

Southwesterer In Focus
RETIRED CHIEF STILL KEEPS BUSY

By Joseph Rice
EPT Sundial 3/21/65

When Chief Willard C. (Bill) Woolverton retired from City service in 1951 after 40 years, 27 days, he said he planned to go fishing. And after that he said, "I'll have plenty to do to keep me busy."

Woolverton's projection has certainly proved true.

Today, the one-time chief of police runs a 137-acre cotton and alfalfa farm just below Tornillo with his son, Bill Jr. In addition, he makes at least one trip weekly to El Paso, attends the Downtown Lions Club meeting here and visits with his many friends. The remaining time he uses simply "to relax."

Relaxing probably comes as a relief for a man who has been as active as Chief Woolverton all his life. Born March 23, 1885, in Anderson County, Tex., he moved to West Texas at the age of 4. The homesite his family decided on was near Uvalde where Billy was raised.

Woolverton went to school in Uvalde, then at the age of 16 left home and joined up with the S Cross Cow outfit near Carlsbad, N.M. During this time he became an accomplished rodeo performer. He broke broncs and roped calves under the title, "Uvalde Slim" and performed at rodeos across the country, including one at Madison Square Garden, N.Y.

But schooling, Capt. Woolverton realizing was more important; than rodeos, and in the winter he attended classes at Seven Rivers, N.M., and finished his high school education. He stayed on with the S Cross outfit for awhile, then returned home and started attending a business college in Del Rio, Tex.



SOUVENIRS OF LONG CAREER—*Capt. W.C. (Bill) Woolverton, retired El Paso police chief and Tornillo cotton and alfalfa farmer, describes one of his experiences gained while serving as chief of detectives. The photographs are of his early enforcement units and the knife is a souvenir from a famous murder case. Woolverton served the City more than 40 years in the fire and police departments. (Times Staff Photo)*

After graduation he began teaching at a business college in San Angelo.

Somewhat of a drifter, Woolverton left San Angelo for Kentucky where he studied business administration at Bowling Green. He was not gone long before he came back to the Southwest and taught in another business college, this time in Roswell, N.M.

The last job he held before he began working for the City of El Paso as a fireman was at Brother's Grocery Store on Alameda Avenue. The Fire Department position was obtained in 1909.

From that year, Woolverton compiled an amazing record of public service. In three short years he moved up from pipeman and driver in the Fire Department to captain of Company Three.

It was while he was captain of the company he met and married the former Lucy A. Roberts of Statesville, N.C., who had been visiting her sister in El Paso.

In 1916 Woolverton decided to transfer to El Paso Police Department. He drove the police paddy-wagon, which doubles as an ambulance. Unfortunately for him, all the other policemen rode horses, and since it took them so long to get any place, he had to answer most of the calls.

Woolverton moved up to a more staid position as jailer, and from there became sergeant of police. He became a captain in 1929, then chief of detectives, and finally the highest position, chief of police. The final promotion came in 1949.

Looking back over his experiences, Woolverton said there were moments of humor and moments of great excitement.

“I remember we once had been watching a man several days on the suspicion he was wanted for a brutal murder in Montana,” Woolverton said. “When time came to apprehend him, though, I was the only man available for the job.

“When I entered the hotel to get the man, he had a gun on the desk clerk. I told him he was wanted for car theft, went over and jerked the gun away. The man went quietly, thinking he was to be booked on a lesser charge. He wasn’t.”

Another interesting happening involved the gangster Mickey Cohen.

GOT RESPONSE

When Woolverton helped hurry Cohen on his way when he visited El Paso, Cohen responded by sending Woolverton a package of stuffed fruit and his regards.

Woolverton paid the return postage and sent the parcel back. Upon seeing that he was costing Woolverton money, Cohen sent him another box of fruit, apparently hoping Woolverton would not accept it again and have to pay for its return. Woolverton did. Cohen seemed satisfied, the second time, however, and that was the end of the episode.

In 1943, realizing he might have time on his hands when he retired, Woolverton decided to invest in some land near the Rio Grande in the Lower Valley.

“When I bought the land, it was completely untouched,” Woolverton said. “I started doing some work on the land and got along as well as I could until my son was discharged from the Navy. We bought some heavy war surplus equipment and cleared the land, planting more and more of it as we progressed. We leveled it, irrigated it and did all the work ourselves.”

Woolverton now plants part of the land as cotton and the rest as alfalfa. He sells the alfalfa to ranchers in the Sierra Blanca area.

The cotton yield, he says, has varied from 70 to 111 bales, depending on how much he planted and how the year was.

