

HEROES IN BLUE

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This is the last article in this series of "Heroes in Blue." As was stated in the beginning of the series: "Good policemen, or policewomen, are more than rough, tough guys. They are better than rough, tough guys. Even though the price of prudence and restraint, of intelligence and daring, may cost an officer his life, he must be equipped with the foregoing and with many other attributes gained only through experience. The GOOD policeman is neither WHITE nor COLORED. He is BOTH. He is the GOOD MAN."

Those featured in "Heroes in Blues" were men and women. All were colored. They were chosen for a specific reason. Like their white counterparts, some saw long service, some have seen short service. But they faced danger beyond the call of duty. However, unlike many of their white colleagues, their acts of bravery failed to gain promotions for them. THIS SHOULD NOT HAVE BEEN. All of them, according to their records, SHOULD HAVE BEEN PROMOTED.

The fact that they WERE NOT, prompted the research and writing of "Heroes in Blue." Such an error or "oversight" should not happen again... at least it is hoped that it won't happen again.

Younger colored officers on the police force should profit from the slight dealt the majority of other colored policemen in the past, in that they should be given consideration for promotion just like their white colleagues. Also, until the present system of selecting officers for promotion, under the existing Civil Service regulations, is changed, UPGRADING SHOULD CONTINUE WITHOUT HALTING WHENEVER A VACANCY, COVERED BY CIVIL SERVICE RULES, EXISTS. And, when this system of selection changes, the "equality" theme should be in force.

In addition, colored policemen should be given equal consideration when promotions or other "breaks" are passed out on the basis of merit, etc. Such has been promised by Superintendent of Police James W. Slusser.

A PROMISE KEPT

Within the past several months, some Negro policemen have been given consideration by the Bureau of Police, namely, Patrolmen Karl O. Jackson, Ralph O. Barnett, Rosey M. Neason and Edward Bailey. There is need for MORE.

In "Heroes in Blue," a majority of the principals were veteran police officers. Time and space would not permit mentioning all of them. Neither is it possible to mention all of the younger members of the police force who are likewise deserving.

But the interesting thing is, that in spite of the "slight" in bypassing worthy Negro patrolmen in the past, this action has not deterred colored patrolmen, even today, from continuing to



Tired of Waiting— Former Traffic Patrolman Leonard Brown, whom many will remember as having been the first Negro traffic patrolman to work the downtown area, grew tired of waiting for a promotion, so retired. This "Hero in Blue" currently operates a grocery store and meat market in the Homewood District.—Harris Photo.

do their best in performance of duty. No doubt interesting reading could be panned from a compilation of record highlights of some of the "oldtimers," who served with distinction in the Pittsburgh Bureau of Police.

Those, who can't remember, should listen to some who can as they insist that if the former George W. Cole, who was appointed to the force in 1891, were living, he would have an exciting story to tell. He retired in 1917, and died in 1923. With his white partner, the late "Spinnny" Robinson, Cole and the latter proved to be an excellent detective team.

FIRST "WAGONMAN"

And even before Cole's time, reports have it that the former Emanuel Harris, grandfather of William (Woogie) and Charles (Teenie) Harris, was the first Negro patrolman to serve as a "wagonman" on the force. The ex-Northsider was said to have been a "crackerjack" officer also.

Then there was the handsome and "picturesque" William H. Wess, who was appointed to the police force in 1898, was retired in 1917 and died at the age of 80, in 1937. His was a colorful and interesting career, according to the record. Some of his

exploits would qualify him as a "Hero in Blue." And there are many Pittsburghers who won't forget William T. (Bill) McCready. He joined the force in 1902, retired in 1935, and is presently living in Ford City.

"Bill" was a good patrolman and a better detective. Police work was not only a vocation with him, but an avocation as well, so 'tis said.

AHEAD OF BUREAU

Long before the Bureau of Police concentrated on Bertillon and crime laboratory work as a means of assisting in the apprehension of criminal suspects, "Bill" McCready was pioneering in the aforementioned fields of crime detection.

His innovations, counsel and industry were constantly sought by his superiors in the apprehension of lawbreakers. In addition, "Bill" McCready served as a model and "inspiration" to younger policemen "learning the ropes."

Hill District residents, in particular, remember well the late Rufus (Keg O' Nalls) Pinckney, who was both feared and respected by the underworld.

One still hears tales of his prowess with mace, fist and kind words. Even though a "mild-mannered" man at home and among his friends, he was "you-know-what on wheels" in operation against the criminal ilk.

REAL "STREET CLEANER"

How Pinckney bravely, disarmed would-be-killers in barricaded houses... broke up gang and street fights... arrested seven and eight suspects... all single-handedly... and how, while walking his beat, he would rap on utility poles to announce his presence in the vicinity, and street loiterers and criminals, several blocks away, would scatter to the four winds, upon hearing "The Man's" warning knock, are legendary stories in these parts. Truly, "Keg O' Nalls" was a real "street cleaner," when it came to operating against the shady characters in the underworld.

