

Sealey Wins Confidence of Irate Harlem

(Following is the second and concluding portion of an article by the New York Herald Tribune's award-winning reporter, Jimmy Breslin, dealing with conditions in New York City's troubled Harlem district after Capt. Lloyd Sealey, first Negro to ever command a police precinct in the nation's largest colored community, took charge of the 28th precinct.)

Lloyd Sealey has quieted Harlem because of his skin, and because of the significance of his job. But he has not quieted Harlem because he weeps for his people when they do wrong and he restrains the white man under his command from doing his job when something is wrong. Sealey is not that kind.

There was, on this Monday night back in July, one part of the night when the trouble was on the corner of Eighth Avenue and 125th Street. The crowds, these huge crowds which raced up and down the streets, all seemed to be there. And the cops ran at them, firing into the air, and bottles came back at the cops and then a Molotov cocktail hit a squad car and sprayed it with flame. The firecracker sound of gunfire came up the steps from the subway platform.

"Who is that?" one of the detectives standing in front of the 28th Precinct said.

"That's Sealey," the guy with him said. Then he turned to us. "There's a fellow you ought to follow. What a man this is. Watch how he handles this."

Lloyd Sealey was walking up from the precinct, which is on 123d Street, in the middle of the block between Seventh and Eighth. He was in a captain's uniform, the gold bars on his collar standing out against the black of his neck. A blue Civil Defense helmet was on his head and a club was in his hand. The club was swinging loosely by its strap, but the big hand was right at the top of the handle and it could slide down and grip the club anytime it wanted to.

Sealey walked easily up 123d Street and then he turned onto Eighth Avenue and the hand dropped down and gripped the handle of the big club.

The street was a blaze of neon and people hung from the windows and stood on the rooftops and threw bottles and there were no cars on the street. Only people. They were in packs, screaming and running and hanging on the street corners and looking up to 125th Street, where it was a mess.

Sealey got out in the gutter and started to walk. He walked straight at the crowd with the club in his hand and then a woman, her stockings hanging at her ankles, turned around and saw him.

"The man," she yelled. "Look out for the man." She started to run. Then an "Oooohhh!" ran through a crowd of kids on the street corner, the same kids who had been challenging the cops to shoot at them for nights, and they started to run. Sealey walked at them, coming straight up Eighth Avenue, and in front of him the crowds dissolved into white shirts running down the sidestreets and women looking and then running into doorways. They were not running because of respect. They were running because they were afraid of this six-foot, 195-pound man who held the club in his hand and walked right at them.

"They're afraid of you," we said to Sealey.

"Oh, no," he said pleasantly. "They're just getting a little exercise."

"Here comes the man," a woman screamed out of a fourth-floor window. "Look out, he break your head."

"They're not afraid, they're petrified," we said to Sealey.

"Oh, be nice," Sealey said. "I'm just taking a little walk."

He went up to 125th Street with the crowd melting in front of him and they melted at 125th Street, too, and in all the Harlem riots you never saw people react to a man as they reacted to Sealey that night.

"They still react that way to Mr. Sealey," Paul Zuber says. "I mean, when he comes around this is no midget walking at you. You can get yourself, oh, about 46 stitches in the top of your head if you toy with Mr. Sealey and the whole town knows it, too."

It is, this Sealey action, as powerful a game as you want to see one man play.

It also is an intelligent game Sealey plays. "The psychological part of this is the interesting thing," he says. "It affects everybody. Now the point of view with which you approach the situation influences your reaction to it. The man on the police force may have been responding correctly up here, but the community may not have been able to see it because of the emotional involvement. When I came here, I wanted to work on the manner in which the community approached the police. And, of course, the way the police approached the community. Without that, all the toughness and all the courtesy you extend means nothing. The community will yell 'Police brutality' and believe in it and nothing will get done."

To work on this, Sealey went at the problem from both sides. First, his own men. The need here was obvious and the word was out from headquarters about it. There was to be a change in the police in Harlem. And not a change in the use of a gun or a nightstick. The change was to start with what is, consistently, the worst enemy any policeman has. His mouth. If there was one thing which came out of the riots clearly, it was the urgent need for police in this city to know and understand, and know and understand forever, that the word "nigger" must be gone. It is a word from the past and when used it is, at once, an admission of stupidity and an expression of viciousness and bigotry. The cops used the word casually in Harlem. And they used it with meaning during the riots, and everytime they said it you could see the eyes in the crowd widen and gleam and you knew that at that moment the people wanted to get the cop who said the word and kill him.

