

7 Houston Policemen Linked In Burglary and Theft Scandal

3 Night Shift Men 'Sprung' By Percy Foreman

BY OMAE COLEMAN
Chronicle Staff

A sensational scandal rocked the Houston police department Sunday as seven night shift police officers were implicated in a series of burglaries and petty theft investigations.

They were charged with burglary and theft a night with a suspension threat, a touch in in police custody, and three officers resigned because of their alleged participation in the scandal.

Night Chief H. (Buddy) McCall said seven other officers, including Chief H. (Buddy) McCall, were suspended for a week, and Chief McCall was suspended for a week. The seven officers had been involved in theft investigations. Some officers were suspended for a week. The seven officers were suspended for a week. The seven officers were suspended for a week.

One Copy of this document delivered to the House Select Committee on Assassinations. (See Bufile 62-117250) NOTE: Form in which document was made may be different than one presented in this document in that certain excisions or omissions have been made, and/or only certain pages of document prepared for delivery.
Date _____ Date of HSC Request 1/26/78
Subj: FOREMAN

THE HOUSTON CHRONICLE
OCTOBER 10, 1952
HOUSTON, TEXAS

POLICE DEPARTMENT
HOUSTON, TEXAS

HO-FILE 800119

NOV 18 1952

INDEXED - 75
EX-112
98 NOV 6 1952

MAILED
OCT 13 1952
FBI - HOUSTON

Handwritten: 67C
Handwritten: [Redacted]

Former Chief in Scandal

Exactly two years ago Friday former Police Chief B. W. Payne resigned from the police department in the face of shocking police scandals. Former Night Chief of Police M. M. Simpson had been charged with accepting bribes from a tavern operator, and a patrolman was dismissed for allegedly operating a call girl service.

Now, two years to the day later, another scandal is rocking the Houston police department.

The officers charged with burglary and theft are:

James W. Atkinson, 26, of 133 Burbank, a cruising patrolman, and Edwin B. Moore, 25, of 2016 Ada, who worked in the radio dispatcher's office. Both men, as the other five worked on the 10 p.m.-6 a.m. shift.

Lester Hatfield, 30, 1114 Vera Lou, is charged with misdemeanor theft of a \$12.50 record player from the Dominy.

More pictures and stories on Pages 8, 10 and 15, Section A.

Television and Radio Shop at 818 South Seventy-Fifth Street on September 8, 1952. He was called in from duty as a cruising patrolman to report to the station.

The three men were released from jail when Attorney

(See POLICEMEN, Page 8.)

(Continued from Page One)

Percy Foreman posted bonds totaling \$7400 for their freedom.

Bond had been set at \$3500 each for Atkinson and Moore and \$400 for Hatfield.

The three officers who resigned, McGill said, are:

Patrolmen F. C. Carroll, 27, of 8620 Spaulding;

Gonslee Pittman, 30, of 431 Pecore and N. A. Womack, 29, of 6934 Avenue P.

Being questioned is J. G. Howeth, 26, of 8620 Spaulding.

He will be fired, said Chief McGill, along with the three officers charged.

McGill and other investigating officers said that all seven were implicated.

These are the statements from three of the four officers, not charged in the case:

Womack: "I was suspended for sleeping on duty Tuesday night. That's the reason I quit. I deny that I confessed to any thefts."

Carroll: "I resigned for a better position. I deny implication in the thefts."

Howeth: "They broke me out of bed at 5 o'clock this morning. I don't know anything about this. I haven't been involved in anything. I haven't resigned and I don't know what it's all about."

Pittman could not be reached for comment.

Atkinson was arrested at his home by Sgt. Dick Schorn.

Moore was arrested on the job at the police station five minutes earlier at 3:55 a.m. Friday.

Charges were filed against them in Justice W. C. Ragan's court. Specific charges are burglary and felony theft of the Williamson Supply Company on Armour Drive on August 13.

Chief McGill said Moore and Atkinson "took an air-conditioning unit and a typewriter."

The air-conditioning unit was recovered in the garage of Atkinson's home and the typewriter from a man to whom Moore had sold it on Washington Avenue, Chief McGill said.

