VCSO), doesn't feel right about just yet. "I would feel more comfortable being referred to as a heroine if I were a police woman," Mrs. Cantrell said. "I love doing what I do as a telecommunicator, and I feel that a hero is someone who puts their own life in jeopardy to help someone else, especially someone they don't even know, like police officers do. That's something people don't naturally feel inclined to do, or don't naturally love doing."

Despite Mrs. Cantrell's humility, telecommunicators' actions do save lives, and more and more people are coming to fully realize this. However, precisely what the telecommunicator does, to say nothing of the life-saving importance of their work, remains largely unknown to the public. "I'm aware that in-depth knowledge of what I do is not possessed by most people," Mrs. Cantrell said, "and I am very much interested in all telecommunicators receiving the recognition and respect I feel we all deserve." Mrs. Cantrell works two days on and two off, 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. each work day, with one 48-hour work-week and then one 36-hour work-week, and with eight hours overtime each week. "I don't think I could stand going to a Monday-through-Friday, eight-

hours-a-day work schedule after working this way for eight years," Mrs. Cantrell said.

Of the more-than-30 telecommunicators who work at her center, she was the only one chosen for the SheriffStars. "I'm excited to be a part of the SheriffStars Cards, yet I'd like to see more telecommunicators chosen to be involved in the program," Mrs. Cantrell said. The one and only telecommunicator intended to be included in the SheriffStars program was the VCSO Telecommunicator of the Year for 1993, Robin Franz, who declined the offer to become a card. Mrs. Cantrell was next in line as runner-up for the Telecommunicator of the Year award. Mrs. Cantrell reported that the reasons Ms. Franz declined becoming a SheriffStars card were due to an unsatisfactory experience with a newspaper, and to Ms. Franz possessing a healthy amount of humility. Other personnel chosen to become cards include Sheriff Robert Vogel Jr., a number of his deputies (including patrol, mounted and K-9 teams), river patrol personnel, pilots, investigators,

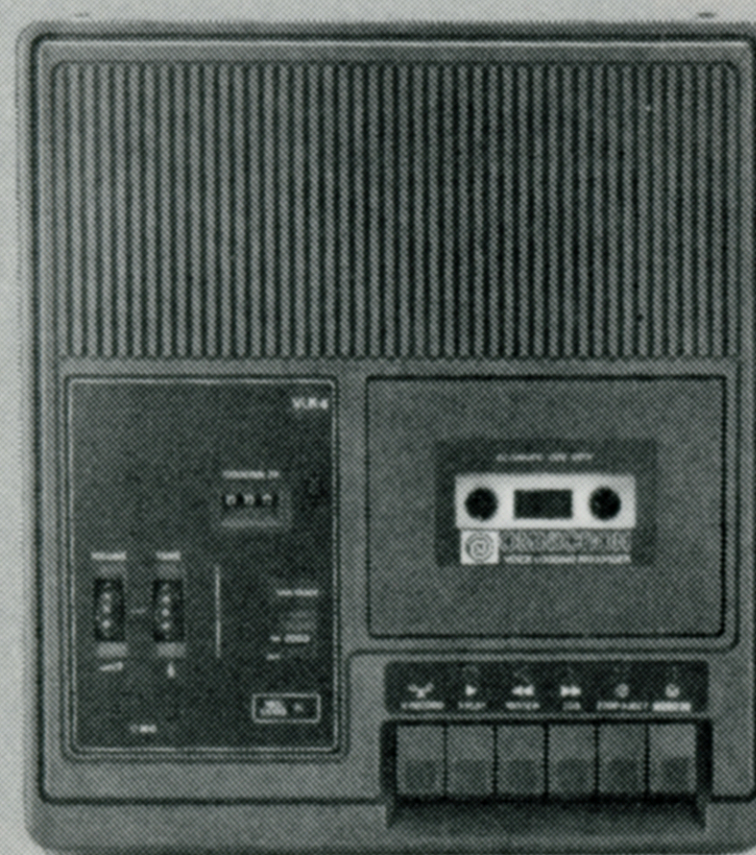
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