

Patrolman Jessie Roy Hicks | Cincinnati Police Division



Age: 28

Served: 4½ years

October 16, 1930 to February 25, 1935

OFFICER

Roy was born April 14, 1906 in Kings Mountain, Lincoln County, Kentucky, the tenth of eleven children born to farmers, Jesse David and Mary Virginia (Padgett) Hicks. Before he was four years old, the family had moved to 1572 Gest Street in Cincinnati and, by 1920, to 1071 West Liberty Street. He earned a high school diploma at West Night High School in June, 1928.

On September 29, 1929, Roy's younger brother, Harry R. Hicks, joined the Cincinnati Police Division as a Patrolman. Roy signed

up for the next Patrolman exam and, on December 29, 1929, the Cincinnati Civil Service Commission posted the eligibility list for the Police and Fire Departments and Roy finished seventh.

On March 20, 1930, his wife of one year, Vernice (Cappel) Hicks, gave birth to a daughter, Mary Margaret "Molly" Hicks. The family was living at 4519 W. 8th Street at Overlook Avenue in Price Hill.

On October 16, 1930, Roy and six others, including [Robert D. Leigh](#), were appointed Patrolman in the Cincinnati Police Division.

Already in December 1930, he and two other patrolmen conducted a raid at 4808 Winters Street and seized a large quantity of beer.

On October 4, 1931, Patrolman Hicks was bitten on the thumb by a bulldog at 3678 Clifton Avenue. His wound was cauterized at General Hospital, and he was admitted. However, he was back on the beat by October 8th. By December, Patrolman Hicks was assigned to a Cruiser (a fast response car) and on the 29th pursued a stolen coupe, forcing it to the curb at Mitchell Avenue. He and his partner had such a difficult time subduing their prisoner, citizens pitched in and helped the officers. In May 1932, Patrolman Hicks was published on an eligibility list for promotion to Sergeant, but not high enough to be promoted by the time the list expired. On May 25, 1932, he pulled over a suspicious furniture truck with a load of furniture. He found a hidden compartment containing \$15,000 in liquor.

On Christmas 1933, Patrolman and Mrs. Hicks had another baby girl and they were living at 3738 Glenway Avenue.

On February 15, 1934, after burglaries at seven homes, Patrolman Hicks stopped a 14-year-old as he was coming from another

unreported burglary at 2350 Ohio Avenue. He found property, then the burglar, and took the youth to Juvenile Detention. On July 26th, a woman fired a shot at some men gathered on the street at Sixth and John Streets. Patrolman Hicks found the car refueling in a gas station at 1743 Reading Road and, with some assistance, arrested both the driver and the woman. She fought so hard and was so obstinate, she was taken to Central Station and booked as a "Jane Doe." On January 12, 1935, he caught two boys looting a home at 123 Mulberry Street on January 12, 1935.

With so many accomplishments in little less than four years, on February 1, 1935, Patrolman Hicks was one of ten key transfers ordered by the new Police Chief Eugene T. Weatherly intended to improve the efficiency of the Police Department. He was transferred to the Safety Patrol at City Hall and onto the Motorcycle Squad.

Also by 1935, he had moved his growing family of four to 3623 Laclede Avenue.

Both Roy and his brother were also accomplished musicians. On February 17, 1935, seven companies of police, more than 500 policemen, marched from City Hall to Emery Auditorium in the first police memorial parade held in fifteen years. It was followed by the 3rd annual Police Memorial Ceremony at the Auditorium which was attended by 1800 people. Chief Weatherly read the names of ten retired and active officers who died in the last year and the 62 who died in the line of duty over 83 years. Patrolman Hicks played *Taps*, as he had during the previous two years, for the 62. Little did anyone know then that he would be Number 63.

INCIDENT

Ten days after blowing *Taps*, and just over three weeks after he joined the Motorcycle Squad, on February 25, 1935, Motor Patrolman Hicks left his home on Laclede to attend 7 a.m. roll call at City Hall when he apparently observed a maroon vehicle speeding in the opposite direction. He turned around and paced the vehicle going 50 miles per hour.

