

Burlington Standard Press
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Routine Police Act Turns into Murder of Sergeant

Fate works continuously as frantic killers try to avoid inevitable.

Fate, acting through the hand of guilty conscience, turned a routine police act performed hundreds of times by every law-enforcement officer, into tragedy in the wee hours of Monday morning just outside the City limits of Burlington.

Sergeant Anthony "Tony" Eilers, 40, stopped the driver of a Rambler station wagon to inform him of the fact that he in a loose front license plate and a faulty exhaust system. A few minutes later sergeant Eilers was dead with five bullets in him and had been badly beaten.

These events in those related hereafter were pieced together from the killer's story to District Attorney John Peyton. Wilson Lee Brook, 21, 1322 South Lafayette Avenue, Racine, the confessed killer, told the District Attorney that sergeant Eilers had stopped his car to tell them about the loose license plate and that the sergeant looked into the back of the car and was told he couldn't do that. Brook said that Eilers pushed him away and looked in again and that he then grabbed him from behind and his companion slugged him with heavy object and then jumped out of the car and began beating the police officer about the face.



Sgt. Anthony G. Eilers

Brook stated he grabbed the officers gun and fire a shot into his side and he fell to the ground. He then emptied the revolver with five shots entering the body, it was determined by the autopsy. The two then dragged the body into the ditch and were going to leave it there. He got into the squad car and when he could not turn off the red light he tried smashing the switch with his foot. Here, fate stepped in again and provided the clue that led to the identity and apprehension of the killer. His foot struck the accelerator causing the squad car to jump forward and hit the station wagon.

The two vehicles were locked together and when the two were separated by the killer and his 17-year-old companion, the rear license plate of the station wagon was torn off and fell to the ground unnoticed.

Change Mind

At this point the two decided to remove the body from the scene. They loaded sergeant Eilers into the front seat of the squad car which Brook drove while his companion drove the station wagon. They proceeded to the water-filled quarry on Highway 38 where they had intended to dump the car and body into the water which at points is over 100 feet deep. A locked gate prevented this so the car was left rammed against the gate with the motor running. It was noticed there at about 5 a.m. by a bus driver on his way to work. He reported the car to the Racine police and a Racine police car found the car and sergeant Eilers at approximately 5:30 a.m.

Now to get the story from the other end. Sergeant Eilers had not been heard from by radio since shortly after 1:30 a.m., when he and his fellow officer Roy Knollmueller had met at a downtown parking lot. At about 3 a.m. a call was made for other officers on department to search this city for

him. At around 4 a.m. a bulletin was sent to surrounding cities and counties that sergeant Eilers was missing since 2 a.m.. Racine, Walworth and Kenosha County Sheriff's officers searched their respective counties but found nothing. A car was dispatched found as far away as a Rock County but returned at 6 a.m. after the missing car and its tragic passenger had been found.

After the body was found, Chief Walter Gabriel ordered in intensive search of alleys in the cities and roadside in the vicinity. The cooperation of county and town road crews was requested and it was this that turned up the first clue. Ted Wianecki, Cedar Park member of the town of Burlington highway department, found the sergeant's coat near the junction of highway 11 and county trunk W. Blood was found on the ground along with tire marks in the freezing ground. Also found here was the second fateful license plate.

Saw Rambler

At about the same time Bruce Ketterhagen reported to police that he had seen sergeant Eilers stop a Rambler station wagon in that vicinity at approximately 2 a.m., but that nothing appeared to be wrong when he passed by. Another report was received from Frank Freeman, a foreman at the Pure Milk Association plant at Kansasville that two plant employees had seen two cars answering the description of the squad car and the station wagon going east on 11 at a terrific rate of speed shortly before 2:30 a.m., as they were going to work.

The license plate found at the scene, was checked through the motor vehicle department and was found listed to a 1957 Rambler station wagon owned by Woodrow Brook. Blood stains were found in the auto when it was located in a parking lot and a South Milwaukee factory. The elder Brook stated that he had loaned the car to his son on Sunday. Brook was arrested at his place of work in Sturtevant.

The sergeant's gun was found along County trunk H near Sturtevant and the sergeant's insignia was also found along the Highway. Brook said he burned the sergeant cap and his own clothing which had blood stains.



