

*John Miller*  
An occurrence recently took place in my jurisdiction that I think would be the best example of the question, "The Police—An Anachronism?" Is the policeman, as we know him, the police department, as we know it, passe or archaic, or are they on their way out? Are there going to be great changes in the years ahead?

The incident I refer to took place March 9th in the City of Detroit. It involved the two largest departments in that area: In Wayne County, our department, the Wayne County Sheriff's Department, and the Detroit Police Department.

To give you a little background, Detroit has a program that most large cities have. You may call it a decoy program. You may have what is called a stake-out program.

When I was in New York City, I was a policeman for nine years, they called it a decoy program, and that time you were required to dress up. If you were slim, you were required to dress up as ladies, and put on a wig and that sort of thing. Very imaginative. In Detroit they call it STRESS. Stop The Robberies, Enjoy Safe Streets, and they worked the word out and called it STRESS.

The STRESS program has been responsible for cutting crime in Detroit proportionately every month. The percentage in crime rate in Detroit has gone down a few percentages, it is down seven percent or eight percent over a year ago. Unfortunately for those of us who are in the surrounding areas, our crime has gone up proportionately.

This STRESS program has been responsible for 19 deaths. Nineteen persons have been killed, and this has caused a great deal of concern among persons who feel, as you know, when you are concerned with the crime rate, it is one thing when it goes down and another concern evolves. So STRESS has been under fire from some segments of the community.

This March 9th, five deputy sheriffs and a civilian were in a private apartment enjoying a card game, and apparently the last deputy sheriff that entered took his gun from the car, and he parked it

in the parking lot. He took his gun in his hand and walked with his gun in his hand up to the apartment. He was spotted by one of the STRESS officers who, feeling that they had someone committing a crime, followed him into the apartment.

We investigated the case quite thoroughly. What happened afterward, and it became a little hazy as to the facts, seems to prove out that somehow a shot was fired in that apartment.

The prosecutor in developing the case, and in handing down indictments later, recommending warrants, felt that this is what happened. After the STRESS officer followed the deputy sheriff into this apartment, he felt the officer, for some reason, fired a shot.

The prosecutor's feeling was that when this Detroit officer entered the apartment, he did so illegally; that he trespassed, because even if this deputy sheriff had a gun in his hand, the only crime that could have been committed would be a violation of the ordinance. The gun was in plain view. It was carried in his hand, and it did not give the police officer the right to enter the building to effect an arrest. So that when he entered the door, which incidentally was open, he immediately committed a trespass. Now, when he fired that shot and committed a trespass, the deputy sheriffs on the inside, as police officers on duty 24 hours a day, were completely within their province to return the fire when they felt they were being assaulted by a man carrying a gun, whom they did not know was a policeman. One of the deputy sheriffs went to the door and returned five shots. Then all hell broke loose in that area. Down the street from this particular location were two uniformed men.

The department of STRESS had two partners, and once the deputy sheriffs returned the fire, all of these men converged on the apartment, a very small apartment, and they opened fire on the apartment. It was at this time, when the returned fire started coming in, that the deputy sheriffs began to realize that these were indeed

ROCHESTER ST.  
EVENT

## The Police:

police officers. By this time they were shouting back and forth. The ones who were shooting were obviously policemen, because never in the experience of policemen have they been under siege from the bad guys. They never had gone that far.

Our men insisted they continued to yell they were deputy sheriffs, but the fire continued. The upshot of it was that one of our deputy sheriffs was shot and killed by one of the uniformed officers, not by a direct shot, but by a ricochet that glanced off some object that we have yet been unable to determine, and entered into his side, wounding him fatally. Another deputy sheriff, the evidence seems to indicate, was in the process of trying to identify himself, and he was shot in the head. The bullet went straight through causing brain damage, and now he is lucid some of the time, and some of the time is incoherent. He is still in the hospital.

