

The Mississauga News

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THE COP WHO SITS AND LISTENS

Sgt. John Kelly of the Mississauga Police Department is my kind of cop.

He still follows the old-fashioned idea that policemen are around to help people.

Not to arrest them or to frighten them or even to control them, but to help them.

"I'll never forget what was said to me the first day I got into a cruiser to go out on duty as a full-fledged police officer," said Sgt. Kelly. "The deputy chief of the department looked through the rolled-down window of the car and said, 'John, I want you to remember that in the course of a year you could probably arrest every citizen in Mississauga. Everybody does something wrong. But that's not your job.' I still remember that," the bulky policeman said, "and I'm sure I'll never forget it."

Sgt. Kelly looks at it this way: "In the course of a year, everybody does something illegal — even if it's only jaywalking. Now if a 35-year-old man walks into a bank and robs it with a sawed-off shotgun, he knows what he's doing — he's fully aware of the game and he's taking his chances.

"But a 13 or 14-year-old kid who's in trouble for breaking school windows doesn't fit that category. In fact, taking him into court might hurt him more than help him. He doesn't always need to be punished, but most of the time you can be sure he needs to be helped."

The six-foot, two-inch, 200-plus lb. Mississauga Police Department sergeant officially began his program to help kids in trouble in August, 1967.

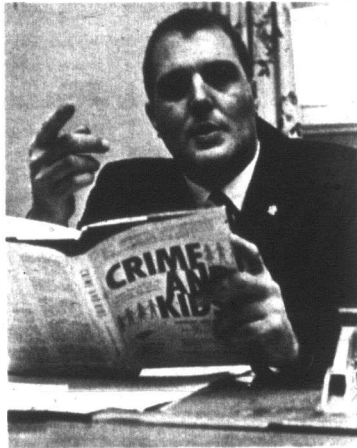
Police Chief Garnet McGill detached Sgt. Kelly from his regular duties to initiate a program to fight juvenile delinquency in Mississauga.

"It was supposed to be a pilot program" the sergeant grinned wryly,

Story by
Jerry Hoff

"but whenever I ask for more help, the chief tells me he needs more help too. It's darn sure I won't get my help 'til he gets his."

Sgt. Kelly has had one addition to



Sgt. John Kelly is well versed in contemporary literature on his specific area of operation.

his staff, however. Sgt. Wes Kelly (no relation) of the Mississauga Police Department is helping his namesake in the Clarkson area.

"Actually," Sgt. John Kelly explained, "Wes just counsels kids now. He was active in other areas but found they took too much time. So now he talks to the kids and I have to handle the administration of the rest of the program in both Lakeview and Clarkson."

Lakeview, was referred to by Sgt. Kelly, includes the area bounded by the QEW on the north, the lake on the south, Metro Toronto on the east and Highway 10 on the west.

"I've been 15 years with the department," said Kelly, looking out of his office window at Lakeview United Church, 1023 Greaves ave., Mississauga. "I started as a uniform officer, and progressed to the detective division.

"I've always wanted to work with kids. It's been in the back of my mind for years. I like kids and I've been waiting for an opportunity like this for years."

The big, tough sergeant who looks as if he could hold his own in any barroom brawl — and whose record proves he can — stopped listening to me asking him questions and concentrated on something going on outside

his window.

It was noon break for the church's day school. And the big tough cop lowered his voice an octave, dropped the cop's bark from his tone, smiled softly and said to no one in particular, "Look at those little devils."

And you knew he was telling it like it is when he said he liked kids.

Sgt. Kelly's opportunity to work with kids began when Mayor Bob Speck, Chief McGill, and members of the Mississauga Board of Education travelled to Flint, Mich., to personally look over that city's community school program.

In Flint, schools are open days and evenings all year 'round for use of the entire community. This is the result of a co-ordinated program involving the police department, board of education, and recreation board.

any of the kids will break down and tell you what's bothering them. I get a lot of kids coming to me, or brought to me, who'll tell me things they won't tell the other people who are around them.

"There was this one fellow, just 12 or 13, and he was causing no end of trouble around his area. He was a bully of the worst sort, always starting fights or picking on someone. We got a couple of calls on him and finally I had him in to talk about it.

"Well, again, it took just about two and a half hours to get down to the real reason he was acting like that. It seems he had two older brothers in the family. Well, the young fellow I was talking to had a dog. He loved the dog. And it was killed in an accident. So he cried. And his brothers laughed at him and called him a sissy.



Detective Sgt. William Snarr of the Mississauga Police Department lectures a COPS meeting on organized crime. Understanding the police officer and his job is part of COPS training.

"In my job," Sgt. Kelly said, "we work with the same groups. I've helped set up what we call a Regional Counselling Team to find out why kids get into trouble. The team consists of members of board of education, staff members of school psychology, departments, the school attendance department, clergymen, school administrators, and probation and parole officers.

"The emphasis here is to try and help the kids, not punish them," he repeated. "We have to teach them what's right and wrong and why they should respect the law. It isn't always good to take these kids to court. We have to try to find out what's best for individual cases.

"Why is the important thing," Sgt. Kelly emphasized. "Most people are satisfied with the most obvious reason, but in almost every case it's not the obvious reason that's the real cause. It's too temptingly easy to take that as the solution. And the kids will tell you the obvious reason is the real cause because they either don't know the real cause or because they don't want to talk about the real reason."

He illustrated his point: "It's funny, but it almost always takes just about three hours before

"So he set out to prove to them that he was anything but a sissy. In fact, he was going to show them he was the toughest kid around and he began beating up on everyone in sight to prove it.

"So the real reason wasn't that he was a bully — which was the obvious reason — but rather that his brothers had teased him and he had something to prove.

"You should see that kid now. He's the most gentlemanly guy around. He changed because he told someone what was bothering him and no one laughed at him. In fact, he learned that more manly men than either of us or his brothers had cried at the death

Photos by
Chris Holoboff

of a loved pet. So he didn't feel that he had to prove anything anymore."

Besides Sgt. Kelly's private counselling and the efforts of the counselling team, the Lakeview and Clarkson programs have another major facet.

It's called COPS — Cadet Organiza-

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Dear Mr. Kelly, It was a great pleasure for me to once again see the great work that you are doing for the youth of B.C. I was also surprised & pleased with the expansion of the COPS to Clarkson, as I certainly never take the young men of tomorrow take great pride & interest in your badge under which they so willingly serve. As a one time cadet of the Corps I realize that I see something more than just wearing a uniform, but the satisfaction of working & serving I that caused my great interest. I know that every cadet who wears the uniform of the C.O.P.S. feels the same satisfaction as I have felt in working & learning to understand our Police Forces as they really

are. It is to the cadets that I need to express my congratulations for a fine cadet corps, as they have worked to make I feel I'm in the officers & certain instructors I extend my thanks as they gave me a good understanding of military discipline & character, which I feel have given me a firm foundation for the career I have chosen for myself. It is to the men & cadets of C.O.P.S. that I say thanks for all of your time & effort & truly hope you will follow your procedures for the many cadets who have faithfully attended & your great endeavor to the Corps. On the behalf of the & myself I say once again thanks.

Yours Truly,
Randy M.B. Hayward
Royal Highland Regiment of Canada

Sgt. Kelly's results are tangible. He recently received this letter from the first graduate of COPS to enter military life. This is what it's all about.