Squad Car Found Here A representative of the state crime laboratory is shown as he looked over the spot where the Burlington squad car, with body of Sgt. Anthony Eilers in it, was found early Monday morning.

Brook was arraigned before a court Commissioner Monday on a charge of first-degree murder and a preliminary hearing was set for Monday, Feb. 12. He was returned to the County jail and is being held without bail. His juvenile companion will have a hearing before Juvenile Judge Howard

DuRocher. A law-enforcement officer will have to request that juvenile jurisdiction be waived before he can be prosecuted as an adult.

Chief Gabriel reported that he had offers of assistance from every law-enforcement department in the area while the search was being conducted. He stated, when he was asked what he thought of sergeant Eilers as a police officer, that it should be evident from the fact that he was promoted to sergeant just over a month ago. Other fellow officers called sergeant Eilers "a policeman's officer." The only mystery remaining is why he did not call in when he stopped the car. He had never failed to do that before, members of the department recalled.

Congressman Henry Schadeberg on hearing of the tragedy in Washington sent a wire expressing shock and stating that a perpetrator of the crime should not anytime go free.

Who was Tony Eilers?

Those who knew him loved him – Tony was a man's man

By William E. Branen

Who was Tony Eilers? We really got to know this capable policeman when the two of us signed up for the so-called "fat man's" softball league several years ago. Tony wasn't fat, but any fellow over 21 years of age was welcome to play.

Tony liked outdoor life and to have a little fun on the side, like a social game of cards, was also a trait of this popular officer. He played third base on this comic type team. He was as good at that as his other sporting endeavors. You see, Tony loved to hunt and fish. Whenever he could get away, summer or winter, fishing was his first choice, after family.

His love for baseball and kids can best be described when one learns that Tony was the coach for the police team in the city pony league. No, Tony was far from being a cream puff – as a fighting ranger in the South Pacific he earned a purple heart. Not even his closest friends ever heard him talk about his military experience, for Tony was not one to brag.

When he was discharged from the service Tony went to work for the Schillers of Burlington Roofing and Insulating Corp. He was kidded many times about the canceling of roofing in cold weather when he would be found a nearby lake ice fishing.

You know the old saying that all "cops" have bad feet. It is reported that this was one of the reasons he left the roofing firm and joined the Burlington police force. There was something about the slant of the roofs that affected his ankles thus making it impossible for him to climb.

At that time Tony lived at Cedar Park. But, because he was going to work for the city, he found it a requirement to obtain housing in Burlington. So, he switched houses with a local painter, Fred Cable, who owned a local paint store, now occupied and run by Phelps Paint and Wallpaper. Tony then moved with his family, Dorothy, John Anthony, 10; and Jean Ann, 8, to 588 Wisconsin Street.

Just recently Tony became a sergeant on the police force. For some time he had not wanted a promotion, mainly because he despised the night shift – and the new sergeant is required to have night duty. But, because his years on the force warranted an elevation in rank, he accepted Chief Gabriel's request and sewed on the stripes.

As a policeman Tony was classed by many of our town folks as one of the best. He was a 24-hour cop as they say – even in street clothes – if he saw a disturbance, he would stop what he was doing and help to calm down the excitement.

Teenagers respected him, for he was firm, yet tried to understand their problems. He would reason with them and expect courtesy in return. This he got. We've seen many teenagers nod to Tony in a friendly way – probably showing their appreciation for the understanding he had shown to them.

We especially remember one New Year's Eve at the Joseph Kane home on Walnut Street when the two of us got into a long discussion over the life of a policeman. He was never one to complain, but he did state that in his mind a night man deserved more money since they were actually risking their life on practically every call they made. He mentioned the also had tavern calls and teenage problems that are very ticklish.

The Obituary

Sergeant Anthony George Eilers

Anthony George Eilers, 40, 588 Wisconsin Street, was killed in the line of duty as a police officer on Monday, Feb. 5.

Sergeant Eilers, a lifetime resident, was born in Burlington on the Dec. 12, 1921, the son of Anthony Henry and Cora Teut Eilers. He attended Cooper grade school and Burlington high school.

On Feb. 15, 1947, at Our Lady of Mercy Catholic Church, Chicago Illinois, he married the former Dorothy Komm. They resided in Chicago for three and one-half years, then moved to Burlington.

