‘Taki 183’ Spawns Pen Pals

Taki is a Manhattan teen-ager, who lives in his home and his street number every-where he goes. He says it is something he just has to do.

His TAKI 183 appears in subway cars, on walls and inside subway cars all over the city, on walls along Broadway, at Kennedy International Airport, in New Jersey, Connecticut, up to 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 marks, plus the obscenities and other graffiti in subways, stations, it cost $80,000 a month, or about $300,000, in the last year, the Transit Authority estimates.

"If I work, I pay taxes too and it doesn’t harm anybody," Taki said in a interview, which he was very upset at removing the graffiti.

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

Withdraws Last Name

The 17-year-old recent high school graduate lives on 183rd Street between Audubon and Amsterdam Av- enues. He asked that his last name not be disclosed. Taki, he said, is a traditional Greek desmos, a deme or community, his real first name.

"I don’t feel like a celeb- rity normally," he said. "But the guys make me feel like one when they introduce me to the cops. This is a joke, they say. The guys know who the first one was."

Taki said that when he be- gan sneaking his name and number onto ice cream trucks in the neighborhood early last summer, nobody took it as graffiti.

"I didn’t have a job then," he said, "and you pass the time, you know. I took the forms and went to work, 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 to get elected President."

He said he had no idea how many times he had written it.

Other teen-agers who live on his block are proud of him. "He’s the king," a youth lounging on a doorstop said. "I like to write my name every once in a while, but not like that. I think you can get away with it." He added that he writes RAY A.O. — for RAY O.C. for O.C.

Graffiti have had a long his- tory in the city’s subways. Radio City music hall in World War II, left his mark along with the mus-

taches drawn on advertising posters and various obscenities.

Official, said, however, that the problem had mush- roomed during the last two years.

It is also harder to deal with. The Magic Marker and other felt-tip markers are considered indelible on con- crete and other rough sur- faces 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 Howeley, 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 reli- gions and all economic classes.

The actual offense, the Transit Authority police said, is classed as a violation be- cause 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 Ser- vice 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."