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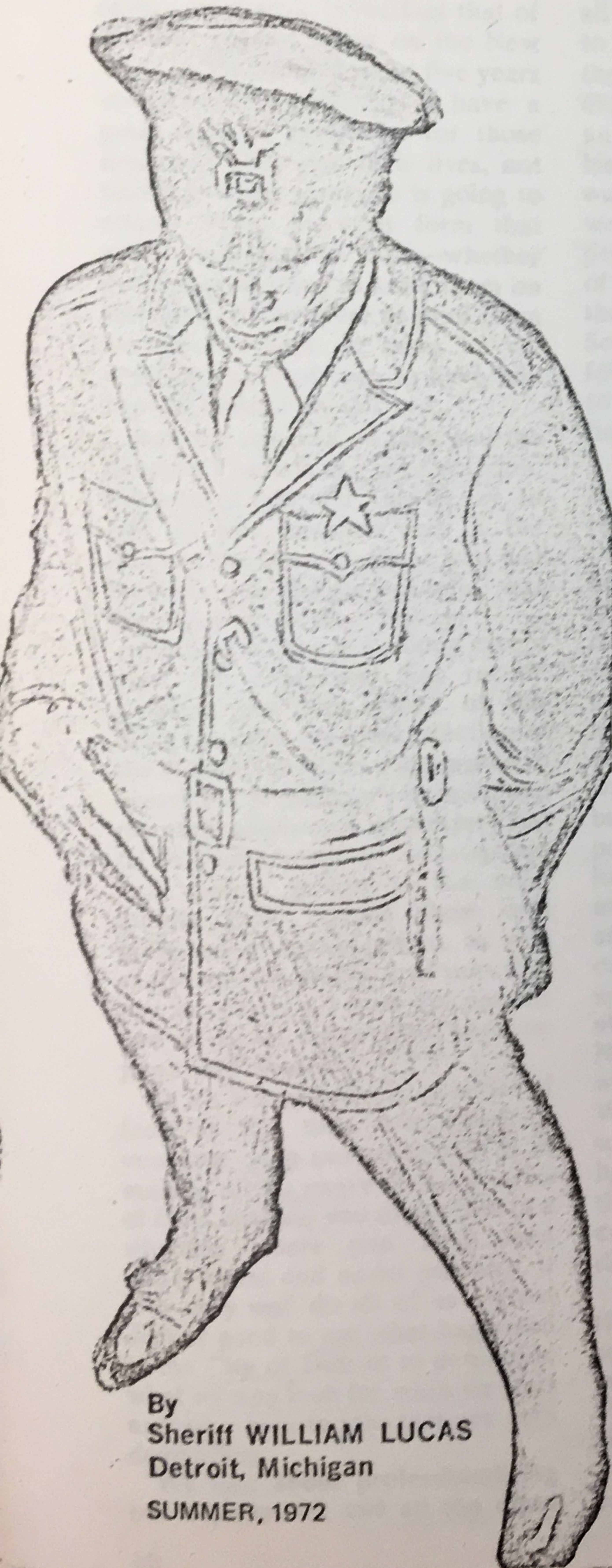
### 50 SHOTS FIRED

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The problem itself was bad enough. However, what compounded the problem, and what caused a great deal of concern for all of us in the field of law enforcement in the Detroit area and the prosecutor, and in some degree the public at large, was the incident itself. The shooting, of course, was a tragedy. Both sides insisted they identified themselves, and this could have very well been a mistake. However, there is a great deal of concern about the amount of shooting that took place. I think we have evidence over 50 shots were fired by the officers into the apartment. At one point the evidence seems to indicate that

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# An Anachronism?



By  
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Detroit, Michigan

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where the deputy sheriffs were retreated into a room behind a very thin cardboard wall, one of the officers stood in front of the wall, emptied his gun and loaded and emptied it again, hitting anything behind it.

The problem is, why could not these men hear their identification of their fellow officers or the deputy sheriffs, and why was the shooting done so indiscriminately? After the arrest was effected, or after the shooting ceased, with one deputy sheriff killed and one wounded, the arrest was eventually effected.

Then, the second problem that cause us in our investigation to wonder about the police procedure, was that the deputy sheriff alleged and in fact it was proved by the whelps and bruises on him, that they were assaulted by the officers who made the arrests. In fact, one of the deputy sheriffs, and this was borne out by the statement of a Detroit officer, came up to a deputy sheriff and held a gun to his head, and threatened to kill him. Luckily, he was saved by a Detroit officer who said, "Hey, I know that man. Leave him alone."

The prosecutor handed down three indictments, all for assault with intent to murder. And these were on the three original STRESS officers. The officer, the deputy sheriff who had been threatened and is alive, had been threatened, but unable to identify clearly the officer who had threatened his life, as were the deputy sheriffs who were involved in the other assault, because of the excitement of the moment. They were unable also to identify who assaulted them in the series of incidents. So all that remained were three indictments for assault to commit murder in this whole affair.

## PROGRAM MODIFICATIONS

Throughout all of this, the community and even police of STRESS followed the events very closely. This was the first time there had been this kind of confrontation, and they naturally seized upon this and attempted to discredit the program. To combat this, the mayor and the police commissioner

made certain modifications in the program. One of them was that STRESS men henceforth would have psychological testing. Well, this caused a furor in some areas of the community, because they had the understanding these men were being tested before they were put in this program.

