

Paul Harvey's Piece 'Policeman' Has Been Called 'One of His Best.' And It Couldn't Be More Timely

A policeman is a composite of what all men are, mingling of a saint and sinner, dust and deity.

What that really means is that they are exceptional, they are unusual, they are not commonplace. Buried under the froth is the fact: and the fact is, less than one-half of one percent of policemen misfit the uniform. And that is a better average than you would find among clergymen!

What is a policeman? He, of all men, is at once the most needed and the most wanted. A strangely nameless creature who is "sir" to his face and "pig" or worse to his back.

He must be such a diplomat that he can settle differences between individuals so that each will think he won.

But...if the policeman is neat, he is conceited; if he's careless, he's a bum. If he's pleasant, he's a flirt; if he's not, he's a grouch.

He must make instant decisions which would require months for a lawyer.

But...if he hurries, he's careless; if he's deliberate, he's lazy. He must be first to an accident, infallible with a diagnosis. He must be able to start breathing, stop bleeding, tie splints and above all, be sure the victim goes home without a limp.

The police officer must know every gun, draw on the run, and hit where it doesn't hurt. He must be able to whip two men twice his size and half his age without damaging his uniform and without being "brutal." If you hit him...he's a coward. If he hits you...he's a bully.

The policeman, from a single human hair, must be able to describe the crime, the weapon, the criminal and tell you where the criminal is hiding. But...if he catches the criminal, he's lucky; if he doesn't, he is a dunce.

He runs files and writes reports until his eyes ache, to build a case against some felon who will get "dealed out" by a shameless shamus.

The policeman must be a minister, a social worker, a diplomat, a tough guy and a gentleman.

And of course, he'll have to be a genius...for he will have to feed a family on a policeman's salary.