Man remembers help with donation to police

By LESLIE L. ZAITZ
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An unknown Irish policeman who worked for the Portland Police Bureau during the Depression is responsible for the Sunshine Division's recent gift of Wyoming mineral rights, according to the donor.

William P. Burt, 62, the man who gave a one-eighth interest in the oil, gas and mineral rights to 320 acres of Wyoming rangeland, volunteered for an interview Friday in the wake of news accounts of the gift by a person city authorities knew little about.

"My mother and I were having a very difficult time of it," Burt said. "In those days, there didn't seem to be anybody interested in giving out assistance. We didn't ask for it, but there wasn't anyone to help. We don't know who told on us, but one day this big Irish cop came knocking on the door. He gave us a sack of groceries. He came one more time later on."

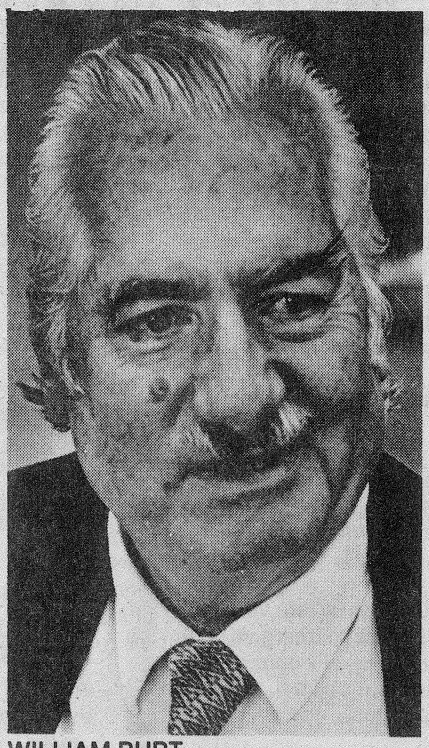
"In my travels around the United States, I have never heard of any other police department with anything like the Sunshine Division," Burt said. "I think it is tremendous for the police to have an interest in helping people."

Burt and his family moved to Portland from Washington state in about 1922. Burt's father, Eugene Marion Burt, was an artist until the Depression started. He had to leave the area to find work; he died when his only son was 13.

William P. Burt said he left Portland in 1939, visited occasionally, and arrived in 1959 for an 18-month stay.

In his time away from Portland, Burt was, among other things, a second lieutenant in the Army, personnel director for the city of El Paso, Texas, and a management consultant.

"When I came back to Portland in 1975, I was reminded of things in my youth. I thought about the Sunshine Division and decided to help them. I had read an article about the work they did and how they needed help," Burt said.



WILLIAM BURT

He said he hopes his gift pays off handsomely.

"I'd like to see them actually go out and find people in need," Burt said. "I don't think anyone anywhere in the United States should suffer these days. If the police could relieve some of the distress (of hunger and lack of shelter) then they wouldn't have to combat the effects of that distress."

The mineral rights were given to Burt when a close friend of his died in 1974. Verde Exploration Inc., the Casper, Wyo., company with drilling rights, does not expect to test drill for at least six months. Wells within two miles of where the Sunshine Division's rights are situated now produce about 20 to 30 gallons of oil daily.