Continuing down the "memory trail," about whom were Pittsburghers referring when, speaking about this officer usually said, "He always gets his man"? Why William (Big Bill) Smith, of course.

Smith was a rugged officer, somewhat like Pinckney in that he was both mild-mannered and plenty tough, depending upon the occasion. The underworld recalls that Smith was quite a "handy man with his dukes," and "never drew his rod unless he was going to shoot."

It was May 27, 1930, when a crowd of men standing on a corner in the Hill District was observed in earnest conversation. One of them was heard to exclaim, "He always gets his man, ya know?"

NABS HUGHES' KILLERS

The news had just been flashed that Smith had captured the slayers of the former Patrolman James (Jim) Hughes, one of the

city's finest officers. The latter was slain Dec. 27, 1929. Smith felt Hughes' death keenly. It was Hughes who taught Smith the game. The latter swore to avenge his death by capturing the killers. After obtaining a vague description of the slayers, Smith worked tirelessly for five months—night and day—running down every possible clue.

Finally, on that May date, he was successful. He nabbed two of the trio, involved in the slaying. Both were given life sentences in the penitentiary.

In 1932, Smith arrested James Thomas, six months after the latter had killed his wife and a "Leroy Coles."

Two hours after L. Slackman, a tailor on Herron Avenue, was killed in a robbery, Smith nabbed Mose Thompson and an accomplice. Both were convicted and sentenced to prison for the crime.

"CRIME OF REVENGE"

Remember back on May 30, 1938, when above the drone of screeching automobile horns and the clanging of street cars, a shot was heard in the direction of Greenlee Field on Bedford Avenue?

Remember, when at midnight, two white police officers found a blood-soaked fur scarf and pocketbook in a shallow ravine near the field?

Remember, when those same officers, minus flashlights, waited until daybreak before they returned and looked for what had all the earmarks of a crime?

Remember, when the early morning sun came up to reveal the bullet-ridden, beaten and bruised body of pretty Edith K. Dougan?

Remember the bloody, tortured body of Sam Parham, her fiancé?

"Bill" Smith remembered too! He never "pigeon-holed" that crime, even though some other officers in the department might have, it's often been said.

He always believed that the crime could be solved, if the investigating officer were given unlimited time and some additional help. He believed this even until the day of his retirement in the 1940's. He also believed that the crime was one of "revenge."

In the Dougan-Parham case, Smith, together with his chief, the late Walter Monaghan, and Detective Voyle Parker, interviewed many people and tracked down countless leads, prior to Smith's retirement. But no suspect was ever found who could be definitely charged with the fiendish crime.

VICTIM OF "POLITICS"?

Smith, now living in Detroit, Mich., is an example of "politics" being played in the Police Department. He was a good patrolman and an excellent detective, but somehow or other was always in some "superior's hair." Some said that certain politicians were after "Bill." Others charged "personal problems." Be that as it may, "Bill" Smith rated recognition as a "Hero in Blue."

Then there was ex-Patrolman Leonard Brown, who later became a very fine traffic patrolman before his retirement in 1950.

RUNNING GUN BATTLE

His record shows, among other complimentary evidence, that he distinguished himself in heroic fashion back in 1930, during a running gun battle in automobiles following a drug store robbery on the North Side. The chase ended on the Boulevard of the Allies, where the bandits managed to escape. They were later caught, and identification was made by Brown.

The "stickup" occurred about 10:30 P. M. The establishment was Schreiber's Drug Store at Anderson and Lacock Streets, Brown said. He was about a "block away" at the time.

Brown continued, explaining that the owner of the store came to the front door, called to him for help and said that he had been "stuck up" and that the bandits had fled down Lacock Street in an automobile.

CHASE BANDITS' CAR

The proprietor jumped in his car and with Brown on the running board and firing at the speeding target, followed the fleeing vehicle down to Progress Street to the Sixteenth Street bridge. The officer instructed the victim to "pull in front of the bandits' car," but he drove in behind the latter's car, instead.

One of the thugs, looking from the rear seat of the getaway car, saw the approaching car with Brown on the running board, and gave instructions to its companions. The thieves began driving towards the main part of the city.

From Sixteenth Street to Seventh Avenue to Liberty Avenue, then to Market Street and over the Boulevard of the Allies

the chase continued. There, the pursuing car and its occupants lost the bandits' speeding car. The thugs, who continued their series of drug store hold-ups and burglaries, were finally nabbed by Brown in a downtown hotel washroom. He identified them on sight and made the pinch.

MADE TRAFFIC PATROLMAN

In 1938 Brown was made a traffic patrolman and he continued to serve until his retirement.

Realizing that advancement for colored police personnel was slow, Brown decided upon retirement, and currently is doing a thriving business in his grocery store and meat market in Homewood.

Another veteran officer, who rates as a "Hero in Blue" was the late city detective, Eugene (Gene) Parker, who died two weeks ago after ten years of service.

Parker was another fearless officer who gave the criminal leeches no rest or break.

