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9:15 December 21, 1948

Your Mayor speaks and makes his weekly report to the people. We present Mayor Earl Riley, Director of Civilian Defense in this area who appears at this hour each week to give the latest information on the local war effort and on timely civic problems of the day.

Riley

Good evening. Among the organizations that have proven a tremendous asset to Portland in these days of an unprecedented increase in population and increased problems of every type is the Portland Veterans Guard and Patrol. To the hundreds of men who have donned a semi-police uniform and volunteered to patrol Portland streets night after night in an effort to help the depleted police department maintain law and order, we owe a debt of gratitude. These men are giving up their own pleasures and leisure time to devote their efforts to public protection and it has been a godsend to the city because in addition to having this unprecedented increase in population and a great expanse of residence territory, we have seen our regular police force cut down very rapidly by army and navy and coast-guard enlistments and the draft. Better than one quarter of the police department we had before the war is now in the armed services. New men have had to take their places and have had to undergo periods of training in order to know police work. It has been impossible to keep the regular force up to a reasonable manpower standard. When this problem first came upon the city many months ago we set forth to try to organize a volunteer force. Fortunately a great number of fine men who are employed in defense and other industry came forward and took on the assignment as a matter of civic pride and public protection. Tonight I have invited the head of the group, Captain John Keegan, and one of the officers in the ranks to discuss this organization. The officer is Mr. Claude Beckner who is one of the hundreds who have been doing an excellent job at no salary other than the satisfaction of performing a public duty. Let me first present Captain Keegan.

Keegan Good Evening.

Riley We all know, Captain, that under conditions such as we have in Portland today with 150 thousand new people and a wave of prosperity affecting everybody, we should expect an accompanying wave of crime. We have not had such a wave of crime and there must be a very good reason. Will you as an expert in police work tell us why.

Keegan It's purely a matter of police vigilance, Mr. Mayor. We have had crime, of course, and we will continue to have it. But it has not been anything near what we had every reason to expect. I will say that the regular police department has done a fine job even though seriously handicapped and where they have left off, the Veterans Guard and Patrol has taken over and finished the job. Between the two, Portland has been kept in good shape.

Riley I believe, Captain, the Veterans Guard and Patrol now numbers about 2500 men it was up to 4000 at one time but is now down to about 2500.

Keegan Twenty five hundred is approximately correct and I might add that it is down too far we've got to increase the force. It's well to remember that the entire force is not out every night. A member may be able to go out only once or twice a week or maybe even only one night a week. For this reason it is necessary to have a very large force in order to get a sufficient number of men for patrol each night.

Riley They are assigned, Captain, to districts. They patrol in pairs and keep on the lookout for criminals and law breakers of every sort. I take it that what you would like to urge here tonight is more recruits.

Keegan Yes, we need more men we are going out to try to get at least two thousand more. You know our ranks have been seriously affected by enlistments and the draft and the shifting of men in industry. The Guard and Patrol has had a very large turnover in membership principally because men with families have been and are being taken now into the army and because the manpower situation has become tighter in war industries men are putting in so many hours at work that they simply cannot keep up their police patrol work.

Riley How much time is required of a member of the Guard and Patrol?

Keegan It varies but we have it scheduled so that there is always a certain number of these loyal citizens on the job throughout the twenty-four hours.

Riley Just what do they do?

Keegan Practically everything a regular police officer does. Under the present set-up they work in a dual capacity. First, in civilian defense work and second, as auxillary policemen. We figure on every volunteer having about four hours a week of duty. Such duty as patrolling his district, guard duty and helping control traffic.

Riley They've been quite a factor in traffic work. We've seen them on busy downtown intersections regularly of late.

Keegan Yes. They've been valuable particularly during this pre-Christmas rush.

Riley They get no salary whatever?

Keegan No. It is entirely voluntary service. We have no provision for paying them, even if they would accept money which they wouldn't.

Riley On the Civilian Defense part. They are all specially trained for specific duties. What would they do, say, in the event of an attack by the enemy?

Keegan They would take over the regulation and direction of civilian traffic away from predetermined military routes and assist in many other ways.

Riley And how about their duties during an air raid?

Keegan In the event of an air raid, they report to previously assigned posts. Every man would know his post and his duty. A certain number are kept on call to help the regular police as emergencies arise. I might say right here that all of these volunteers are having continuous training in first aid, how to cope with bombs, how to take care of poison gas victims and soforth.

Riley The organization, Captain, dates back to before Pearl Harbor. When Pearl Harbor was attacked, how many men did you have?

Keegan On the Sunday of the attack on Pearl Harbor 585 men reported for duty as soon as they heard about it.

