

# Everybody's All-American



*He's all set for a crushing tackle! Chief J. W. "Dub" Wheeler of the Norman Police Department stopped juvenile delinquency before it could reach the line of scrimmage.*

By PAUL A. ANDRES, '50BA  
Sooner Feature Writer

Judie and John Juvenile Delinquent died in Norman, Oklahoma, January 22, 1945.

Their executioner was Chief of Police J. W. "Dub" Wheeler, '30-'36, an All-American tackle in 1935 who turned his fabulous gridiron talents to stop juvenile delinquency before it could reach the line of scrimmage.

Patrolman Wheeler was promoted to the position of Chief of Police on January 22, and his promotion marked the demotion to the lowest position in its long history of his rival for supremacy—the juvenile delinquent.

The first thing he did after his promotion was to engage the help and co-operation of Orion Burkett, '39bs, '43m.ed, principal of Woodrow Wilson Public School of Norman. Together they established an organization known locally as "The Norman Junior Police and Girls' Safety Patrol."

The meeting between these two men came about in a rather unusual but significant manner. Chief Wheeler experienced the results of what he so aptly termed "Parental Delinquency" and got fighting mad. Within the first three months of his administration, four gangs of burglars and vagrants were brought in. All of them were youngsters between the ages of 12 and 14. They had been arrested on charges of burglary—not ordinary apple-stealing, but actual professional robberies.

Stores were entered through skylights, autos were stolen and driven on wild escapades, street

lights were shot out, and a great many youngsters were picked up prowling through the streets at two and three o'clock in the morning.

Investigation and questioning led the Chief to Mr. Burkett. He seemed to be the only man in town whom the kids apparently liked, trusted, or would speak freely to. The plan that Mr. Wheeler had in mind was based on a strong bond of friendship between the "cops" and the "robbers."

Burkett took readily to the plan, and together the two men formed an organization so successful that, "in three years," according to Chief Wheeler, "no youth between the age of 9 and 17 has been arrested on a charge of serious nature. 'Clear-outs' of pool rooms and beer taverns are no longer necessary because no youths are there."

*The Chief of Police and the Principal of the grade school are now the avowed personal friends of every kid in town.* In fact, they are such good friends that every afternoon the police station is crowded with youngsters who come to see Chief Wheeler—not on charges of burglary or misconduct, but to present their problems and yell, "Hey Dub, how about Stephen and I mowing some lawns Saturday."

Both men have their hands constantly full—but they love it. While your reporter was talking to Mr. Burkett in his office at the school, the bell rang—school was out—and 30 kids rushed in through his always open doors and started popping questions about a forthcoming Citizenship meeting and Christmas movies that they wanted to help Bur-

kett with. It was 30 minutes before we could resume our conversation, but it was one of those periods of time that come only once in a lifetime. Eager faces, beaming smiles and the enthusiasm of busy youth—children who might have been juvenile delinquents if two inspired men hadn't set out to help their ever-increasing talents in the right direction.

The two men found that a lot of the young miscreants were telling the truth when they told of actually needing the money they had stolen to buy food, shoes, and, of course, candy. He found that these kids were not really bad, but suffering from a lack of the necessities of life—especially parental care and understanding.

Billy, now a member of the Junior Police, had a father who earned his living by hunting, fishing and gambling. Jack rabbits, catfish and a deck of cards provided little more than a good way for Billy's father to loaf. His mother was forced to hire herself out as a washer-woman to keep the family eating. Being brought up in an atmosphere like this, Billy naturally thought nothing of stealing—that is, till he found himself in front of the Chief of Police's desk.

The Chief took an immediate interest in Billy, and as a result, Billy took an immediate interest in the Junior Police. His fear of the law developed into admiration for it. He proudly counted Chief Wheeler among his best friends.

There are countless cases like Billy in the files—some of them had long police records before they became junior police. All of them have police records now, but the totals are on the opposite side of the line. They are records of promotion—records which every lad and lassie on the "force" beamingly displays with smiles that indicate to everyone the inspiring investment in youth that is being made.