“The time is coming when I’m going to have to retire again, though,” Woolverton said. “My son does most of the work now, and some day it will be up to him entirely. Then I’m just going to take it, easy.”

With his many friends to visit and his extremely active mind thinking of new things to do, one doubts if Billy Woolverton will ever “take it easy.” He’s going to be just as busy as ever.

* * *

Southwesterner In Focus

Retired Chief Still Keeps Busy

By JOSEPH RICE

When Chief Willard C. (Billy) Woolverton retired from City service in 1951 after 40 years, 27 days, he said he planned to go fishing. And after that, he said, "I'll have plenty to do to keep me busy."

Woolverton's projection has certainly proved true.

Today, the one-time chief of police runs a 137-acre cotton and alfalfa farm just below Tornillo with his son, Bill Jr. In addition, he makes at least one trip weekly to El Paso, attends the Downtown Lions Club meeting here and visits with his many friends. The remaining time he uses simply "to relax."

Relaxing probably comes as a relief for a man who has been as active as Chief Woolverton all his life. Born March 23, 1885, in Anderson County, Tex., he moved to West Texas at the age of 4. The homestead his family decided on was near Uvalde where Billy was raised.

Woolverton went to school in Uvalde, then at the age of 16 left home and joined up with the S Cross Cow outfit near Carlsbad, N.M. During this time he became an accomplished rodeo performer. He broke brones and roped calves under the title, "Uvalde Slim" and performed at rodeos across the country, including one at Madison Square Garden, N.Y.

But schooling, Capt. Woolverton realized, was more important than rodeos, and in the winter he attended classes at Seven Rivers, N.M., and finished his high school education. He stayed on with the S Cross outfit for awhile, then returned home and started attending a business college in Del Rio, Tex.

After graduation he began teaching at a business college in San Angelo.

Somewhat of a drifter, Woolverton left San Angelo for Kentucky where he studied business administration at Bowling Green. He was not gone long before he came back to the Southwest and taught in another business college, this time in Roswell, N.M.

The last job he held before he began working for the City of El Paso as a fireman was at Brother's Grocery Store on Alameda Avenue. The Fire Department position was obtained in 1909.



SOUVENIRS OF LONG CAREER—Capt. W. C. (Bill) Woolverton, retired El Paso police chief and Tornillo cotton and alfalfa farmer, describes one of his experiences gained while serving as chief of detectives. The photographs are of his early enforcement units and the knife is a souvenir from a famous murder case. Woolverton served the City more than 40 years in the fire and police departments. (Times Staff Photo).

From that year, Woolverton compiled an amazing record of public service. In three short years he moved up from pipe-fitter and driver in the Fire Department to captain of Company Three.

It was while he was captain of the company he met and married the former Lucy A. Roberts of Statesville, N.C., who had been visiting her sister in El Paso.

In 1916 Woolverton decided to transfer to El Paso Police Department. He drove the police paddy wagon, which doubled as an ambulance. Unfortunately for him, all the other policemen rode horses, and since it took them so long to get any place, he had to answer most of the calls.

the desk clerk. I told him he was wanted for car theft, went over and jerked the gun away." The man went quietly, thinking he was to be booked on a lesser charge. He wasn't."

Another interesting happening involved the gangster Mickey Cohen.

GOT RESPONSE

When Woolverton helped hurry Cohen on his way when he visited El Paso, Cohen responded by sending Woolverton a package of stuffed fruit and his regards.

Woolverton paid the return postage and sent the parcel back. Upon seeing that he was costing Woolverton money, Cohen sent him another box of fruit, apparently hoping Woolverton would not accept it again and have to pay for its return. Woolverton did. Cohen seemed satisfied the second time, however, and that was the end of the episode.

In 1943, realizing he might have time on his hands when he retired, Woolverton decided to invest in some land near the Rio Grande in the Lower Valley.

"When I bought the land, it was completely untouched," Woolverton said. "I started doing some work on the land and got along as well as I could until my son was discharged from the Navy. We bought some heavy war surplus equipment and cleared the land, planting more and more of it as we progressed. We leveled it, irrigated it and did all the work ourselves."

Woolverton now plants part of the land as cotton and the rest as alfalfa. He sells the alfalfa to ranchers in the Sierra Blanca area.

The cotton yield, he says, has varied from 70 to 111 bales depending on how much he planted and how the year was.

"The time is coming when I'm going to have to retire again, though," Woolverton said. "My son does most of the work now, and some day it will be up to him entirely. Then I'm just going to take it easy."

With his many friends to visit and his extremely active mind thinking of new things to do, one doubts if Billy Woolverton will ever "take it easy." He's going to be just as busy as ever.