Floyd Norris of 3104 Warsaw Avenue saw him chasing the maroon vehicle at W. 8th Street and Sunset Avenue. Immediately after the double bends in the road in the 4300 block of W. 8th Street, Patrolman Hicks either lost control or was “pushed” by the speeder to the right, struck a curb at 4344 W. 8th Street between Sunset and Hermosa Avenue, crashed the motorcycle, and flew into a metal pole. He sustained a skull fracture, internal injuries, and a severely bleeding cut over his right eye.

Victor Pepper, 4379 West Eighth Street, found him unconscious and summoned police. Because no patrol wagon or fire ambulance was available for transport, Patrolman Hicks remained in the cold street until transportation could be obtained. Finally, he was taken to General Hospital.

DEATH

Patrolman Hicks died at the hospital three hours later with his brother, Patrolman Harry Hicks, at his side.



Motor Patrolman Hicks was survived by his wife, Vernice (Cappel) Hicks; daughters, Mary Margaret “Molly” Hicks (5) and Carol Hicks (1); and siblings, Claude Hicks, Charles Hicks, Henry Hicks, John Hicks, Elva Hicks, Edward Hicks, Elfie Hicks, Ester Hicks, and Patrolman Harry Hicks. A funeral service was

held at his home at 3632 Laclede Avenue, and he was buried in Spring Grove Cemetery. He was buried in Vine Street Hill Cemetery. Six fellow officers served as pall bearers: Patrolmen [Robert D. Leigh](#) (who died in a similar fashion five years later), Clifford Rhein, Fay Gallaher, Henry Heller, William Kelleher, and Henry Zimpelman.

During the next Police Memorial Ceremony, February 24, 1936, Patrolman Harry Hicks and three other patrolmen blew *Taps* for the fallen officers, including Harry's brother.

EPILOGUE

While attending the funeral, the residence of his brother, Patrolman Harry Hicks, at 4121 West Liberty Street, was destroyed by fire due to a faulty furnace.

By April 4, 1935, Vernice Hicks had moved to 1248 Iliff Avenue, and she was approved to receive a \$70 per month widow's pension for the rest of her life. She remarried and died August 11, 1983.

Because of the medical transportation difficulties encountered at the scene of Patrolman Hicks' accident, the Police Division purchased seven new "Combination Cruiser/Invalid Cars," each equipped with two stretchers and first aid kits. They were made by Ford Motor Company and designed by Cincinnati Police Chief Eugene T. Weatherly. They later became known as Scout Cars and are still used internationally today in various forms and configurations.

Chief Weatherly, after the motorcycle death of Patrolman [John W. Neal Jr.](#) in 1944, determined to abandon two-wheel motorcycles and replace them with Scout Cars.

All told, since area law enforcement had begun using motorcycles in the 1910s, twelve area officers had died in such accidents: Cheviot Assistant Marshal [Albert Schmitt](#), Fairfield Township Motorcycle Constable [Emery Farmer](#), Covington Motorcycle Patrolman [David Rogers](#), North College Hill Deputy Marshal [Howard "Bud" Seaman](#), Cincinnati Motorcycle Patrolman J. Roy Hicks, Cincinnati Motorcycle Patrolman [Howard Beitman](#), Covington Motorcycle Patrolman [Harry Rose](#), Cincinnati Motorcycle Patrolmen [Robert D. Leigh](#) and [John W. Neal Jr.](#), Reading Motorcycle Patrolman [Willard Santel](#), and Cincinnati Motorcycle Patrolmen [John Hughes](#) and [Lewis Hall](#). After the mandatory use of motorcycle helmets and the reintroduction of two-wheeled motorcycles, no motorcycle officers have lost his life in the region.

Patrolman Hicks has 12 grandchildren, including retired New England Patriots Donald Hasselbeck, 31 great-grandchildren, including Matt and Tim Hasselbeck, NFL quarterbacks in Super Bowls XVIII and XL, and 24 great-great-grandchildren.

If you have any information, artifacts, or images regarding this officer or incident, please contact the Greater Cincinnati Police Museum at Memorial@Police-Museum.org.

© This narrative was further researched with modern sources and revised on February 27, 2023 by Cincinnati Police Lieutenant Stephen R. Kramer (Retired), Greater Cincinnati Police Historical Society President. All rights are reserved to him and the Greater Cincinnati Police Museum.