The organization of the Junior Police is complete. "Sometimes, between school and play, we want them to work and help pay the way. They can arrange for jobs through one of their own members who assists Wheeler and I in operating the Youth Employment Service. They get nothing without working for it in some way—all we provide is the opportunity," Burkett said.

One of the classics of this work program is illustrated vividly when it is pointed that two boys working as a team earned over \$100 each mowing lawns one summer.

The scheme which these two traditional competitors—the athlete and the scholar—have set up is one to move every youth to greater achievement.

Upon joining the Junior Police, each boy or girl is given the rank of private. For each time he attends citizenship meeting, five points are added; one point is earned for any other type of meeting such as Boy Scouts and Camp Fire Girls. Ten points are earned for special events and each member of the patrol strives for 50 points—for that means promotion. Five-hundred points entitles the youngster to the top position of Chief—a position which means both to Norman citizenry and to the youngster himself that he is a leader of good clean living, hard working young people.

The program that was set up consists of five parts: (1) Health and Recreation; (2) Excursions; (3) Work Experience; (4) Instruction in Citizenship and (5) Guidance.

To carry out this extensive program a lot of equipment has been procured. Two large buses, which will hold over 100 youngsters, were purchased when it was found that this would hold down excursion expenses to a minimum. These buses are available to any youth organization, and the Junior Police use them on trips to places of historic importance and scenic beauty. Such things

as boxing gloves and practice bags were obtained from the Navy surplus which was left to the University. Recently \$1,100 worth of baseball uniforms and equipment were bought from the patrol's own resources.

Since 1945, trips have been made to Carlsbad Caverns, New Mexico, northeastern and western Oklahoma, and to the State Capitol and historical buildings. An eight-day trip planned for last summer to Yellowstone National Park, with a stopover at Pikes Peak, Colorado, was to cost each youngster a total of only \$25. A highlight of a recent trip was a visit to Alabaster Caverns near Cherokee. Even the wildest dreams of the children were fulfilled as the guide led them through the "mysterious" tunnels.

A 15-minute daily radio program is provided free of charge by the University of Oklahoma's station WNAD during the summer months. The daily program, directed by Jess Burkett, '47bs, varies from day to day to allow more children to participate. The programs, which include everything from cowboy songs to youth forums are eagerly participated in by the talented youngsters. Chief Wheeler holds weekly auditions in co-operation with Burkett, and the best talent is chosen for the coming week.

Probably one of the most interesting individual projects is "The Junior Police News" which was the idea of Kuyk Logan, a present member of the Junior Police and also editor of the small four-page newsheet. It is printed whenever enough news is collected to fill it and contains such departments as "Behind the Mike with WNAD," "Norman Sprouts" and current news of the "force."

The Health and Recreational program is presided over by Claude "Pop" Southward, '22ba, '29ma, and is closely tied in with the work program. All popular sports and personal health are taught. In this field especially, Chief Wheeler takes an active part in teaching the ideals of clean living and good sportsmanship to his charges.

In a letter to the members, Orin Burkett states, "Our Mayor, City Manager, Park Board and Chief of Police, favor the Junior Police Program which you helped to build. They want to broaden and extend it to all the boys and girls in Norman. I know of no other city which is taking so much interest in its youth. With our youth council and so many boosters for Norman youth we should make Norman one of the best youth centers in the nation. It was your interest that made the program grow. We want to continue with your ideas and a co-operative program is bound to emerge."

Interest in the Citizenship program is very high, as evidenced by the fact that an average of 200 voluntarily attended the daily summer lectures conducted by Wheeler and Burkett in the assembly room at the County Courthouse. Occasionally the crowds of teen-agers are so large that the lectures have to be held in one of the local movie theaters. The lectures are vivid, lively and designed to establish in youth an honest desire to become law-abiding citizens.

The Norman Junior Police and Girls' Safety Patrol, with an enrolment of 599 boys and 276 girls on December 20, 1948, has received the wholehearted co-operation of Norman citizenry. Numerous gifts are given by organizations such as the local Chamber of Commerce, American Legion Post 303, and many other interested benefactors. The majority of finances, however are obtained from the youth's own facilities.