Both men made oral statements which led to the recovery of the stolen material, Chief McGill disclosed.

Womack, Hatfield's partner, has been allowed to resign, Chief McGill said.

"Hatfield said he and Womack found the door open and he (Hatfield) went in and stole the record player," McGill said.

"There will be other persons questioned and investigated," Night Chief McGill said. "Our probe is not near complete, but at this time we do not know how many more officers are involved. This may be all and there may be more."

Series of Thefts

The bulk of the loot taken in the series of thefts consisted of whiskey, cigarettes and small amounts of money, the night chief said.

"Most of these thefts were committed by officers who went to places to investigate a burglary. They would pick up something and carry it off," he added.

Rules of Evidence

All the thefts and the lone case of burglary by Officers Atkinson and Moore were committed in the East End area. No written statements were taken by investigating officers.

Chief McGill and the other investigating officers would not say how many thefts were committed.

"We're up against the legal rules of evidence," McGill explained. "We must have tangible evidence and it must be corroborated by credible witnesses and an accomplice is not considered a credible witness."

Some Loot Recovered

The stolen loot is being sought by police.

Actually the only loot that has been recovered is the air-conditioning unit, the typewriter and the record player, Chief McGill said.

He refused to divulge the source of "the first tip" which threw a bombshell into the police department. All he would say was: "It leaked out in talk among officers on the force. It became generally known that some officers were stealing while investigating burglaries."

Complete Investigation

He said he had a long consultation with Police Chief L. D. Morrison, whom he quoted as saying:

"I want a complete investigation, regardless of who is involved."

McGill laid the success of the expose "to the co-operation of uniformed officers on the night side, both patrolmen and detectives."

"We would like to state that while making this investigation, we knew it would involve the honesty and integrity of the police department, but we had a job to do even though it was very unpleasant to us," he said.

Participating in the sweeping investigation with Chief McGill were Captain of Detectives Tom Eubanks; Police Lts. R. R. Simmons, A. C. Martindale, Larry Fultz, O. B. Hitt and Sgts. Dick Shorm and A. T. Cook.

Chief McGill said that he already has recommended the dismissal of Officers Atkinson, Moore and Hatfield, who were stripped of their badges early Friday.

Turn In Badges

Three other officers turned in their badges and commissions after summoned to the police station. The fourth officer, Howeth, now in police custody for questioning, will be fired, Chief McGill said.

Chief Morrison said he will concur with Chief McGill's dismissal recommendations.

The civil service commission has the final word on an officer's dismissal.

City Attorney Will Sears early Friday stepped into the police scandal picture.

He and W. J. Burton, investigator for the city attorney's office, came to the police station at 9 a.m. Friday "to assist Chief Morrison with any civil service action he might want to take in connection with this expose."

McGill said four of the officers, Carroll, Howeth, Pittman and Womack, worked in adjoining districts.

"These four men doubled up on calls where only one car was needed to investigate."

He said no traps were set on the suspected officers.

"We knew we were getting hot when some of them began accusing their fellow officers of squealing on them," McGill said.

It was learned that police were investigating another officer who reportedly stole building material.

McGill and other officers refused to comment on this matter.



GONSLIEE PITTMAN
Unavailable for Comment



J. G. HOWETH
Being Quizzed



N. A. WOMACK
Denies Guilt



F. C. CARROLL
Says He's Innocent



Photo by Lea Witt, Chronicle Staff
SAD DUTY—Police Sgt. Charles Roehm glumly checks in a pile of uniforms, belts and service revolvers relinquished by seven Houston policemen involved in a series of thefts. Three officers were fired and jailed, discharge of a fourth was recommended, and three others resigned.



Photo by Lou Will, Chronicle Staff
POLICE SCANDAL FIGURES FREE ON BOND — Attorney Percy Foreman, second from left, is shown with three Houston policemen for whom he posted bond early Friday. In the picture, left to right, are discharged Patrolman Lester Hatfield, Attorney Foreman, and discharged Patrolman Edwin B. Moore and James W. Atkinson. Atkinson and Moore are charged with burglary and felony theft; Hatfield is charged with misdemeanor theft in the big department expose.