

Pat Biog. BK.

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KELLY, John

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# Kelly was COPS program founder

NOT FOR CIRCULATION

By TOM SAWYER

It's called COPS for short, quite appropriate for a police cadet organization — and, says its founder, quite accidental.

The Cadet Organization Police School, known for its work with children and the reduction in youthful crime that goes with it, probably would have been known as CORPS but for a run-in with the City's recreation department of the day.

The conflict was over a judo school Kelly had set up some time before, and it was enough to make him think twice about crossing the powers that be a second time by including a planned reference to "recreation" in the organization's name.

So the R was dropped and, in January, 1968, COPS was born.

It was an appropriately haphazard process, because the organization itself began almost accidentally.

In those days, Kelly recalls, he'd just launched the police youth bureau and neighborhood kids were always dropping by to visit him at his Lakeview office.

"They just didn't have anything to do, really," he says.

So Kelly came up with a few suggestions — including the cadet program.

And, somewhat to his surprise, they jumped at the chance. Soon the word was

## what are they doing now?

out: Membership increased dramatically in only a few months — from 30, to 50, to 100, until, at its peak, more than 500 kids had signed up and the program had to be moved from its first home in a church basement to the Canadian Arsenal Building.

Over the years, some of the appeal of COPS must have been its activities — judo, boxing, marching bands, camp, and travel, including trips to Wales and the Yukon.

However, Kelly thinks the most appealing thing about the organization was that it demanded discipline during an era when the tendency was to "let kids do what they want."

"I don't think kids want to go flipping around not knowing what's right and

what's wrong. There are a lot of adults who don't set a very good example."

So COPS would and did.

The result, says Kelly, was good for both the community (there was a noticeable falloff in the number of young offenders) and for the kids themselves.

In a matter of weeks, he says, the kids you wouldn't want to claim as your own had usually been turned around: Snapping to attention, saluting, and so on.

Today, some 15 years later, though he remains a member of its board of directors, Kelly is no longer actively involved in COPS.

However, the program itself continues to do well.

"It's been around for a while," Kelly says. "It's kind of sold itself.

"After I left, it went down a little bit, I know, but they've got a new fellow down there and it's come back again.

At a recent inspection, membership totalled about 170, "which isn't too bad."

Meanwhile, he's still working with kids, with plans for a sports camp on land near Sauble Beach that could be in full operation within two years.

The camp is also something of a retirement project for Kelly, now in his 29th year with the force.



Staff Sergeant John Kelly started the COPS program which has gone from strength to strength.