Some of the many things that are all part of the productive labor and "keep 'em busy" program are operating the coke stands at all of the University athletic functions, mowing lawns around town, cleaning up vacant lots as a part of the civic bet-

terment programs, and, during the Christmas season, quite a few of them made daily trips to the banks of the Little River and the North Canadian to gather mistletoe to sell to various organizations and merchants about town.

Perhaps, as is the case in so many projects, the most interesting thing about the entire program are its authors:

Chief Wheeler was named All-American tackle in 1934 by Harry Grayson, sports editor of the NEA service. He was named in all the All Big Six teams in 1935 and also was placed on the second team of the *New York Sun*. Also during 1934, he played for the West in the East-West game at San Francisco. According to Harold Keith, '29ba, '39ma, director of sports publicity, "Wheeler ate more steaks than any other man on the West team the night before the game. He carried 'em well the next day too!"

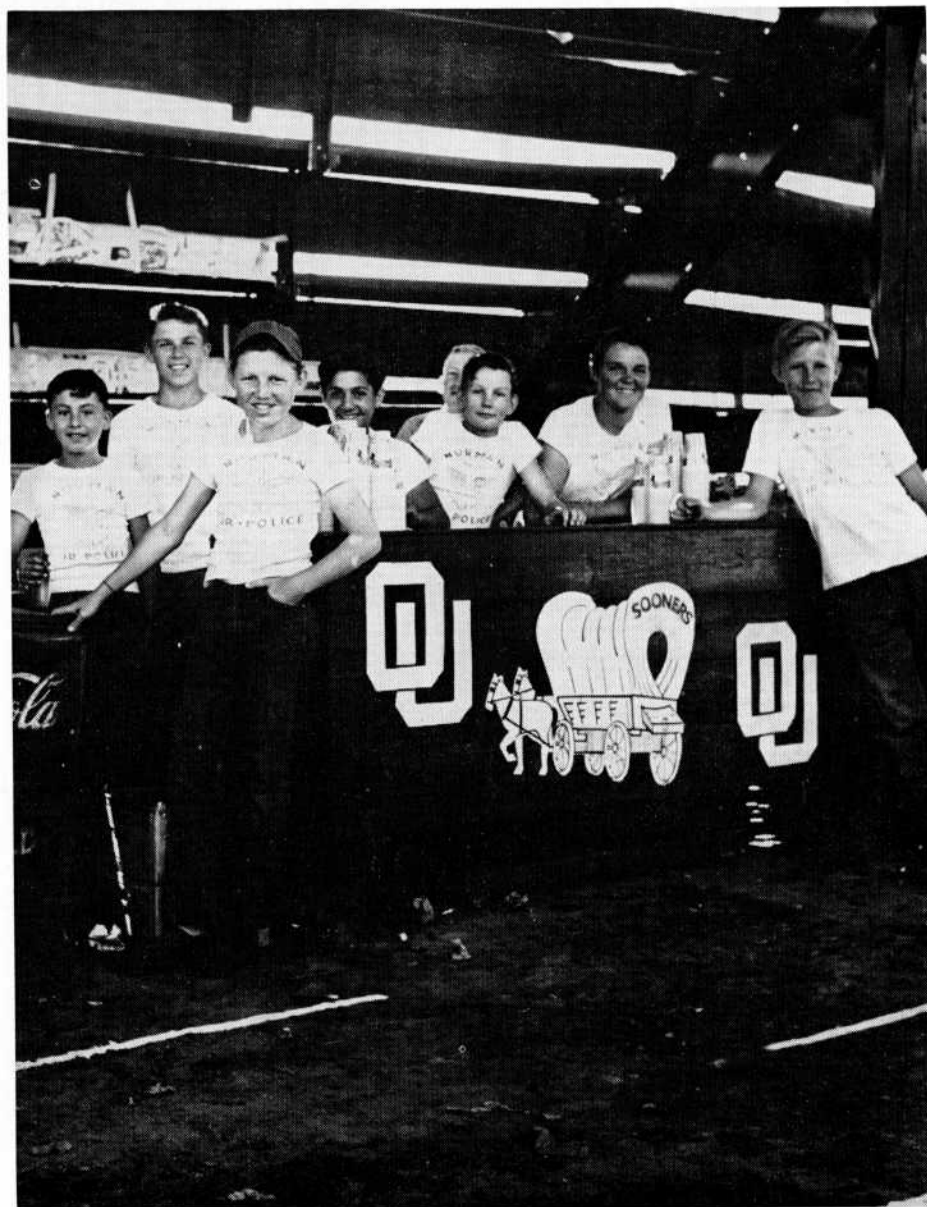
Wheeler is originally from Davis, Oklahoma, where his high school coach was Key Wolf, Oklahoma's great Indian guard from 1905 to 1909. "Dub," as everybody calls him, was also picked as an all-state high school tackle on the *Daily Oklahoman's* team in 1931. He's still a great sportsman and impresses one as being far from the hard-boiled

