

The Villa Police

Winter Haven Police Force includes four men who serve the Florence Villa area and plans for a fifth next year. All are dedicated servants of the law.

Joel Wilburn has the longest years of service, having been first hired in August of 1954.

Joel's father, Rufus Wilburn, came here from Georgia in 1914. He was a minister and served Williams Temple CME Church but also worked for the Villa Hotel. He married Amanda Young, born in Bartow, and Joel was born here in 1918. He attended the Jewett Schools from which he graduated, and served in WWII in the South Pacific. Upon returning here he worked for Mrs. Frank Howard, who was busy on her book "Before the Sun Goes Down." Following this he joined the police department.

In 1947 Joel married Gertie Cunningham, daughter of J. W. Cunningham, and they have two daughters, both of whom finished college. They are the girls J. W. Cunningham says keeps him young. Elizabeth teaches in her college of Hampton, Va., as assistant professor of speech, and Patricia is assistant manager in the Medical Department in Washington, D. C.

Joel is a member of the American Legion, Samson Lodge #142 of the Masons, was president of the P. T. A. for five years, and is a member of the Board of Directors of the Citrus Center Boys' Club. He served his church, Williams Temple CME, as chairman of the building committee when they erected their new structure, is a class leader and chairman of the over-all planning board of the church. Mrs. Wilburn teaches school.

In 1965 Willie T. Richardson, known as "Big T," was hired for the Villa Force. His rank is patrolman. He was born in Lake Wales in 1944 and is a graduate of Lake Wales High School. He and his wife, Barbara, have two children.

James Tugerson, known as "School boy" is a sergeant on the Police Force, and has served the Villa since December 1969. He was born here in 1923 and has over three years in the army as a Military Police. He graduated from Jewett High School and he and his wife, Ora, have six children,

Gay William Henry was also hired for the Villa in 1969. His rank is patrolman. He was born in Winter Haven in 1945 and graduated from Jewett High School. He served two years in the army. His wife, Eunice, is an operator for General Telephone Co.