Beyond this, when a cop talked to people, he was to use a little more sense. He was, in short, to talk to colored people as if they were white.

This was the easy part to handle. Sealey's men get paid for doing what they are told.

The hardest part was to maneuver the people of Harlem. In Harlem, the only way to really see anybody is to go to a meeting. It is a city of meetings, this huge tract of five-story buildings. People meet on street corners or in doorways or in churches or in second-floor offices. And they talk.

So one week after taking the job, Sealey and his boss, Harry Taylor, the assistant chief inspector in charge of Manhattan North, walked into a night meeting at the Carver National Bank on 125th Street. In the audience were representatives of 69 organizations, from the Black Muslims to local churches.

Taylor got up and said, affably, "Now you people have grievances, and we in the Police Department have faults. Tell me about it."

The summer came down on Taylor that night. It came in words, bitter, cutting words. And it came on Sealey, too. He was a cop before he was a Negro to them that night and everybody in the audience hated cops. It was wrong, of course. The police never were like what the people thought of them. But the people believed they were.

Through it all, the people in the audience, who were snarling so much, began to see something. Harry Taylor and Lloyd Sealey were sitting there and taking it. There were no comebacks and no anger showed. Just two guys who had the shrewdness of those who have been on the streets for a living. By the end of the night, the people were talking to Taylor and Sealey, not at them.

And now Sealey started working his area. There isn't a meeting he doesn't attend, a luncheon he won't make, a funeral wake he won't visit. He walks his precinct like a politician, shaking hands, talking to people, working on them. And it has all paid off. They talk to the police in his precinct now. Oh, maybe they're not in love with them. But they talk to them. After last summer, that is some kind of a miracle.

The whole thing, then, comes down to a matter of interest. The police were interested enough to try something. They were interested enough to admit a mistake and rectify it. They were interested in people and they did something to show it. So far, here in October, and with May closer every day, the police are the only ones to have done a thing about Harlem. Every other agency, and every politician, has shown nothing. There is HARYOU, about which much is written and fought over, but little gets done. There are speeches about housing and the future, but the people still live the same and the rats breed and grow long and bold. Nothing has changed in Harlem. Not even something on paper which can give hope. And the kids still hang around and the junk is everywhere and the stupid gambling laws make policy numbers, the religion of Harlem, illegal, so the runners are told to pay the cops and the cops take it and the same cycle of hopelessness and misery and ignorance goes on and the price we are going to have to pay for it gets stiffer every day.

"We try," Sealey was saying one night. "But there is only so much we can do. Look around you. We can't do anything about the housing. And we can't do anything about giving people a chance. That isn't our business. But that's the things that bother them and create trouble. We can't stop that. We can act on it when it happens. But we can't remove the source of the trouble."

The source was everywhere. He was walking on



MAKING DECORATIONS

Mesdames Philip Mosley of Girl Scout Junior Troop 22; Shirley McDaniel of Brownie Troop 21, and Charles Galloway of Brownie Troop 119 are shown making decorations for their troop's tables for the annual Girl Scout Appreciation Dinner to be held at Convention Center at 6:30 p.m. on January 16.

Eighth Avenue and the street corners on 124th were clogged with weaving, pawing winos. The dirty stores in the middle of the block sold ham hocks and turkey wings. And above the stores were the houses, still crumbling, just as they were last summer.

Sealey didn't mention anything about the houses or the rats or that everybody on Eighth was broke and ignorant because nobody ever gave them a shot at life. He couldn't. It isn't police business. It is a politician's business, and it is fall now and they are too busy talking to get votes to worry about the summer. They come to Harlem only to shake hands and make sweeping promises to the colored people. In the summer, they stay away and leave their mistakes to some cop who has three kids at home and has to risk his life.

Sealey stands as the one expression the white man has made which has any meaning to it in Harlem. It is a small thing, one expression. But you have to thank God for anything you get. Thank Him and do a little praying about next summer. It is going to be here very shortly. *

WILD GOOSE

BAR




PACKAGE
GOODS and

MIXED DRINKS

PAYROLL

CHECKS

CASHED

BUDWEISER

DRAFT BEER



'D' St. & LAKE MEAD BLVD.
604 W. Lake Mead Blvd.
NEXT DOOR to 7-11 STORE