cop. His quick smile and easy-going though efficient manner is such that he is endeared to the hearts of both youngsters and parents.

Orion Burkett impresses you immediately as the proud father type. He doesn't smile, he beams, as he puts his arm around one of the little chaps and asks them to repeat the words of the Junior Police pledge. He is the principal of one of Norman's biggest schools and, despite his many duties and responsibilities, he is the smartly dressed aggressive businessman who has made his investment in youth.

Characteristic of both men is their firm belief in themselves and their program. They sponsor a full-time day by day program during the summer months when children with time on their hands might get into mischief; during the winter months the program is not so extensive because of school, but it includes a lot of fun sponsored mostly by campus fraternities and sororities who often invite as many as 30 of the youngsters to their houses for an afternoon of fun and football.

Emphasis is placed upon the fact that membership in the organization is purely on a voluntary basis and requires no dues. The only requirement



The Junior Police take over the confectionery stands during all the Sooner home games. Their smiles indicate that a profit is being made in more than one way.



that must be fulfilled is the recitation of the following pledge by each member:

**I PROMISE**

To love my God and my country.  
To live a clean and honest life.  
To respect and defend the Constitution of the United States and the Constitution and the Laws of the State of Oklahoma  
To aid all peace officers in the discharge of their official duties.  
To stand for right against wrong wherever I may go.  
To strive by my conduct to bear example of good citizenship.  
To do my work honestly and cheerfully no matter how menial it may be.  
To work before God humbly and before my associates with a high heart.  
To be always and at all times a good American.

After this, the two men formally present each member with an identification card which serves as admission to all Junior Police functions. The presentation of this card means new hope and a brighter future for many. No matter what the youngster's past may have been, he now is a member of decent society and has the opportunity to succeed with the rest of his generation. A truly "All-American" opportunity.



Orion Burkett, '39ed, '43m.ed, left, hands the all-important identification and membership card to one of his pupils from Woodrow Wilson Public School, Norman, as Chief Wheeler, All-American tackle at the University in 1935, watches the 599th Junior Policeman sign his pledge.

## Correspondence . . .

U.S.S. Columbus (CA-74)  
c/o F. P. O. New York  
(From Naples, Italy)

Dear Mr. Beard,

This travellin' Sooner was mighty happy last summer when he was able to visit the Lisbon-Genoa-Rome-Gibraltar-Tangier areas. So you can imagine how glad he was to go to England via the "long route"—Gibraltar-Venice-Trieste-Nice-Algiers-Naples-Plymouth.

Can't make up my mind which of all these localities I've enjoyed most. The Casbah in Algiers was more intriguing than those we'd seen at Tangier, Tunis and Bizerte. We had a police-escorted tour through this Algiers native citadel which took us from the ancient Turkish fortress overlooking the Casbah through the narrow, winding cobblestone streets and tunnelways which varied in width from three to ten feet. I sneaked a few glances into several doorways and was surprised to see mosaic patios with shrubbery inside. The roofs on most the dwellings are walled-in playgrounds for the women of each house. All the homes are jammed together so that one could travel anywhere in the Casbah by rooftop. French policemen leave the Casbah at midnight—they're crazy for staying in there at all!

