

Mrs. Conlisk Tells Trials Of Being 'Police Wife'

By WILLIAM DENDY
Staff Writer

"He's getting busier and busier since he took the job" said Mrs. James B. Conlisk, when asked about her husband, Chicago's new superintendent of police.

"His duties often keep him away several evenings a week and with Jim, our oldest boy at St. Procopius college, and John at St. Ignatius High school during the day, we don't cook as much as we used to."

Mrs. Conlisk who will celebrate her 35th wedding anniversary next spring explained the particular problems one encounters being a policeman's wife.

"IT WAS DIFFICULT at first adjusting to Jim's shift work but one learns to live with these things," she revealed. "We both grew up in St. Brendan's parish on the south side and lived in the same house from the time we were married until we moved out here near O'Hare airport."

"I'm just a homemaker," she said. "My husband is the one who should be interviewed. He works awfully hard at his job and I keep trying to make him slow down. He is really dedicated to his police work. This morning he had to leave the house at 6:30 for a breakfast conference. His hours are not really stabilized."

MRS. CONLISK told how her husband "came up from the ranks." He always wanted to be a policeman, and except for a brief position with the First National bank and his years in the service during the war, "that's always what's he's been."

She described her reaction to the news of her husband's appointment as superintendent. "The date was June 23 when Mayor Daley announced that Jim would succeed O. W. Wilson. Our phone was busy for two days with calls from friends congratulating us. It took a couple of days to get used to the idea."

Mrs. Conlisk said that when she was a girl she used to think



MRS. JAMES B. CONLISK Jr., wife of Chicago's new superintendent of police, is shown knitting an Afghan in her new home on the northwest side of Chicago. (New World Photo)

all police officers were alike, but when O. W. Wilson came to Chicago he brought with him a collection of brilliant former students who gave a new dimension to her estimate of police work.

"These men are really efficient," she said. "I think that really good men stand out. They are like cream rising to the top in a bottle of milk, and in police work they have to be sharp to survive."

MRS. CONLISK SAID that she gradually grew to live with the knowledge that a policeman's work was dangerous at times. "You get used to the idea and you even reach the point where you never expect anything will go wrong. There was one time, though," she revealed, "that would have really worried me if I had known about it when it was happening."

"It was back in 1952 or 1953.

with old friends on the south side on their weekends. "We don't know too many people up here. This neighborhood is rather new."

THE CONLISKS live in a new one-story brick home on the edge of one of the eastern flight path approaches to the airport. "I hardly notice the sounds of the jets roaring overhead anymore," she noted. "You just grow accustomed to it, I guess."

She disclosed that her oldest son Jim, who is 21, wants to be a policeman like his father. "He's majoring in political science now and we hope he'll go on to graduate school. Our other boy, John, is 16 and we think perhaps he may become a writer," she said. "He's still in high school so it's rather early to tell. But he likes writing stories."

Mrs. Conlisk believes that wives of police officers should encourage their husbands to take extra courses in criminology or police work if they can. "Police who are really motivated should do this," she said, "It's one of the best ways to move ahead."

SHE TOLD HOW her husband had attended a year-long series of courses at Northwestern's Traffic institute. "He left for classes at 6 in the morning and didn't get home till 7:30 at night. Often he would stay up till 2 or 2:30 in the morning studying."

She said that the possibility of her husband ever becoming police superintendent had never entered her mind for most of his career "but when he was appointed deputy commissioner, I started to think about it," she grinned.

The police had cornered a gunman down near the Northwestern depot. The man had decided to shoot it out. I found out after it was all over that Jim had been in the middle of it, right in the line of fire. He didn't get hit and he told me about it after it was all over. Somehow it didn't seem so frightening," she said. "Once it's over it's not so bad."

Mrs. Conlisk said that she and her husband often visit