

READING RECORD

An independent newspaper published every Wednesday and Friday by The Reading Record, Inc., Fourth and Penn Sts., Reading, Pa. Telephone FR 6-2901.

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NATIONAL ADVERTISING REPRESENTATIVE
WEEKLY NEWSPAPER REPRESENTATIVES, INC.

Subscription Rates: 100 Issues by Mail \$5.00; Single Copy 10c.
Advertising rates and contract terms available upon request.

Entered as Second Class Matter at Reading, Pa., under Act of March 3, 1879.

Just As Dead

Age is no excuse for crime. That's why The Record last February initiated the policy of publishing names of chronic juvenile offenders.

Our purpose was not to besmirch the name and reputation of misguided youths — those who had temporarily run afoul of the law or engaged in childish "pranks" — but rather an attempt to nip a budding career of crime.

FBI Chief J. Edgar Hoover, who should know, has emphasized the difference between so-called juvenile delinquents and teen-age gangsters. When a bullet strikes, it makes no difference to the victim whether the person pulling the trigger is "a poor, misunderstood boy" or a hardened criminal.

The Record's policy of using juveniles' names raised a degree of protest. Pollyannas cried the practice would ruin the lives of teen-agers and bring disgrace upon their families.

Last Sunday one of those "poor, misunderstood" boys was responsible for a senseless, cold-blooded slaying. Sixteen-year-old William Clayton Henderson, of Boyertown R.D. 2, ended the life of State Trooper Phil Melley, only a few weeks before Melley would have retired from 20 years of honorable police service.

Granted, not all fuzz-cheeked punks will take a life — intentionally. But then a bullet doesn't check a birth certificate before finding its target. The victim is just as dead whether the person pulling the trigger is 16 or 60.

The Record has a policy of publishing names of chronic juvenile offenders. We intend to maintain that policy. We intend to do everything we can to blow the whistle on juvenile delinquents before they can become adult criminals.



Just Another Juvenile Crime

