LOGAN – My night with the cops started out with a typical noise complaint and ended with a three-man booking at Cache County Jail.

Wanting to get an experience with the local police department, I set up a ride-along to shadow an officer from the Logan City Police Department during his Friday night patrol. I wanted to know what the average Logan police officer might encounter during a weekend night shift, and why officers choose this line of work.

“Something ain’t right in my head I guess,” said Officer Michael Graves of the LCPD, with a laugh. “There is always that inner ambition to help people who need help – to be on the good side of the law.”

Graves said he enjoys his job because “you never know what you’re going to find. Some people like a desk job, other people can’t handle that.

“I don’t like the same old-same old. There’s never a typical plan. That’s the thing about this job.”

After I made a horribly cliché joke about doughnuts, we jumped into his patrol car and drove south on Main Street toward the Riverwalk Apartments to investigate a noise complaint, a common complaint in Logan especially on the weekends.

“Noise is an on-going problem,” Graves said. He understands that noise complaints are often paired with alcohol consumption. “I could go in there and find a bunch of adults and it wouldn’t be a big problem. They are legal and allowed to drink. Or I could go in and find a bunch of minors – you never know.”

We rolled into the parking lot and he shut off his lights. Curious, I ask if this is a typical practice among cops. “Yeah,” he said. “In fact, half of the time with a noise problem you want to go in stealthy.” After seeing that they were all of legal age, he asked them to keep it down and we went on our way.

We started driving but he flipped a U-turn and we headed back into the apartment parking lot. He was on the lookout for a suspicious car he saw driving with its headlights off. He wanted to catch it. The speed bumps caused a problem.

“These speed bumps make it hard to catch up with someone,” Graves said, wanting to go faster. “If you weren’t in the car, I wouldn’t care.”

We pulled out of the parking lot and ventured around the surrounding streets trying to spot the suspicious white Honda Accord. “That’s interesting. That’s very interesting... hmm,” Graves said under his breath. “He must have just booked it. That guy disappeared too fast. Darn.”

Graves said often he is looking for things that “just don’t feel right. If you believe in intuition – hairs on the back of your neck. It’s amazing how much you’ve got to rely on that.”

At first it was a slow night. We patrolled the dark streets of Logan while chit-chatting about comedian Brian Regan among other small-talk conversation topics. We came to the conclusion that comedians and journalists are two professionals that need to know a little bit of everything to be good at what they do.

Itching from curiosity, I asked him if it is actually possible to talk your way out of a ticket. He laughed and said he’s heard “every excuse under the sun.

“I did have one person say ‘My 2-year-old granddaughter has to go poo so I was speeding to get her home.’ I said, ‘OK. Get out of here,’ and let her go.” He felt sympathetic since he has three young daughters of his own.

Every cop is different, Graves said, when they are deciding on whether to give a ticket during a routine traffic stop.

“I’m not the kind to say ‘Do you know why I just stopped you?’ I hate that,” he said. “I’m the kind that walks up, I introduce myself and let them know why I stopped them...
and see if there is a justified reason for it. I ask, “Do you have a justified reason for what I just stopped you for?”

Graves has to deal with all kinds of excuses and individuals. Being in a college town, he said that the hardest people that he has dealt with are college students.

“When college kids get a little bit of alcohol in them, they become their own personal lawyers,” he said. “They think they know the law. They think they know what they can and can’t do. They know that they are 21 next week and they’re allowed to drink.”

College parties and underage drinking are continuous problems in Logan, but surprisingly, so are gang-related activities, Graves said.

“There are plenty of gangs,” he said. “The difference is that I don’t think they are out in the open like in other larger cities but there are plenty of gangs. Luckily, and I say luckily because it’s not a violent thing, they still are trying to establish themselves.”

To do that, Graves said that the gangs do a lot of tagging, or graffiti. “That’s how they mark their territory,” he said.

“They also do a lot of fist fights. They obviously aren’t out stabbing. We don’t have a lot of drive-bys here. We’ve had a couple but not too many. There was one, eight or nine years ago – a shooting at Willow Park that was gang related.”