At Venice, we moored the Columbus in the Grande Canale, just a stone's throw from the Doge's Palace and St. Mark's Cathedral from which Marco Polo set sail on his travels to the Orient. We took a gondola tour which took us from the two-mile row of famous Venetian palaces on the Grande Canale to Marco Polo's nifty abode on one of the "backstreet" canals. Incidentally, Venice is composed of 117 small islands, thoroughly divided by 150 canals and connected by 378 bridges.

Trieste impressed me because it looks so much like an average American city—except for a castle perched on its highest hill. Also impressive was the famous "Bora", a strong steady wind which swoops down on the city and deposits people into the harbor if they don't hang on to anything station-

ary. In the old days, hoop-skirted women were fished out of the "drink" quite regularly.

On the French Riviera, we took in everything from Nice, Cannes and Grasse to Villefranche, Beaulieu and Monte Carlo (where we got "taken in!") This Cote d'Azur, as the French call it, was settled by the Greeks and Phoenicians several thousand years ago. The smaller harbor at Nice is just as it was when first built by the Phoenicians, as are Tourettes-sur-Loup, Vence and several other ancient villages tucked up in the Maritime Alps behind Nice.

Here at Naples, we can almost get in our share of sightseeing from the ship—we passed the picturesque Isle of Capri just before entering this attractive harbor. Then, too, there's the majestic Mount Vesuvius, visible on some days from 20 miles at sea. Just to the south are Pompeii and Herculaneum which were buried in 79 A.D. by an eruption of Mount Vesuvius. These cities and several others were rediscovered accidentally in 1748 and are still being dug up with delicate care for fear of destroying priceless relics. Even the ruts in the narrow cobblestone streets, worn by chariots, are still visible. In a museum there are brilliantly-colored paintings which have been well-preserved all these centuries. Also preserved is the figure of a man, still in a position of shrieking hysteria, and nearby, a dog's twisted body, writhing in the agony of suffocation.

Tomorrow we're going over to the Isle of Capri on a swimming party and a Cook's tour of the ancient palaces and villas. We also plan to visit nearby Sorrento and find out what the town's got that makes Sinatra always sing, "Take Me Back to Sorrento."

Enclosed is my \$5 remittance toward my Association membership. Keep those *SOONERS* coming, cuz I always enjoy 'em! Give my regards to the "hired hands."

Sincerely, Ensign George A. Souris, U.S.N., '47 journ.

Wichita, Kansas

Dear Mr. Beard:

The sample copy of the *Sooner Magazine* has reached me. Thanks very much for it. I have been

out of touch with the University for so long that the magazine made me feel I'd again met old friends.

My husband, Major Key, and I returned from Korea this past summer where he had served with the Army Exchange Service, and I had taught in the American Language Institute for the past two years. It was indeed an interesting and gratifying experience for me in spite of the many inconveniences we were called upon to endure.

Please find enclosed a personal check for my annual dues and the *Sooner Magazine*. Please send the magazine to the above address. My home address is Fort Riley, Kansas where I am now living due to the housing shortage.

It is amazing how many fine things are being done by the University of Oklahoma Alumni Association. I think the *Sooner Magazine* is the best ever.

Sincerely, Mrs. Homer B. Key (Florence Earles, '34m.ed.)

The Chicago Daily News  
Rome Bureau

Dear Ted:

This should be in time to wish you and the alumni organization a Merry, Merry Christmas. I look back with a lot of fond memories on the three years I spent there during Frank Cleckler, '21ba, George McElroy, '34Law days.

Christmas in a foreign country is not the same as one at home. This is the 35th country in which I have beaten up this typewriter in the last four plus years.

Under present conditions, Rome must be one of the best spots for living out of the United States.

I am planning on getting to Spain in the next few weeks where Paul Kennedy, '30ba, and I should be able to sing a few Boomer Sooners. I saw Paul a lot last winter in London during the foreign ministers' conference.

Give my best wishes to Roscoe Cate, '26ba, Professor Herbert, Fayette Copeland, '19ba, and all.

Very Sincerely, Ernie Hill, '33ba, Rome Bureau Manager.

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