

The Long Arm

"It isn't suicide, it's murder."

"It isn't accidental, it's arson."

"The lie detector shows he's lying. He did rob the bank."

"No matter how it's been altered, that's a stolen car."

Quick-witted and well-trained law enforcement officers are a horror to criminals, but clever criminals escape detection every day because an officer doesn't know where to look for evidence of a crime or what to look for.

Take arson, for example. Any arson expert is quick to point out that the chances are overwhelming that a car was deliberately set afire if there is total loss. The experts maintain the only way for a car to burn to nothing is for a driver to smash it into a telephone pole at 70 m.p.h. A cigarette thrown carelessly into the back seat just won't do it, although this is the tale told by crafty arsonists time and again. Unfortunately, it is believed time and again.

For the credulous there was a demonstration not long ago on the University of Oklahoma North Campus. Playing the arsonist was an arson expert. It took him 30 minutes and five gallons of gasoline to set the car afire—and he really had to work at it.

The unusual demonstration was a part of one of a series of law enforcement courses offered by the O.U. Extension Division. The aim—to keep the people safe by de-

veloping highly trained lawmen who won't be fooled by canny criminals.

O.U. was the first university in the Southwest to sponsor law enforcement courses and is still the only one to offer a comprehensive program. The University of Texas is in the act to the extent of co-sponsoring with O.U. a homicide investigators seminar which originated in Norman.

The law enforcement series began in 1954 when the first annual Southwestern Homicide Investigation Seminar was offered. The homicide seminar, whose discussion topics sound like the titles in a murder mystery catalogue, won favor so quickly that additional courses were planned and put into operation.

The fifth annual Southwestern Arson Investigation Institute was held in November. Upcoming in February are the first annual Polygraph Examiners Clinic and the third annual Oklahoma Institute on Juvenile Problems. Homicide will hold the spotlight in May, and in July auto theft. The auto theft seminar was begun two years ago but this summer and in the future it will be merged with the annual seminar of the International Association of Auto Theft Investigators.

The guiding hand behind the formation of the series was James L. Robinson, '32ba, '32Law, an Extension Division specialist and consultant on law enforcement. How-

ever, Robinson is quick to minimize his part and praise the State Crime Bureau, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Highway Patrol and various police and civic groups which have stood foursquare behind the development of the courses.

The series is rapidly making a name for itself on the national level, witness the merger of the auto theft seminar with the seminar of the International Association of Auto Theft Investigators.

One arson expert attributes in part the drop in the number of cars totally destroyed by fire annually in Oklahoma to instruction given fire and police officials in the arson course here.

William J. Davis, secretary-manager of the National Automobile Theft Bureau, Chicago, Ill., made this point while speaking at the arson seminar here in November.

"Back in 1934, Oklahoma had approximately 37 automobiles totally destroyed by fire for every 100,000 registered," Davis said. "Due to the excellent work of the State Crime Bureau and the splendid educational campaign being carried on by the bureau and the University, that average was reduced by 1959 to 13 cars totally destroyed by fire for every 100,000 registered. That means the number burned has been cut by two-thirds.

"I think Robinson and his staff deserve a tremendous amount of credit for organizing these seminars. The only way to check such crimes is through education of law enforcement officials."

Davis' comments are typical of those made by national experts who visit the North Campus as lecturers.

Another well-known authority, Raymond L. Straeter, former chief investigator for the arson division of the Los Angeles Fire Department, and an author, lecturer and teacher, knows from experience that the arson institute is winning wide renown.

"Several times in being qualified as an expert witness in court, I have seen the judge show familiarity with the O.U. arson institute, and I have heard judicial heads across the country comment about the institute and its effectiveness," Straeter said.

Robinson and F. Lee Hayden, '51bs, '52ms, director of short courses and conferences, have a soft spot in their hearts for the arson institute, as it brings in enough revenue to finance other seminars which



Starting this automobile fire at O.U.'s arson institute gave firemen more trouble than putting it out.

of Learning

By Carolyn G. Hart, '58journal

have difficulty breaking even.

The reason for the arson seminar's affluence is that two national insurance investigating boards are so impressed by it that they send speakers free. O.U. must pay every penny to get nationally known speakers for several of the other seminars.

The National Board of Fire Underwriters and the National Automobile Theft Bureau are of course eager to lower the number of auto thefts and arson-inspired fires. They consider the education disseminated by the seminar to law enforcement officers another means of reaching their objective.

The homicide investigators seminar is costly, since topflight men are imported as speakers, but it is considered well worth the cost.

One trait common to all the institutes and seminars is that the men attending, whether firemen, police officers or juvenile officers, learn not only the newest techniques of determining if a crime was committed, but also receive intensive instruction in conducting the investigation, preserving evidence and determining what evidence can be admitted in court.

In the past some firemen would rush in and clean up the premises after putting out the fire, thereby destroying evidence of arson. Now if there is any question investigators are called in immediately.

County attorneys in some areas have also wrung their hands when police officials unwittingly destroyed evidence by not following sound rules of investigation. Students at any of these courses receive a thorough grounding in what not to do at the scene of the crime, as well as what to do.

One of the greatest boons from the courses has been the awareness generated among law enforcement officers across the state of the fine laboratory facilities at the State Crime Bureau—theirs for the asking.

Robinson cannot praise the State Crime Bureau enough for the encouragement its officials have given to O.U.'s law enforcement series.

Robinson believes that credit for the founding of the homicide investigators seminar should go to a former special agent of the bureau, Ray Page, now commissioner of the Department of Public Safety. Instrumental in beginning the arson seminar was Chester Stringer, bureau special agent now on leave.

State Crime Bureau cooperation is the

backbone of the newest seminar for polygraph examiners. M. W. (Doc) Myatt of the bureau will direct the two-day seminar in February. It will be a refresher course and is expected to draw some 30 examiners, a phenomenal turnout as there are only 12 or 15 polygraphy examiners in all of Oklahoma and not many more in surrounding states.

O.U. will be the only university offering such a course. In fact, there are just two basic schools in the country, one sponsored by the Army and the second by a polygraph company.

Robinson feels the University is very fortunate to have Myatt in the driver's seat, since Myatt is one of only 10 men in the United States to hold a certificate of excellence from the International Association of Scientific Interrogation.

Also brand new this year are the first annual Southwestern Police Administrators Workshop, scheduled in the spring, and two short courses in Supervision for the Department of Public Safety, held this fall and winter.

The workshop will draw only the highest echelon of policemen from Oklahoma and surrounding states. The major aim will be improving cooperation among the sovereign states in bringing about the downfall of lawbreakers.

The two short courses, although not set

up for the study of such dramatic events as theft, arson and murder, are very important in their own right for they mean better conducted and more efficient law enforcement in Oklahoma. The short courses were set up for different levels of officers in the Highway Patrol. Men attending learned more about human motivation, office procedure and executive efficiency.

All in all, Robinson might be expected to settle back and be satisfied with the comprehensive program now going great guns. But looking ahead, not behind, is one of Robinson's traits.

In the planning stage are a series on traffic safety since highway deaths are becoming an increasing factor in modern life. Robinson would like to see institutes on traffic laws, traffic management and traffic safety. Another series is envisioned on the detection of forgery and on narcotics control. And the idea man is eager to see another directed specifically at teaching officers how to handle juveniles. The present juvenile series is aimed at exploring the causes behind juvenile problems and the best means of meeting those problems.

Criminals in fact should take heed. With Robinson afoot in Oklahoma with as many ideas for their downfall as any early Western marshal, it might be well for them to either walk the strait and narrow or move on.



Highway patrolmen attend University short courses each year to iron out enforcement problems.