The second recommendation was that henceforth the squad would be enlarged. The STRESS operation, the way it had operated in the past, depended upon three men; one, the decoy, and two, the apprehenders, and it was found because of this small number of men, that if the decoy was attacked with just two men out there to make the apprehension, it was very difficult for them to do so on the city streets, and that was the reason the gun most ordinarily would be used. So what the plan entered into was to enlarge the squad to maybe five or six men, and plant them in different areas, and in an area where the operation would be operated.

Last, and probably most important, was that henceforth a supervisory officer would be assigned with each team, where before the men were allowed to go out and work pretty much on their own. From that date on, there would be direct supervision of the operation.

## AN OVER-REACTION

Well, all of these are good ideas. Unfortunately, however, they might have come a little too late, because right now in the City of Detroit and the County of Wayne, there is a growing opposition. In fact, it went so far in some instances as to recommend the recall of the mayor. When that wasn't feasible they then entered a court suit against the STRESS operation to have it dissolved, and that is where it is now.

The concern I have revolves around the idea of professionalism. There obviously was an over-reaction. This was and is a good program, a program that has proven itself in many communities; that is the decoy program and the stake-out program.

All of us in the field recognize we have to take some real drastic

measures to cut crime. All of us recognize many of the men that do this job are volunteers and they have a very dangerous assignment. I was asked my opinion of the STRESS program during the height of this emotional upheaval. Because my men were injured it was felt I would be able to give the coup de grace to the program. What the person asking the questions didn't realize, of course, is the fact that of the nine years I spent on the New York police force, I spent five years undercover myself. So, I have a great deal of sympathy for those men that daily risk their lives, not knowing when someone is going to attack them, or what form that attack is going to take—whether somebody is going to knife them on the spot, or rob them or grab them around the neck. It takes an exceptional kind of man to have him expose himself to this risk.

But, the concern we had, and the concern I have is this over-reaction, this lack of restraint, this frenzy. In fact, in one instance one of the officers, the Detroit officer who just fired his gun indiscriminately, was described to be in a frenzy.

Nothing more can be done except what the prosecutor has recommended. But the upshot of this thing has been the dissatisfaction of the citizens; they have attempted to override a prosecutor's opinion and recommendation. A grand jury has on its own started an investigation and various groups in the community have started their own independent investigations, as well as the normal amounts of suits that you would expect from the parents and wives of those who were injured and beaten.

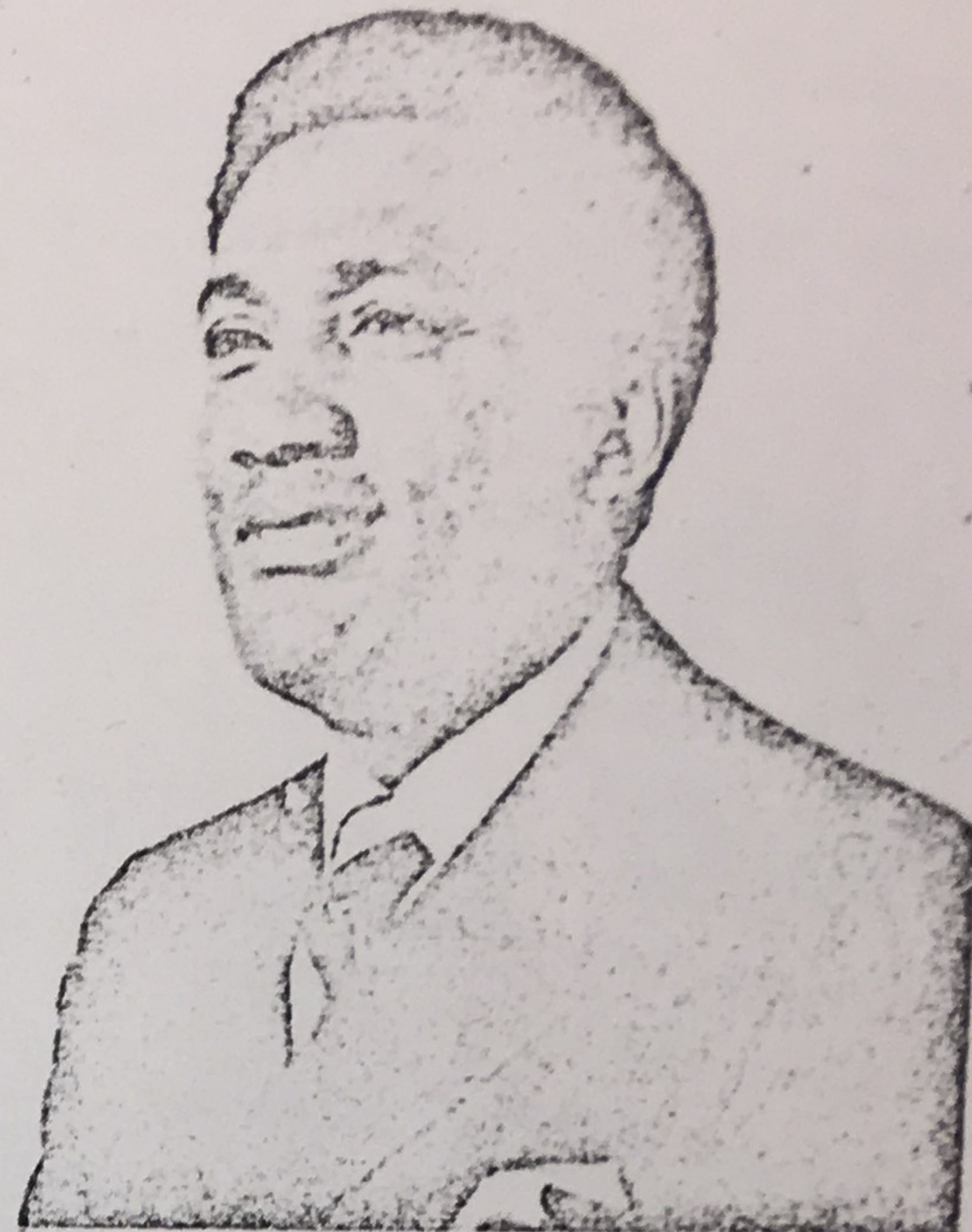
So it's a very interesting series of facts at this time, but where it concerns us in our profession is in making others aware of these series of facts, making you aware that in a situation where you have men under stress and under pressure, it may very well do all of us a great deal of good to use what happened in the City of Detroit to determine what we may look for when we start assigning men to jobs that are very demanding.

