Assistant Marshal Albert Schmitt | Village of Cheviot



Age: 29
Served: 3 years
1918 to May 28, 1921

OFFICER

Albert was born June 6, 1891 to John Jacob “J. Jacob”, Sr. and Lena (Dalker) Schmitt. Jacob’s father and both of Lena’s parents immigrated from Bavaria. By 1900, Jacob was working for a street railway in Cincinnati and the family was living at 2171 McLean Avenue.



Albert married Edith M. Applegate of Indianapolis on January 2, 1909 in Covington, Kentucky. By April 1910, he, and his family of three were living in Cheviot at 3832 Washington Avenue and he was working as a machinist at an iron works.

About 1916, Jacob Schmitt, Sr. took a position as the Cheviot Village Clerk.

During 1917, Albert was living at 3712 Woodbine near Trevor Avenue and still working as a machinist, at the Acme Machine Tool Company. Their fifth and last child, Freeman, was born during May 1918.

During 1918, Albert and his brother, John Jacob Schmitt, Jr., went into law enforcement. Albert was appointed as an Assistant Marshal and the first motorcycle policeman for the Village of Cheviot. John joined the Cincinnati Police Department as a Patrolman.

During early 1919, Albert and Edith's fourth child, 2½-year-old Albert Schmitt, Jr., became ill with influenza. He developed bronchitis, then pneumonia, and on February 17, 1919 he died.

MURDERER

Gilbert Fred Ahlenstorf was born July 3, 1897 in Saint Bernard to carpenter John Henry and Henrietta “Hattie” (Kiefer) Ahlenstorf. He married Josephine Wuebker on August 2, 1915 and fathered a child by her. During 1918 he was working at the Sinton Hotel and living at 512 Oak Street in Saint Bernard.

Sometime before 1921, Ahlenstorf had been arrested for Speeding by Assistant Marshal Schmitt and made a public threat against him “if he ever tried it again.” On May 15, 1921, he was found guilty of Speeding again, this time in Cincinnati, fined $25 (almost $400 in 2021 dollars), and his driving privileges were suspended for two months.

INCIDENT

Less than two weeks later, on the night of May 27, 1921, Ahlenstorf was driving again, and speeding again in Cheviot, and Assistant Marshal Schmitt was again chasing his motorcycle. In his sidecar, the 23-year-old husband and father carried a girl he had met downtown that night, Miss Alvena Brennan (19) of 811 Mound Street. With him was another speeding motorcycle, operated by Foster Lloyd (19), carrying Mary Rison (19), also of Mound Street, in its sidecar.

Marshal Schmitt pursued the motorcycles out of the village and south on Boudinot Avenue into the City of Cincinnati. When Brennan noticed the pursuing motorcycle, she told Ahlenstorf, who looked back, said, “that’s Schmitt after me,” and sped up. He yelled to Lloyd, “Here’s Smittie. Watch me get him!” Lloyd turned off Boudinot, probably at Ramona Avenue. Just before Werk Road, Assistant Marshal Schmitt began to pull ahead of Ahlenstorf and Ahlenstorf ran into his motorcycle forcing it to hit the curb, which caused Marshal Schmitt to be ejected and propelled headfirst into a tree.

Ahlenstorf's motorcycle also went down spilling him and his passenger. Lloyd must have been close enough to hear the crash because he returned, stopped at the crash scene, and told Miss Rison to get out. Ahlenstorf ripped the license off his wrecked bike.

Miss Brennan begged for help for an injured foot. Marshal Schmitt lay broken and bleeding beneath the tree. But Ahlenstorf got onto Lloyd's bike, and both rode off. A witness came upon the scene and tried to stop Ahlenstorf, but Ahlenstorf punched him and got away.

Cincinnati District Nine Patrolman George W. Berheide was the first officer on the scene. Assistant Marshal Schmitt was rushed to General Hospital in Cincinnati.

Later, when Assistant Marshal Schmitt's motorcycle was picked up, the speedometer was locked in at 55 MPH.

DEATH

Hours after the crash, early the next morning at 3 a.m. on May 28, 1921, Marshal Schmitt died of "shock and multiple injuries," including a fractured skull and two fractures of the right leg.

Assistant Marshal Schmitt was survived by his wife, Edith (Applegate) Schmitt (29); children, Alice Schmitt (12), Oliver Schmitt (10), Ruth Schmitt (8), and Freeman R. Schmitt (2); parents, J. Jacob, Sr. and Lena Schmitt; siblings, Edward H. (Amelia) Schmitt, Louis (Emma) Schmitt, Cincinnati Patrolman John J. (Lillian) Schmitt, Jr., and Clarence (Dorothy) Schmitt; and parents-in-law, Ollie and Dorothy Applegate.

He was laid out at his home on Woodbine and services were held at 2:30 p.m. on Monday, May 30, 1921 at the Cheviot United Methodist Church at Harrison and Lovell Avenues. More than 600

people attended. Edith was so distraught that she could not participate except in the graveside services, where she collapsed. She remained unconscious for several hours at home. Assistant Marshal Schmitt was buried at the Bridgetown Protestant Cemetery on May 31, 1921.

