

Burlington Standard Press
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Burlington Buries Its Policeman As Impressive Officers Join In Respect

A stirring three hours of our lives took place in Burlington, last Thursday morning as the city put to rest its police officer, Sgt. Tony Eilers.

The 40 year-old sergeant, who was killed by a freak bit of fate, was honored and praised during those three hours, much more than he had ever been in his dedicated life.

On Wednesday afternoon, Sgt. Eilers was shown at the McCarthy-Rueter funeral home. Hundreds came to see him and try to raise the spirits of the relatives.

Five police officers from Neenah started the invasion of Burlington of lawmen from all sections of the state. Four had a specific duty, that of guarding the casket of the deceased fellow officer. They took turns standing erect at the casket as mourners viewed the remains of this popular policeman. Four officers and the police chief had come over 150 miles to be at the scene of the tragedy.

During the evening droves of area persons came to the funeral home and then came fateful Thursday.

Over 250 men in blue marched four abreast up Geneva St. to St. Mary's Catholic church to participate in the holy Mass service for Sgt. Eilers.

The 250 strong were followed by over 40 cars, several seating the relatives and close friends of the deceased. Joseph Kane, official of the Standard Press, and a very close friend of the Eilers, was chosen by Dorothy as the person she wished to have escort her during the funeral.



Impressive Display The more than 205 law enforcement officers who attended the funeral of Sgt. Anthony "Tony" Eilers last Thursday morning are shown above as they began their march to St. Mary's Cemetery from St. Mary's Catholic Church.

Msgr. Joseph J. Heim, as the dignified priestly person he is, gave a funeral sermon that had well chosen words and was extremely fitting for the solemn occasion.

He said that words were not needed at this time, but due to custom he would have to say a few. And the few he did say were some of the most powerful words spoken in a house of God in our city for some time.

Christ has always been ready to forgive, he stated. "It is not our place to sit in judgment. It is not our place to condemn the man who committed this brutal crime. This is the job of due process of the law in our country," Msgr. Heim continued.

Sgt. Eilers had wonderful qualities – many of them the white haired priest continued. However, he desired to single out one – devotion to duty.

This was not another job to him, he wanted to serve others. He was dedicated to his work. Even prior to his police work he had proven in his military life – as a Ranger – the type of hazardous task he would and could do for his fellow man.

High School Boy

Msgr. Heim related the highest tribute that could be given to a police officer was rendered by a high school boy on the day of the officer's death. This young man said to the head of Burlington's largest church:

"He was the finest policeman of the force."

It was wonderful to hear a young man speak so highly of a police officer , the prelate said.

Then the priest turned to the philosophic as he stated:

"The purpose of his life was not realized when he breathed free air – but when he left his life.

"Why should it happen to him?, you ask. Could it not be that life was sacrificed that others might be saved in the future?" he suggested.

"Will this not alert us to the responsibilities we have to educate youth to respect lawful authority and to obey the laws of our land? Let us intensify our efforts to instill in our youth respect and obedience.

"What more dramatic way for God to remind us of this duty we have?" St. Mary's leader added.

He and he educators, clergy and parents had this task.

He reminded the near capacity congregation gathered, of their task to emphasize God's moral laws. And he said all three must set an example. He demanded we insist for respect and authority.

In closing he added: "Let us not let a man like Sgt. Eilers die in vain.

"He was a great man in life but also in death, were the closing remarks of the sermon.



Policeman's Funeral Members of the Burlington police force are shown standing at Salute as the flagged draped casket of Sgt. Anthony Eilers is carried from St. Mary's Catholic church following the funeral mass at which Msgr. Joseph J. Heim officiated.

Firing Squad

At the cemetery the firing squad and color guards of the American Legion and V.F.W. took command. Under the leadership of Robert Martinson, who handed the American flag that draped the casket to the sorrowed widow, the squad performed without a flaw in the near zero temperature.

Anderson-Murphy post and Ross-Wilcox post did an outstanding of honoring this V.F.W. member.