Riley In line with what you are saying about the efficiency and loyalty of these men, I think it is time to present Officer Claude Beckner whom I asked to be here tonight for special commendation. Officer Beckner recently performed an act of heroism that saved the life of a 15 year old girl and is therefore entitled to one of the special awards of meritorious service given by the organization. The girl in question was in an automobile accident and suffered a severed artery. She was taken to one of the Veteran Guard and Patrol posts and Officer Beckner immediately took charge. Through what he had learned as a member of the organization he was able to stop the flow of blood. When the ambulance arrived he rode to the hospital with the patient and by vigilance kept her from the death that surely would have followed had not an experienced man been on the job. For this, Mr. Beckner, you have the thanks and the commendation of the entire City of Portland.

Beckner Thank you, Mayor Riley. I appreciate that very much. What I did, however was just what any member would have been able to do and would have done.

Riley That's just modesty At any rate, you did a fine piece of work which added much to the glory not only of yourself but to the Veterans Guard and Patrol. It is the deeds of the individual members that makes the whole organization stand out.

Beckner Well, thank you again, Mayor Riley.

Riley Now, Captain Keegan, I know you will see to it that Officer Beckner will receive the merit award he has earned in this case.

Keegan I certainly will, Mr. Mayor.

Riley And now to get back to the work these men are doing. How many each night do you figure on putting on the streets?

Keegan The average is about 80 men a night. That means close to 10,000 man hours per month in actual patrol service. On top of that, we have a total of about 17,000 man hours a month checked up to meetings, schooling, and instruction the hours devoted to learning police work.

Riley This does not include special assignments such as football games, traffic control and so forth.

Keegan No, it doesn't. Taking special assignments into consideration, the veterans patrol has averaged around 20,000 man hours a month since Pearl Harbor.

Riley That is a fine record, Captain. Now, you want new members.

Keegan We need at least two thousand more, Mayor. And we need them right away. Some for the added duties and some to replace our members who have been called into the armed services.

Riley Who is eligible?

Keegan Any citizen over 21 years of age and of good character is eligible for the service.

Riley How do you assign them?

Keegan In most cases, men accepted will be assigned to duty in their own home area.

Riley But not always.

Keegan No, but whenever possible. Most men know the families in their own neighborhood and consequently can work more efficiently.

Riley That reminds me, Captain, of a story I heard about one of your men. He must have been out of his own neighborhood because no one knows his identity yet. It seems that he was on his way to work early one morning when he saw flames shooting from a two story dwelling. He awakened the sleeping occupants, called the fire department and calmly directed traffic until the regular peace officers arrived. Then hurried on his way to work.

Keegan Whoever that man is, he deserves a vote of thanks, but that is just one of the many community services our men perform. And, in almost every instance, they are as modest and self-effacing about it as this man was.

Riley They are also doing a fine job in helping the regular officers cope with the juvenile delinquency problem. Tell us about ^{this} ~~the~~.

Keegan They are playing quite an important part in ~~this~~ problem, Mr. Mayor.

Their principal job is to pick up juveniles on the streets after curfew hours and turn them over to their parents. Occasionally they pick up juvenile offenders and have apprehended many juvenile criminals.

Riley This work is principally in residence sections where it is impossible for the regular patrol cars to visit as frequently as necessary to control this problem?

Keegan Yes.

Riley Now, Captain, I know from the reports you make regularly that there are hundreds of instances of individual heroism and of individual cases where members are doing outstanding work. I wish we had time to tell some of these. But what you and your men want more than praise is new members. So will you sum up the whole situation by explaining the type of men wanted and what will be expected of those who volunteer.

Keegan To be eligible a man must be a citizen of good character and be over 21 years of age. The volunteers will be trained in the tasks of protecting life and property during an air raid or evacuation. They receive special first aid training, anti-sabotage training, general police training and patrol and guard work. They are given full police powers, but are not subject to call for regular police duty such as disorders that may occur as a result of labor disputes. They are simply a police auxiliary that is pitching in to help in every way possible during the emergency. One thing we insist upon, is that every active member is to attend his weekly neighborhood meeting where he is taught all phases of the work. He receives constant training. They all like it.

Riley And men wishing to enlist should apply where?

Keegan Apply at Police Headquarters at 2nd and Oak streets or at the Veteran Guard and Patrol headquarters in the building adjoining police headquarters.

Riley Well, I want to thank you Captain Keegan for coming here tonight to explain this important work and to ask for more help. I hope a large number

of citizens who have a time to give to this public cause will
respond. Also I want to thank Officer Beckner for being here
tonight to receive the special commendation for an act of heroism
in connection with his duties as a member of the Veterans Guard
and Patrol

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