INVESTIGATION

A pedestrian who witnessed the crash wrote down the license number and gave it to Patrolman Berheide. Miss Brennan and Miss Rison claimed to not know the names of the suspects; asserting that they met them downtown and accepted their offer for a ride. Miss Brennan claimed that she thought Gilbert's name was "George." He did have a brother named George.

Cincinnati Chief of Detectives Emmett D. Kirgan and Detectives Christian Wolf and Joseph E. Brink investigated. Within 24 hours of the crash, by the evening of May 28th, they identified Ahlenstorf and found that he had not returned to his home since the incident.

Cheviot Police found Lloyd and they and the Cheviot Mayor Clifford Harry Hay questioned him during the morning of May 29, 1921. Lloyd admitted to being the other biker but asserted that he turned off Boudinot before the crash and did not see it. His passenger had corroborated this assertion on the night of the crash.

On June 17, 1921 police swore out a warrant against Ahlenstorf for Manslaughter, based on a complaint signed by his brother, Bruce Schmitt, also of 3712 Woodbine Avenue. Ahlenstorf had fled the state.

After wandering through several cities, including Duluth,

Minnesota and Toledo, Ohio, he came back to Cincinnati. On June 20, 1921, Detectives Weiss and McCorkhill found Ahlenstorf, based on information provided by some of his family members, and arrested him. He denied that he ran into the officer purposefully. He appeared at a preliminary hearing on a charge of Manslaughter, was bound over to the Grand Jury, and released on $5000 bond.

Lloyd fled to Florida and was not available to testify against his friend.

On November 22, 1921, the Grand Jury announced that it had ignored the charge of Manslaughter. Cheviot residents were "considerably dissatisfied," according to the Cincinnati Enquirer. We assume that he was found guilty of some traffic charges and fined. He may have even incurred another driving suspension.

EPILOGUE

Four years after the crash, Lloyd married a teenager and had a child. He returned to Cheviot by 1930 and his wife died one year later. He moved back to Florida and died in 1959. There is no indication that he was ever charged with any crime regarding Marshal Schmitt's death and his assisting Ahlenstorf in leaving the scene.

About 1¼ years after killing Assistant Marshal Schmitt, on September 24, 1922, while carrying three other men on his motorcycle, Ahlenstorf ran into a car at Beekman and Arlington Streets. The three were injured in that mishap and he was charged with Reckless Driving, convicted, and fined.

During 1927, Ahlenstorf abandoned his wife and child and

disappeared. During 1938, Mrs. Ahlenstorf still had not heard from him and she was granted a divorce. Four years later, during 1942, he registered for the draft from 3763 River Road in Cincinnati. We have no further record of him.

Edith Schmitt was diagnosed with uterine cancer within five years of the death of her husband. She died June 20, 1927, at the age of 36, and was buried next to her husband. The youngest three remaining children went to live with Edith's parents.

On September 27, 1937, Jacob Schmitt, by then Clerk of Cheviot's City Council, was killed in another vehicle mishap near his home.

Less than eight months later, on May 11, 1938, Assistant Marshal Schmitt's son, Oliver (28), was killed in an automobile crash near Hopkinsville, Ohio.

On July 20, 1972 another son, Freeman Schmitt, was killed in a farm accident involving a tractor near his home on Muddy Creek Road.

Freeman's daughter, Marilyn, having never met her grandfather, considering her father was two when Marshal Schmitt was killed, in the late 1980s joined the United States Border Patrol. She retired from the United States Customs and Border Protection of the Homeland Security Department with 30 years of service.

Then her son, T. J. Wilham, who knew nothing of his great grandfather, served as a director for the Albuquerque Police Department for eight years, including for a time as the Director of the Real Time Crime Center.

NOTES:

Marshal Schmitt's death was brought to our attention by David Weeks, an Officer Down Memorial Page (ODMP.org) researcher in North Carolina and forwarded to us by ODMP CEO Chris Cosgriff. The Greater Cincinnati Police Museum's Memorial Committee further researched the incident, notified the Cheviot Police Department, and published the first account of it on January 25, 2013.

The Greater Cincinnati Police Museum applied to the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial in Washington DC to have Assistant Marshal Schmitt listed on their memorial. The "Names Committee" met on December 3, 2014 and established his eligibility. His name was etched into the Memorial, and he was officially inducted on May 15, 2015.

On May 31, 2021, the City of Cheviot and Cheviot Historical Society, assisted by the Greater Cincinnati Police Historical Society and Hamilton County Police Association, commemorated the 100th anniversary of Assistant Marshall Schmitt's death. The ceremony was held in front of the Cheviot Municipal Building. The Greater Cincinnati Police Historical Society President designed a memorial plaque and delivered the keynote speech. The Cheviot Historical Society and Cheviot Police Public Safety Cadets commissioned, and the City of Cheviot installed the plaque just inside the main entrance of the Cheviot Municipal Building.

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.

This narrative was revised May 28, 2023 by Cincinnati Police Lieutenant Stephen R. Kramer (Retired), Greater

Cincinnati Police Historical Society President, with research assistance from Cincinnati Homicide Detective Edward W. Zieverink III, Greater Cincinnati Police Museum Curator, and SORTA Operations Superintendent Philip Lind (Retired), Greater Cincinnati Police Museum Registrar, and photos provided by Deborah Hicks, Marshal Schmitt's great-granddaughter. *All rights are reserved to them and the Greater Cincinnati Police Museum.*