We talk about professionalizing our department, and all too often

I'm afraid we talk in terms of sophisticated equipment. I know I have been guilty of that, thinking how I can most effectively use the manpower I have. You think of good administrative procedures; the way to get the most out of your dollar. In fact we even have to develop the art of grantsmanship about the federal government walking around with the dollars. We all want to reach up, and it's an art to it. Grantsmanship is a new art in the field of law enforcement. In my department I have a fellow that is an expert in grantsmanship, that is his main province; that is why he was hired. But all too often I think we forget professionalism is also personal, men to men; a man, a type of human being that has not only the patience of Job, the wisdom of Solomon, but almost the love and forgiveness of a Jesus Christ. It has to be an exceptional man in the field nowadays.

So when I ask, is the police an anachronism, I'm not really being too facetious. It could very well be the policeman as we know him, as he was, is evolving into something quite different. In many communities a policeman has to be a college graduate and in those communities where he is not, he at least has to have a high school degree, where in the past even that wasn't required. No longer is the brawn of a fellow of great importance. More and more we are looking for a man who has a lot more on the ball than just being able to separate two guys battling it out in a local gin mill. We are looking for a fellow who might be able to handle the situation firmly. None of us have gotten to the stage where we are looking for a milksop. We all need a man who has something on the ball. He has got to have the savvy to be able to avoid the direct confrontation where he can, without losing any of the dignity of our profession.

It is incumbent upon all of us in this profession to continually remember and strive in the air of professionalism, to develop by our example, by our recruiting, by administrative guidance, the kind of men, and in fact, set the kind of example for the men under our



Sheriff William Lucas

direction so that they can know that they have a tough job to do. They must know that they have our support, but they must also know that there are limitations placed upon all of us by the public, and by our profession. They must know too that there is no way in the world that we as police officers can be effective without the complete support of the community.

We are, God knows, provoked in many ways. I'm looking forward with great interest to what is going to happen at the Democratic and Republican Conventions this year. We have all seen a great deal of federal money spent to prepare these officers for what may be ahead, so that what happened in Chicago is not repeated. But we all know, particularly those of us who are in large cities, know that this summer, in fact I anticipate and almost predict that we are going to have several small clashes with the youth in our communities. The jobs are scarce, the schools are broke and may close early. We anticipate, we know we are going to get it on the streets, and we, as police officers, are going to be right in the middle of it.

But that is our job, and if we as supervisors, and we as those persons who have been in the field, long and experienced officers, and we the professionals will set the tone, it is my opinion in the long run we will indeed evolve this field of law enforcement into a true profession, and one that we can continue to be proud of. ★