

Real Life Different Than TV Shows

# BH 'Eye' Tells It Straight

By NICK SMITH  
Staff Writer

Any resemblance between a true private detective and one seen on your TV screen is a rarity, according to Abbott Taylor of Benton Harbor.

Abbott says he knows of no private eyes who go around shooting people, they don't drive big new cars with telephones, and seldom, if ever, have 21-year-old, green-eyed, well-built women clients who are looking for a lost husband, father, sister, mother, etc. Neither are they knight-errants shown on television nor the paid Peeping Toms that many people scornfully believe them to be.

Taylor, without a penthouse office, works in the dining room of his home at 457 Division street where he spends a lot of time typing reports. A wife and three children in the house doesn't help his concentration while he's working there. He has no secretary.

He opened the one-man agency in April. He works mostly at night, giving the grounds and buildings of several Twin City businesses a more thorough inspection than the owners expect from police. He terms these security checks his "bread and butter," that part of the business which gives a reliable daily income. His fee ranges from \$4 to \$10 an hour, depending upon the type of work and the client, he said.

During the day Taylor adheres more to the mold of the hard-boiled detective. He conducts investigations for a variety of clients, including insurance companies.

Recently Taylor did a job for an insurance company that involved investigating a woman who allegedly was totally disabled from a work-incurred injury. Taylor explained the mechanics of the investigation.

"I went to her neighborhood and talked to some of her neighbors and told them my business. Some answered questions, some slammed the door in my face. People get jumpy sometimes when you investigate their neighbor."

Taylor said he next "set up surveillance" by sitting in his parked car and watching her house. He was waiting for her to leave the house and drive to another job, which would disqualify her claim to the insurance company that she was unable to work. The woman did not leave, Taylor said.

"I watched the house and saw little activity inside—I mean she wasn't lifting barbells in front of her picture window or anything like that." Taylor said he write a report, and the

woman's claim was apparently honored.

Taylor said he caught an insurance chisler this summer. Like the woman in the story above, this man was injured in an accident at his factory and told the insurance company he could no longer work. The company contacted Taylor, who routinely set up surveillance.

Early one morning, the fellow left his house in a car. "I followed him to a farm, where he started picking strawberries along with other workers," Taylor said, laughing.

He returned to his office without saying anything to the man. His report erased a healthy future for the goldbrick, who intended to supplement in-

surance money with wages earned where "social security number" is spoken less often than "Trabaje!" (Go to work!)

Abbott Taylor used to pack his .38 caliber revolver hung upside down under his armpit from a shoulder holster, like Hollywood's detectives do.

He has a permit to carry a concealed weapon anywhere in the state, and one evening he was visiting a friend who was in the hospital. "I was sitting on a chair, next to the bed, and I had to lean over to reach for something," Taylor said. "The damn gun fell somehow out of the holster, and banged onto the floor." Now Taylor carries the gun in a belt holster or in his pocket.

Not every gun-toting Romantic with a penchant for seemingly big, easy bucks, can become a private investigator.

The Michigan State Police license all of the state's private investigators. Lt. Roy Coger, commanding officer of the licensing unit, said there are a scant 227 licensed detective agencies in the state. Although some agencies have more than one working detective, Coger said over 90 percent of them are one-man shows.

Before a man is licensed, he needs the permission of his local police department and the county prosecutor, Coger said. To be eligible, a person must be either a three-year veteran of a police force or a governmental investigative unit or have a college degree in police administration. You must be 25, at least a high school graduate and have no felony or high misdemeanor convictions. All applicants are investigated by the state police, Coger added.

Taylor has almost six years of police experience, having worked as a dog catcher and deputy for the Berrien county sheriff and as a Covert township patrolman.

In his seven months as an investigator, Taylor has not drawn his gun, used his fists or handled a criminal investiga-

tion. Besides insurance investigations and the nightly security checks, he has investigated claims of child neglect, usually made by one divorced spouse against the other, determined when a husband or wife was "cheating" on the other and rounded up people who posted bail bonds to keep out of jail, then left town. Clients in the last case are local bondsmen.

When he has time, Taylor watches crime shows on television. His favorite private eye show is "Cannon." Taylor said, "I like him as a character, but the show's not real. No detective will shoot somebody else with as little cause as they do on television. And all detectives don't drive big, new cars, either," the owner of a 1967 Pontiac and 1970 Buick concluded.

## Die Casters Elect Two Area Men

CHICAGO — Two southwestern Michigan industrial executives were elected to offices of the American Die Casting Institute, (ADCI) during the institute's 45th annual meeting here, P.A.R. Findlay, vice president and general manager of Paramount Die Casting, St. Joseph, was re-elected as one of the institutes three vice presidents.

W.T. Andresen, assistant to the president, Du-Wel Metal Products, Inc., Bangor, was elected new vice chairman of the institute's die casting research foundation, the technical arm of the ADCI.

Roger C. Shurtum, president of St. Louis Die Casting corporation, Bridgeton, Mo., was elected as president of the ADCI.

The ADCI is made up of custom die casters in this country and abroad and suppliers to the industry.



PRIVATE INVESTIGATOR ABBOTT TAYLOR

## Bills Going Out

# Benton Tax Base Rises \$6 Million

Benton township's state equalized valuation (tax base) for 1973 is about \$6 million more than last year, Treasurer James Culby told the Benton township board of trustees last night. And tax bills will be going out soon.

Culby reported the township had an equalized valuation of \$94,405,211 and an assessed valuation of \$87,213,820. The figures came during Culby's report on the 1973 tax spread.

Culby stated tax bills have already been prepared, and will be mailed to residents on Nov. 30. Taxes may be paid in person or by mail, he said, noting the final tax payment date without penalty is Feb. 14, 1974.

Culby said the township will send 8,000 tax notices. Trustees also approved three requests which had previously

been approved by the Benton township planning commission. They were:

A special use permit for Whirlpool Corp. for construction of a maintenance garage on Monte road;

A used car license for Donald Gross for G & G Motor Sales at 1635 Red Arrow highway;

And a land split for Ellis Hull, Sr., for a 23-acre parcel at 1946 East Britain avenue (Hull's Terra).

In other matters, the board:

—Approved membership dues of \$250 for the Twin Cities Area Safety Council.

—Agreed to give a \$500 donation to Blossomtime, Inc.

—Awarded a contract for a sewer line on M-139 near Whirlpool's administrative center to Yerington and Harris Construction Co. for \$85,536.

## SJ Elks Pay Honor To Their Old Timers

St. Joseph Elks Lodge No. 541 honored almost two centuries of "Elkdom" at Old Timers night last week.

Special recognition was extended to John Morlock who celebrated his 80th year in the lodge.

Members granted life mem-

bership included Robert S. Criddle, Patrick J. McMullen, Arthur Traxler, William Gifford, L. Walter Priddy, Dr. Robert Ticknor, Harold Tudor, L. Ray Leatz, Max Klemm, Dr. Howard Ross, Fred Calderwood, Joseph Rolete and Emil Yircut.