

Inspector Fought in Bulge

Ralph Barnett Was 1st Sergeant With Gen. Patton

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Except for the fact that he never was a little man, physically, Ralph Ormsby Barnett might be called one of the little men who helped to make Lt. General George S. Patton a great general.

Barnett, who was sworn in yesterday as Pittsburgh's first Negro police inspector, served in the Quartermaster Corps during World War II.

During the Battle of the Bulge in the winter of 1944 and 1945, First Sergeant Barnett helped to supply the fast-moving Third Army with troops, ammunition, gasoline and tires. On his return trips, Barnett brought back German prisoners.

Battlefield Commission

After the Bulge was wiped out, Barnett received a battlefield commission as second lieutenant. Not long after that he was promoted to first lieutenant.

Barnett, 49, of 5127 Breckensidge Street, Upper Hill District, has been on the police force since 1928 as a patrolman and detective. A giant of a man, he is six feet, five inches tall and weighs 256 pounds.

His wife, Anna, is such a good cook Barnett constantly is fighting his own battle of the bulge. He once reached 285 pounds.

After he was graduated from Schenley High School, Barnett studied mechanical drawing at Carnegie Institute of Technology at night. He wanted to become a draftsman, but, in those days at least, engineering firms weren't hiring Negro draftsmen.

Worked in Liquor Store

As a sub-patrolman, on night duty, Barnett did some day-lighting. He worked as a clerk in a state liquor store.

One day he conducted a raid on a house in Tanshill Street, Hill District, and brought several defendants charged with drunkenness before a magistrate. The magistrate wanted to know where they got the liquor.

"We bought it from him," said a defendant, pointing to Barnett.

Several years ago Barnett and three other city policemen—Robert Butler, now captain of county detectives, Lt. Harry Sauselein and Detective William Grayson—were cited for their work in solving the burglary of a Penn Avenue wholesale jewelry firm.

Found Concrete In Cuffs

The burglars rode a freight elevator to the fifth floor of the building, then broke through a concrete floor with crowbars to get to the jewelry firm on the fourth floor.

The policemen solved the burglary when they found crumbs of concrete in the pants cuff of a suspect. Two accomplices later were arrested.

Barnett has been moonlighting in recent years. He worked at night as a draftsman for a firm that erects railings and store fronts.

"I'll have to give this up because being an inspector is a full-time job," said Barnett.

Barnett once played basketball for the Centre Avenue Y. M. C. A. Spartans. At Schenley High School, he was too skinny for football. As a youth, he was six feet, one inch tall and weighed only 145.

The Barnetts have two sons, Ralph Jr., 17, a senior at Schenley High School, and Gregory, 9, at Frick Elementary School. Ralph Jr. wants to be an engineer.



Pittsburgh's First Negro Police Inspector and Family
Inspector Ralph Barnett with wife, Anna, sons, Ralph, Jr., 17, and Gregory, 9.

