Motorcycle Patrolman Willard H. Santel | Reading Police Department



Age 23
Served: 1½ years

OFFICER

Willard was born August 29, 1921 in Lockland to dairy farmers, Louis B. and Elizabeth Rose (Eling) Santel. Nothing much is known about his earlier years, but they seem to have been uneventful. When he was 18, during June 1940, his mother died of lung cancer.

In his early 20s, Willard joined the Reading Police Department and married during September 1944. Then tragedy struck again on November 24, 1944 when Patrolman Santel's father, while painting the Notre Dame Academy building in Reading, a scaffold broke and he fell to his death.

By May 1945, he and his wife were living at 218 East Columbia Avenue and she was pregnant.

INCIDENT

On May 8, 1945 Motor Patrolman Santel, on a police motorcycle, pursued a violator on Old Wright Highway (now Interstate 75) when he crashed into a loading platform at Forrer Avenue in Lockland, then glanced off and hit a wall. Suffering from a compound fracture of the left tibia and fibula, Lockland Police took him to Good Samaritan Hospital in Cincinnati.

DEATH

While hospitalized, Patrolman Santel developed bilateral pneumonia. He died 21 days later May 29, 1945, becoming the only Reading Police Officer to die in the line of duty. The Coroner determined the crash to be an accident.

He was predeceased by both parents and his oldest brother, Clarence Santel. Patrolman Santel was survived by his wife, Patricia M. (Lemming) Santel (20) and siblings, Arthur Santel (25), Elmer Santel (20), and Irene Santel (15). He was buried on June 2, 1945, in Saints Peter and Paul Cemetery with his parents and brother.

EPILOGUE

On January 9, 1946 Mrs. Santel gave birth to Patrolman Santel’s only child, Sylvia Santel. Mrs. Santel eventually remarried and had four more daughters.

If you know of information, artifacts, archives, or images

regarding this officer or incident please contact the Greater Cincinnati Police Museum at Memorial@Police-Museum.org.

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