The truly deep respect young people had for the sergeant was demonstrated by one young girl, who almost nightly had been told to scoot home when she lingered too long in the dark shadows of temptation in our downtown area. This young lady broke down as she passed the casket at the funeral home. Who would now send her home? she asked a half-brother of Sgt. Eilers.

Pallbearers were formed classmates of the deceased: Kenneth Christensen, Al Alby, Frank Terhorst, Ed Schiefer, Harold "Boots" Schiller and Clifford Willick. The police department served as honorary pallbearers.

While the local police attended the services, Sheriff Rudy Spieker, Racine county, assigned men to the local beat. Other departments handled traffic and one outsider was on patrol. From the lowly rookie to the police chief of Milwaukee – they came to show respect and help wherever they could.

All persons who desired were treated to a lunch at the new Vets building. Betty (Mrs. James) Pihringer, who was chairman of the event, said between 450 and 500 were served. All the food came from volunteer women in Burlington. Dishes to pass were lined up on a long table and for over one hour the line passed through.

The women who supplied the food were:

Salads: Mnes. Leon Daniels, J.D. Van Liere, Don Miles, Steve Wisnefsky, Andy Eisenbart, Eugene Mullikin, Jim Pihringer, Anna Schlichting, Hilton Bentz, Frank Terhorst, Roy Wilson, Ed Wolf, John Sennott, Jr., Russ Poritz, Charles Bauman, Dave Umnus, Paul Schroeder, Jim May, Pete Eppers, Ray Zechel, Walter Brown, Ralph Ketterhagen, "Gabby" Corbett, Ralph Luetten, Wib Leemkuil, Nich Hancock, Edward Kendall, Al Uebele, Florence Umnus, Jim Wilson, Walter Paepke, John Weiler.

Cakes: Mmes. Chet Rusk, Ev Rossmiller, George Borgo, Lee Zocchi, Loys Schoefer, Jack Ebert, Louie Mezich, Ken Pella, Herb Alby, John Andersen, Bernice Fuller, Art Christenson, Lou Kozelou, Al Pella, Mat Becker, Louie Behen, John Degen, Don Busch, Bill Branen, Tom Cable, Ralph Wood, Walter Brown, Len Hoerneman, Dick Hockman and Miss Eleanor Koney.

Hot dishes and potato salad: Mmes. Chet Alby, Ralph Bonsack, Joe Kane, Tony Loomis, Roy Umnus, Richard Kosinski, Roman De Grave, Don Beuthling, Ben Christensen, Ted Wianecki, Bill Kurth, Carroll Kendall, Bill Kendall, Lloyd Wilfert, Ernest Drost, Carrie Van Houtegan, Don Nielson.

Beans: Mmes. Turner Klein, Chet Alby, Roy McConnell, John Lux, Ed Kwiatkowski, Helen Albee, Dick Baumgartner, Ralph Wood, M. Cook, Chesley Platner.

The Burlington auxiliary police and their wives handled the arrangements. Firms and individuals donating various services and products were:

Schuette, Werth & Daniels: truck for pick-ups.
Killen's Ben Franklin: plastic silverware.
Kessler's Variety: supplies.
Vogelsang's bakery: 25 dozen buns.
Harold Ebert: money for coffee.
Rose's bakery: 5 dozen rolls and cake.
Weber Bros.: 36 lbs. cottage cheese.
Sentry Foods: cole slaw for 350 people, sugar, buns and miscellaneous.
Wholesale Grocery: 12 lbs coffee.
Spiegelhoff;s Grocery: hams.
Warren Dairy: supplies.
Badger Hotel: supplies.
Burlington Hotel: supplies.

Those serving food were:

Served: Mmes. John Sennott, George Borgo, Ralph Bonsack, Jim Pihringer, Roy McConnell, Steve Wisnefsky, Bob Scott, Turned Klein, Ralph Lutten, Lorraine (Leon) Daniels, Miss Eleanor Koney and Mr. Roy McConnell, Chesley Platner, Ev Rossmiller, Ed Wisnefsky.

Clean-up: Ed Wisnefsky, Jim Pihringer, Roger Humphrey, Roy McConnell, Hank Ptandrescher, Ed Bulgrin, Chesley Platner.

The park employees set up the tables and others helped wherever they could.