

Building 'Safest' Firing Range

By EDWARD RICCIUTI

WALDWICK—"The safest outdoor firing range in North Bergen county" This statement has been made by people who have seen the rifle and pistol range now being built by the Waldwick Police Department.

This range, which Police Chief Pat Pratico has wanted to see become a reality for several years, is being set up by the department with help from private citizens at no cost to the borough. When it is completed next spring, the police will conduct programs there for youngsters and other groups interested in firearms.

Located next to the Little League stadium, the range is being built by department members in their spare time. Local organizations, such as the Lions Club, have contributed help and material for construction. So have contractors who have building supplies available.

Far from designing the structure just for police use, Chief Pratico's men hope to hold classes for youngsters and teenagers who wish to learn how to handle firearms. The Little League will also be able to use the storage and meeting room in the set-up.

This interest in the community as a whole, beyond the matter of law enforcement, is typical of the Waldwick Police Department. Besides Chief Pratico, eight other men work out of the familiar office on the west side of the Municipal Building. They are Capt. Francis McGrogan, Sgt. George Bunning Sr., Ptl. George Bunning Jr., Neil Bremer, Russell Litchult, Dan Lupo, Theodore Giandana, and George Shedler.

Settling family arguments, rescuing cats from trees, investigating accidents and burglaries — these are all part of the job of the Waldwick department.

The department does its job well. Waldwick boasts of only one traffic death since 1952. Its two patrol cars cover about 180 miles of borough streets a day.

However, department members take an interest in their borough beyond their jobs. The construction of the new range is the latest example of their efforts in this direction.

Realizing some years ago the need for a range to keep borough police proficient with firearms, members of the force began work last spring, by clearing a plot of municipal land in the borough park. Devoting their days off to the project, the police soon had a suitable place to construct a range.



Ptl. George Bunning Jr. points to the armor plate target backings being set up in the almost-finished Waldwick firing range. Members of the police force and volunteers are building the structure.

They chopped brush, dug stumps and graded earth. Lugging cinder blocks, they built the walls and the storage house. Before the range is completed, these walls and the house will be stuccoed and painted.

Even though, as policemen, they did not have the easiest work schedules in the world, they managed to find time to work on the range. Early on Saturday mornings construction noises were heard coming from the plot next to the Little League field.

Seeing the efforts of Chief Pratico and his men, local citizens began to pitch in, adding their muscle and skill and in the case of several contractors, equipment to do the work.

These citizens realized that the range will benefit the borough as a

whole — not just the police department. A new ordinance has made it possible for groups to use the range with police supervision.

Sgt. Bunning reports that if enough younger people become interested, department members will gladly conduct classes this winter in use of firearms. This would be in preparation for actual shooting when the range is completed this spring.

Youth Teams Planned

The department hopes to have enough youngsters to organize teams, which, under guidance, will compete for trophies. All members of the force are capable teachers in the use of weapons. They have competed in contests in the New York-New Jersey area.

Last year, in the course of eight

competitions, including the International Trophy Meet and New York Daily Mirror Meet, Waldwick policemen never failed to bring home at least one trophy. They competed on an equal basis with FBI shooters and representatives from much larger police departments.

Still under construction, the range has cinder-block side walls that are 85 feet long and a 65 feet wide backstop. These vary from eight to ten feet in height. Far from any private homes, noise from firing will bother no one, the police said.

A storage and meeting house has been constructed at one end of the range. This will be used for Little League activities and have a comfort station for the benefit of park-goers.

According to Sgt. Bunning, the department hopes to get water for the comfort station from a nearby abandoned borough test well.

Shooters will fire at ten armor plate targets, set up in front of the ten foot high backstop. These are the same type targets used by the Coast Guard and military services to test weapons.

When completed, the entire range will be landscaped and fenced in. The borough will have an attractive structure added to its park, the police said. A valuable piece of property, and useful when completed the range will make nine tired policemen very happy.



Waldwick Police Chief Pat Pratico has a gleam in his eye as he proudly holds one of the many trophies awarded to his men during firing competitions.

State Police Hail To Drivers; System

TRENTON (AP) — State Police Superintendent Joseph D. Rutter said today the State Police written warning system, a year old yesterday, is a success and will be continued.

Last Dec. 8, the State Police started handing out written warnings for minor law infractions, like failure to halt completely at a stop sign or headlight not working.

In the first year 79,021 warnings were handed out, Col. Rutter told a newsmen.

And he said the biggest fear—that warnings would be used by police instead of tickets—did not materialize. During the same pe-