SAVES PARTNERS' LIVES

His most notable feat occurred on Jan. 9, 1951, when, during an arrest of a known felon, he was forced to shoot and kill a suspect who, attempting to flee the arresting officers, dived through a window, slashed two officers with broken glass and put up a terrific fight while resisting arrest. Parker was forced to shoot in defense of himself and fellow officers.

According to the record, a squad of detectives had been dispatched to an East Liberty address on Mayflower Street, to apprehend one Jodie Morris, 30, who was wanted for a series of burglaries and auto thefts.

Detectives Parker and John Thompson went inside to make the arrest, while the rest of the squad surrounded the premises.

Confronted with the officers, Morris made a bold attempt to escape by diving through a window in the room, which he was occupying. But he failed in this bid because he was pulled back into the room by one leg by the police. Additional help had arrived on the scene by this time.

SLASHES OFFICERS

Morris, sensing his chance for escape had dwindled almost to an impossibility, grabbed some slivers of glass and attempted to cut the officers. Two were wounded.

The suspect made a break for the door and fled down a hallway and a pair of steps, with Detective Parker in hot pursuit and firing at the fleeing figure.

Morris was found beneath a neighbor's front porch, suffering from multiple bullet wounds. He died shortly after arrival at the Pittsburgh Hospital. The wounded officers were treated at the same hospital.

Detective Parker drew a commendation from his superiors for having saved fellow officers' lives and apprehending the dangerous felon.

HIT DOPE TRAFFIC

It should also be mentioned that Parker, in cooperation with fellow detectives, Thompson and Voyle Parker, were concentrating on the narcotics traffic, particularly in the Hill District, long before the Bureau of Police established a narcotics squad.

This team made one big haul of dope at a rooming house in the Hill, nabbed the suspects, and actually drew the attention of their superiors to the rising problem of dope traffic within the city limits.

And don't think that all of the heroic feats in line of duty have been performed by veteran members of the police department.

In December, 1954, the alertness and courage of two young Centre Avenue patrolmen, Richard Edmonds and Edward Bailey, came to the fore as they foiled an attempted holdup of a Hill District grocery, arrested the young husband and his wife who perpetrated the robbery and saved the life of the store proprietor who had been victimized.

The two radio car patrolmen were giving Christmas charity an assist in the collection of Old Newsboys Fund Boxes, when

they walked in on the attempted robbery by 20-year-old Augustus Cooper, and his 15-year-old wife, who gave her name as Jane Cooper, but was later identified as Joan Ann Dade, the mother of a 9-month-old baby and an escapee from Morgantza Training School.

The owner of the store said he had been threatened, tied up, untied, robbed and was being placed in a meat cooler when Patrolman Edmonds walked in to remove one of the charity boxes.

READ VICTIM'S LIPS

Edmonds sensed something was wrong, and by reading the victim's lips, learned that a hold-up was in progress.

Whipping out his service revolver, the officer ordered the couple to put up their hands, but they broke and ran for the basement in the store.

Patrolman Edmonds ran to the car and warned his partner, Bailey, who joined Edmonds by covering the only other possible escape route.

The couple tried to blast their way through a padlocked trap door, but the officers, with the help of summoned aid, nabbed them.

The pair admitted later to other robberies in the district.

DESERVE UPGRADING

It is officers like these, and others on the force, who are deserving of upgrading. Not to do so reduces the morale of the younger men and does not improve the efficiency of the Police Department.

All concerned, including Mayor Lawrence, the Director of Public Safety, Superintendent of Police and politicians, particularly those in a position to help, should take it upon themselves to see that better use be



Caught in Act— Radio Patrolmen Richard Edmonds, left, and Edward Bailey, right, who is now working in plainclothes, displayed alertness and courage in December, 1954, when they nabbed 20-year-old Augustus-Cooper, center, and his 15-year-old wife Joan, as the pair tried to rob the owner of a Hill District grocery. Both young "Heroes in Blue" should be considered for "Upgrading Unlimited."—Harris Photo.



EUGENE PARKER
... saved officers' lives

made of the Negro personnel in the Police Department.

HOW UNFORTUNATE!

Now, there is only one acting lieutenant in the uniform division, no desk sergeants, turnkeys, wagonmen and unfortunately NO INSPECTORS. Neither are there any in identification or communications.

There should be NO NEGRO JOBS OR WHITE JOBS on the police force. There should be only POLICEMEN, and upgrading should be on the basis of MERIT ONLY.

And Negro police officers MUST TAKE the competitive Civil Service examinations and they MUST MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO PASS THEM WITH HIGH MARKS. IT HELPS.

Neither the Mayor nor the newly created Human Relations Committee can honestly boast about Pittsburgh's "fair and honest racial practices" as long as some of the city's municipal employes are given "short weight" on the scales of justice—particularly those charged with law enforcement—as regards placement and upgrading on jobs in the Police Department.

This series, "Heroes in Blue,"

was written with the idea of bringing into focus that Negro police officers have, down through the years, performed bravely and with honor in line of duty. Certainly, their deeds of valor have earned the right to be called "Heroes in Blue."