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HEADLINER

Walsh Took Right Turn To Success

By JOE GOULDEN

Each Monday morning around 10 o'clock the members of the Dallas County grand jury file down to criminal district court to return a week's load of indictments.

Immune from the hubbub of bailiffs, clerks and lawyers is an immaculately clad man whose white hair contrasts sharply with a nutbrown tan.

His only sign of officialdom is a stack of manila folders tucked neatly under one arm. He listens quietly to the reading of indictments, then slips out the door and goes back upstairs to work.

He's inconspicuous, and that's just how Douglas Ernest Walsh wants to remain.

He is chief investigator for the grand jury, a position that by its very nature demands a man with the tight lips of a CIA agent, the detective skill of a Sherlock Holmes, the unimpeachable character of a TV Western hero.

Doug Walsh, (as everyone in the courthouse calls him) has all three. And that's why, after 40 years in law enforcement in Dallas, he is counted at the top of his profession — by respect, if not by rank.

"I have one present aim in life," he said one day last week. "And that is to help Dist. Atty. Henry Wade keep good living conditions, crimewise, in a growing city."

He said the combined attitudes of Sheriff Bill Decker

Police Chief Jess E. Curry and Wade are such that grand juries really have no concern with threats of organized crime.

Walsh won't talk about what he does for the grand jury concerning investigation. He takes assignments, however, both from Wade and from individual jurors.

And he stays completely aloof from the occasional whirlwinds of controversy that swirl up and down Main Street between prosecutors and police.

It's suffice to quote one former juror on the subject: "Whenever a hole showed up in a case, Walsh went out and plugged it with a needed witness."

The former police-chief-for-a-month has a theory about life: Each person eventually comes to a Y in his personal road; which fork he takes depends upon the individual.

Because of this, he has a personal reason for casting a cocked eyebrow at youthful tales of "my environment made me go wrong."

At the age of seven Walsh was left parentless in Mexico City when his mother died giving birth to a younger brother. (His father had been an American citizen doing railroad work.)

Some high level correspondence between the American consul, the Governor of Texas and the governor of the Mexican state of Puebla eventually sent the two tots to Buckner Home here.

So perhaps those years put a little more self-reliance starch than usual in Walsh's backbone.

He didn't pay much attention to young punks who blame everyone but themselves for their troubles," he said.

Buckner then raised a boy who was 18, or so, then his father was up to him," he re-

membered, he left in 1910 and got a job in "the second service station" ever in Dallas County, where the White Plaza Hotel is today.

He piled night business school atop a 10-hour work day, then was summoned into Army service for World War I. A 39th Division patch on his sleeve, he sloggged through the Meuse-Argonne campaign.

Back in civilian clothes Walsh became a secretary in the police department's front office on Feb. 14, 1920. And for the next 37 years he was an officer who never wore a uniform nor pounded a beat.

His specialty was identification: First the Bertillion system, later the more exact science of fingerprints. By 1936 he was captain of the ID bureau and head of the city jail.

Walsh is almost fervent upon the subject of fingerprinting. Fingerprints are an act of God — something God almighty intended for you alone. Because of them no man can totally steal your character.

"And God put them on the only joint of the human body susceptible to inking and recording."

Because of those ridges and folds Walsh identified many a mysterious corpse, sent many a wandering amnesia victim back to his home.

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A departmental shakeup in 1939 put Walsh in the chief's chair. He stayed there a month, demanding all the while he be relieved, citing the health of both him and his wife. He was then made assistant chief for eight years, retiring as chief of detectives on April 5, 1948.

Recurrent bouts with pneumonia are responsible for Walsh's chief relaxation — swimming. He soaks up sun as a medicine, keeps a deep tan when co-workers are pasty by comparison.

Walsh lives at 5931 Winton. He has two children, Douglas Jr., an insurance man, and Mrs. Byron Clark, both of Dallas. He is a member of the official board of East Dallas Christian Church and the American Be-