

# 'Taki 183' Spawns Pen Pals

Taki is a Manhattan teenager who writes his name and his street number everywhere he goes. He says it is something he just has to do.

His TAKI 183 appears in subway stations and inside subway cars all over the city, on walls along Broadway, at Kennedy International Airport, in New Jersey, Connecticut, upstate New York and other places.

He has spawned hundreds of imitators, including Joe 136, BARBARA 62, EEL 159, YANK 135 and LEO 136.

To remove such words, plus the obscenities and other graffiti in subway stations, it cost 80,000 man-hours, or about \$300,000, in the last year, the Transit Authority estimates.

"I work, I pay taxes too and it doesn't harm anybody," Taki said in an interview, when told of the cost of removing the graffiti.

And he asked: "Why do they go after the little guy? Why not the campaign organizations that put stickers all over the subways at election time?"

## Withholds Last Name

The 17-year-old recent high school graduate lives on 183d Street between Audubon and Amsterdam Avenues. He asked that his last name not be disclosed. Taki, he said, is a traditional Greek diminutive for Demetrius, his real first name.

"I don't feel like a celebrity normally," he said. "But the guys make me feel like one when they introduce me to someone. 'This is him,' they say. The guys know who the first one was."

Taki said that when he began sneaking his name and street number onto ice cream trucks early last summer, nobody else was writing similar graffiti.

"I didn't have a job then," he said, "and you pass the time, you know. I took the form from JULIO 204, but he was doing it for a couple of years then and he was busted and stopped."

## 'He's the King'

"I just did it everywhere I went. I still do, though not as much. You don't do it for girls; they don't seem to care. You do it for yourself. You don't go after it to be elected President."

He said he had no idea how many times he had written his name.

Other teen-agers who live on his block are proud of him. "He's the king," a youth lounging on a doorstep said.

"It's got everybody doing it," added Raymond Vargas a 16-year-old with Afro-style hair. "I like to write my name every once in a while, but not in places where people can get to it and alter it." He said he writes RAY A.O.— for All Over.

Graffiti have had a long history in the city's subways. Kilroy, who was everywhere in World War II, left his mark along with the mus-



The New York Times/Don Hosan Charles

**Taki, who began sneaking his name onto ice cream trucks last summer, has widened his field and won imitators. These marks are on door on 183d Street, where he lives.**

taches drawn on advertising posters and various obscenities.

Officials said, however, that the problem had mushroomed during the last two years.

It is also harder to deal with. The Magic Marker and other felt-tip markers are considered indelible on concrete and other rough surfaces in subway stations. Those surfaces are painted over to remove graffiti.

Inside subway cars, new high-powered cleaners can remove almost anything from the polished metal surfaces except India ink.

Floyd Holoway, Transit Authority patrolman who is second vice president of the Transit Patrolmen's Benevolent Association, said that most graffiti appeared just before and just after school hours.

"It's not a major crime," he said. "Most of the time they don't try to talk their way out if they're caught."

He said he had caught

teen-agers form all parts of the city, all races and religions and all economic classes.

The actual offense, the Transit Authority police said, is classed as a violation because it is barred only by Transit Authority rules, not by law. Anyone older than 16 who is caught would get a summons, a spokesman said.

## Was Suspended Once

Taki said he had never been caught in the subways. He was once suspended from Harran High School for a day for writing on walls, though, and a Secret Service agent once gave him a stern lecture for writing on a Secret Service car during a parade.

The youth, who said he would enter a local university in September, conceded that his passion for graffiti was not normal: "Since there are no more student deferments, maybe I'll go to a psychiatrist and tell him I'm TAKI 183. I'm sure that will be enough to get me a psychological deferment."

But he added: "I could never retire. I still carry a small Magic Marker around with me."



Lamppost on 183d Street