As we are talking, Graves checked the license plate of the car in front of us at a stop sign. “Just making sure he’s got insurance,” he said.

He did.

We got a call reporting a suicidal individual in an apartment complex in northern Logan. We hurried there and found an army of police cars, fire trucks and ambulances.

“Basically what happens with a suicidal individual is that we [the cops] have to go in and clear the scene, make sure they aren’t using any weapons or what not,” Graves said. He said suicidal individuals are a delicate matter and need to be treated on a case-by-case basis.

“A lot of it depends on how cooperative the person is,” he said. “Someone, like this person – their chemical balance is off a little bit and they just have the thoughts and the tendencies. They are real simple. You walk in. ‘You got any weapons? Nope? OK. We’ll send medical in.’ Others, in their mind, they are done. They’ve got nothing to lose, nothing to live for and they will fight you ever step of the way. We’ve had some where it’s quite a battle to hold them down and keep us all safe.”

After the situation was under control and the medics were called in, we pulled out of the parking lot and continued south toward the fairgrounds in response to another noise complaint. On the way, I asked him if he has had any amazing cop stories he would share – like the ones you would tell at a dinner party.

“No, I don’t know if I can think of one,” he said “I’ve only been on for two years so that’s not a fair amount of time. Sorry.”

It was funny that he said that, because he was about to experience one of his major cop experiences, and I was there to witness it.

After handling the mild noise compliant, we headed back toward Main Street. While I was calmly jotting down some notes, Graves suddenly turned on his flashing lights and siren and we sped northbound, responding to an emergency call. I didn’t know what was happening or where we were going, but I was enjoying the rare opportunity I was experiencing to legally speed in a police car.

We raced to Lee’s Marketplace in Logan where backup had been requested. When we got there, it seemed that every cop in Logan was there as well as three Utah Highway Patrolmen.

Graves jumped out of the car and I was left inside to be an eye-witness to the arrests.

Three men inside the supermarket and were reported to be harassing the customers and seemed to be intoxicated. A call from an employee was received at 11:44 p.m. requesting police assistance. Two out of the three men were “extremely belligerent – fighting and arguing with us,” Graves said.

Related story: Three arrested after incident at Lee’s Marketplace

“I got there when they were just getting the one guy into the car so I went to the other guy on the ground,” he said. “It took us 5-10 minutes just to get him in the car.”

One man was particularly difficult, Graves said. He kicked an officer in the face and made a dent in a month-old patrol car with his foot. Officers used a Taser to help
control the situation along with binding his legs together. After the three men were in the patrol cars, they were taken directly to Cache County Jail.

“If you haven’t already notified the jail, we’re going to need every deputy they’ve got,” Graves spoke into his radio, preparing the jail for the havoc they were bringing. Engine burning, we followed the train of police cars to the jail so Graves could help with the transportation of the arrested individuals.

“If he puts up that kind of fight with us, he’s going to do the same thing in the jail,” he said. “We are going to man power the jail until we get him into a cell. He’s a big Polynesian guy and if he gets on alcohol and whatever else he was on, he can get pretty powerful.”

We arrived at the jail and I’m left in the car while the officers handle the transportation of the newest soon-to-be inmates of Cache County Jail. After about 20 -30 minutes, Graves came back to the car and let me in on a confession.

“So you want to know the truth?” he asked. “You just witnessed my first 1078.”

He described a 1078 as “all hell is breaking loose but hasn’t gotten all the way there yet.”

“And my first, I don’t know if you can call that a fight, but pretty close. They were just extremely belligerent and uncooperative.”

Graves jokingly blames me for what happened, saying I’m “bad mojo… what you just witnessed will probably be a major story.” A journalist’s dream.

After all the excitement of the three-man arrest, we headed to our next response which was about a dog that was loose around University Stadium 6 Movie Theater in Logan.

“The challenge in this work is that we go from that to trying to find a dog,” Graves said with a sigh.

We couldn’t find the dog.

NW