Sergeant Eilers was a member of the Burlington police force since 1957 and had been promoted to the rank of sergeant on January 1 of this year. He was a veteran of World War II serving as a member on a ranger outfit that saw combat action in the South Pacific. He held the rank of staff sergeant in the Army and was awarded the Purple Heart. He was also a member of St. Mary's Catholic Church, the Veterans of Foreign Wars Anderson-Murphy Post 2823, and was one of the coaches of the police Pony League team.

Surviving, in addition to his wife Dorothy, are two children, John Anthony, 10, and Jean Ann 8; four sisters, Marie Eilers Mrs. Helen Salo and Mrs. Luella Seitz of Burlington; Mrs. Velaska Vorpapel of Springfield; and three brothers, Sylvester "Bill" Bender and Leon "Pete" Bender of Burlington, and Art Bender of Milwaukee.

Funeral services will be held at 9:30 a.m. today (Thursday), Feb. 8, from St. Mary's Catholic Church with Msgr. Joseph J. Heim officiating. Interment will be in St. Mary's Cemetery. A military escort will be provided, and grave side services will be conducted by the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

Sergeant Eilers was in state after 2 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 7, at the McCarthy-Rueter funeral home. The rosary was recited at 8 p.m. Wednesday.

Society Must Learn

The tragedy of sergeant Eilers death stunned the community into a fitful silence. The first feeling was one of great loss, an emptiness, a hole left in the fabric of community life. Then came the grief and the feeling that a terrible injustice had been done.

The loathing and disgust we feel toward his attacker is mixed with the thought that it just isn't fair. It isn't fair that such a man as Tony Eilers should die, while his murderer still lives.

But what would Tony say? Tony was a man who liked teenagers. He enjoyed working with young people. He trusted them and they, in turn, trusted him. He would not want this to turn us against those youths who need help. He himself, would never turn his back on a youngster who needed guidance, or kindness, or understanding.

But society must wake up to the fact that it needs a better method of dealing with individuals who break its laws. At present we locked them up for a time then turn them loose – no better than when they went in. And we keep locking them up and turning them loose until their insanity overflows into violence and horror.

In a person needs help, then give him help. Rehabilitate those who will respond. But, we claim, capital punishment may be the only sensible solution to dealing with the mind too warped to be helped. Separate the chance offender from the habitual criminal, help the former to a useful life – and terminate the latter.

The family of Wilson Brook will bear the shame of his deed for all their lives, but society must be ashamed also. Yes, ashamed that Wilson Brook was free to walk among us.

Area Communities to Aid at Funeral

Co-operation extended by other law-enforcement units during the Sgt. for sergeant Tony Eilers will continue this morning during the funeral. Former sergeant LeRoy Himebauch has volunteered to man the desk of this morning so that all members of the department can attend the funeral service. They were named honorary pallbearers. The Wisconsin state patrol is sending four squads into the city to assist. A radio car from the Racine sheriff's department will be in the city to handle all calls here.

Upwards of 100 police officers from surrounding counties in neighboring communities are expected to attend the funeral to pay their last respects to sergeant Eilers.

At Tuesday nights city council meeting, Mayor A. B. Rewald stated that the city "suffered an awful loss in the death of sergeant Tony Eilers." He appointed a special committee of alderman John Coleman, Martin Itzin and Leonard Rauen to prepare a resolution of condone and also to study what could be done on the part of the city and monetary way.

Setup Sergeant Eilers Fund

A way of showing how this community and area felt about the man who lost his life while serving the public can be demonstrated through the SGT. TONY EILERS fund which was established Tuesday morning.

Community leaders met with chief Walter Gabriel and decided to establish a fund for Mrs. Dorothy Eilers and the two Eilers children.

The funds can be taken to the Burlington Standard Press office at 709 Geneva Street or to the Burlington Police Department on Jefferson Street.

It is hoped that all businesses and other establishments that have started their own funds will bring the totals collected to the Standard Press or police station. They will then credit it and turn it into a general account which will be established at the bank of Burlington where Mrs. Eilers is employed. In order to keep the records straight, it is hoped all will bring their funds to either the station or the newspaper office.

The group, meeting in the bank to discuss this fund, believes any the other type of fund collecting would not be fitting and that this group would discourage such suggestions.