

Wednesday, August 2, 1967

Conlisk Takes Over

'Big Jim'--Chicago's No. 1 Cop

By John Justin Smith

It was Big Jim Conlisk's day. He was officially made police superintendent, hailed by the mayor of Chicago and embraced by political and civic leaders.

And through it all, Conlisk was as nervous as a .200 batter with a 3 and 2 count on him.

This was nothing new. Conlisk is nearly always nervous. (The day he was named successor to Supt. O. W. Wilson he told a reporter: "Gosh, this is terrible. I never really wanted the job.")

It's just his way.

THE DAY BEGAN for him when he put his size 12 feet over the side of the bed in his Northwest Side home at 6:15 a.m.—15 minutes earlier than usual.

How had he slept?

"Fitfully," he said, smiling.

He made his way to his fourth floor office at 1121 S. State St. and went directly to his desk at 8:30 a.m. Except for an occasional visit from aides, including his City Hall contact man, Sgt. Paul Quinn, he was in seclusion.

"He's working on important matters from City Hall," said Mel Mawrence, department director of public information.

But the word is out in headquarters that, for now, Conlisk would like to avoid meeting the press, except at regular, semiformal conferences.

A COUPLE minutes after 10, he came out of his office,



Mrs. Colette Conlisk pins a new badge on her husband, James B. Conlisk, after his induction as police superintendent



by Mayor Daley (right) in ceremonies at City Hall. Mrs. Conlisk and son James III flank the new police boss. (Photos by John Tweedle)

spied a reporter and said:

"Oh, boy."

When a photographer aimed a camera, the new superintendent said:

"Not yet. I'm not buttoned up."

He buttoned and checked his uniform blouse and then posed.

HE WAS WARM and friendly. He usually is. But he answered questions only briefly, saying he was working on

the department budget and trying to keep up with details.

"I've got to get over to the mayor's office," he said, shifting his 210 pounds from one foot to the other and back.

He hitched up his eyeglasses and walked away.

AT CITY HALL, he found his wife, Colette, and one of his two sons, James II, 20, waiting for him. (His son John, 15, is in Moscow, touring with fellow students from

St. Ignatius High School.)

Conlisk shook hands with top police brass and a few politicians who had gathered for his swearing-in. Mrs. Conlisk chatted with reporters, saying she has seen so little of her husband in recent weeks that she has had to mow the lawn.

Pretty soon the word went around and everybody shuffled into Mayor Daley's private office. The mayor quickly performed the ceremony, with

Conlisk promising to uphold the Constitution and conduct the department to the best of his ability.

His wife and son pinned the new four-star emblem on his shoulders. Conlisk smiled and now perspiration gleamed on his forehead.

IN HIS NEARBY conference room, the mayor repeated the ceremony for the benefit of television cameras. Conlisk spoke briefly, saying

he's going to continue Wilson's policies.

"I know, Jim, that with the help of God you'll make a great superintendent," Daley responded.

The deed done, Conlisk went back to his office to cool off with a few minutes of seclusion. Then he went to the Sheraton-Blackstone Hotel for a luncheon in his honor.

IT WAS A mighty turnout. The mayor was there, of course. There were city department heads, aldermen, other politicians, federal judges, business and labor leaders and James B. Conlisk, Jr., 48, a career cop and son of a late career cop.

He stood and met all comers with a smile and then sat down to lunch.

Afterwards, there was speech making and Conlisk was lauded as "intelligent" . . . "far-sighted" . . . "a dedicated, professional policeman."

HE THEN put his nerves aside and spoke, saying he was planning possible use of helicopters and personal radios for patrolmen. He also announced formation of a community services division to incorporate the present human relations section.

Purpose of the new division will be to let the public in on the department's problems—and the department in on those of the public.