Patrolman Allen J. Althoff | Cincinnati Police Department

100 YEARS AGO



Badge: 550
Age: 33
Served: 10¾ years
January 14, 1915 to October 20, 1925

OFFICER

Allen was born August 11, 1892 in Cincinnati to a molder, William E. Althoff, and his wife, Katherine (Sturbing) Althoff. When Allen was two, his father was appointed to the Cincinnati Police Department and assigned to the Third District (73 E. McMicken). Years later, Patrolman Althoff transferred to the Eighth District (2616 Vine Street).

In his late teens, Allen took a position as a clerk at the

Fechheimer Brothers Company, a uniform company whose many customers included the Cincinnati Police Department.

On January 13, 1915, Cincinnati Safety Director Holmes appointed Allen to the position of Substitute Patrolman. In an extremely brief time for that era, six weeks, he was promoted to Patrolman on March 1, 1915 and assigned to the First District (City Hall).

He married Florence Grauvogel 4½ months later, on July 3, 1915.

Within a year of his appointment, Patrolman Allen Althoff was working undercover under Lieutenant John Seebohm focusing on liquor law violations. On January 16, 1916, Patrolmen Althoff, Ohmer, and Hereth donned civilian clothes to investigate Sunday liquor sales at bars and found the Hops Club at George and John Streets selling alcohol. Also on the 16th, the Cincinnati Post reported that the Typo Club at 130 W. 5th Street, after a Patrolman Althoff arrest, received a $1000 fine (almost $30,000 in 2025 dollars). On February 15, 1916, Seebohm took Patrolmen Althoff and Tschus over icy roofs on Court Street to conduct a surprise raid at 1021 Vine Street.

On March 1, 1916, back in uniform, Patrolman Althoff found a residence on fire at 1021 Mound Street, broke in the door, found the home filled with smoke, and saved the four women inside.

His father, Patrolman William Althoff had diabetes. He became ill in November 1916 with an infected carbuncle at the nape of his neck and died on December 2nd. He was 57 years old and had served 24 years.

During World War I, Patrolman Allen Althoff served as the Detective Bureau Secretary. We do not know how long he held that assignment. We assume until 1919 when the 160 officers returned from the war. By 1920 he was back in uniform in the Fifth District (1024 York Street).

By October 1925, 33-year-old Patrolman Allen Althoff was nearing the end of his 11th year as a policeman and had built a reputation for fearlessness. Back in a time when a policeman could only summon assistance was by blowing his whistle in three short spurts, Patrolman Althoff had never blown his whistle for assistance in his entire career. He was living with his wife and three-year-old daughter, Jean Jewell Althoff, at 1902 Highland Avenue. The whistle was one of Jean's favorite toys when her father was home.

MURDERER

John Edward McKibben, alias John Edwards, was born May 14, 1904 to John W. and Jennie McKibben. All we know about his father is that he was a laborer in 1911, not in their household in 1912, and certainly deceased in 1916 when John Edward was 12. Mrs. McKibben, in her forties, had to go outside the home to work to support the family. She found a job making hooks in a bed spring factory, leaving her older son to watch John Edward and his sister. Almost since birth, John Edward was a problem child and, in the view of the family, slow in his mental development.

He was unable or unwilling to keep up in school and was placed in "special" grades. He skipped school enough to bring truant officers to the home. When he was 14, he grabbed his sister by the neck and strangled her until her face "turned black." One afternoon, he repeatedly set fire to pieces of his clothing on the kitchen floor and kept his sister busy extinguishing the fires. In 1917 or 1918 the older brother enlisted in the military to fight in World War I, leaving John unleashed on the community.

He would often get out of bed at night, leave home, and not return until the morning. We do not know what his offense was,

but the Cincinnati Juvenile Court sent him to serve 18 months in the Boys' Industrial School at Lancaster, Ohio. After his release, he apparently ran away because he ended up in Michigan, in trouble again, and serving time in the Boys' Reformatory at Iona. Then, as an adult, he was convicted of auto larceny. In May 1924, on or about his 20th birthday, he was sentenced to 1 to 25 years in the Iona Penitentiary. He was paroled in April 1925 after only 11 months. A condition of his parole might very well have been that he leave Michigan for Cincinnati, a common stipulation at the time.

He somehow convinced his mother that he had been working prosperously in New York for those years. He was probably back in Cincinnati by June 1925 and had been keeping company with Elizabeth Andrews since mid-September. On or about October 1, 1925, McKibben purchased a revolver, almost certainly violating the conditions of his parole.

It was not until October 15, 1925 that he came home to his mother with news that he had met a girl and was going to marry her. It would seem that McKibben made arrangements that night for his sister to meet him and his fiancé at the church on Saturday evening, the 18th, probably to discuss wedding plans. He promised his mother that he would bring Elizabeth to meet her on Sunday the 19th.

Prior to McKibben, Andrews had been keeping company with Adam Janser, and she left some of her clothes in his room. On that Saturday, armed with his revolver, McKibben and Elizabeth went to Janser's room at 323 West Court Street to retrieve them. Janser was not at home. They entered the room, she retrieved her clothing, and McKibben stole Janser's suit and overcoat. After arriving home, Janser went to Police District One and reported a burglary.

That night, McKibben kept his appointment at the Pilgrim Holiness Church at 15th and Elm Streets. Elizabeth was not with him. They had a fight, possibly over the theft of the clothing. He divulged to Pastor Reverend J. V. Coleman that he had made a mess of his life, regretted having caused his family so much trouble, and promised to turn his life around.

Two days later, he was sitting in the Lubin Theater at 140 West 5th Street with Andrews watching a picture show, wearing Janser's clothes, and armed with a revolver.

INCIDENT

On October 20, 1925, while Patrolman Althoff patrolled his beat on Elm Street, Janser approached him to advise that he had found a man wearing his clothes at the Lubin Theater. Patrolman Althoff followed Janser to the theater where Janser pointed out McKibben and Andrews. Patrolman Althoff arrested the two and escorted them to a callbox at Fifth and Race Streets to call for a patrol wagon. [In 1925, while most of the officers were on foot or mounted on horses, their only method of communication with headquarters were the telephones in call boxes on street corners or in some local mercantile establishments. The only method to transport prisoners was to call for a patrol wagon to pick them up.]

Whether it was McKibben's amiable demeanor, the apparent youth of the couple, the fact that it was daytime with hundreds of pedestrians and motorists in the area, or all three, Althoff obviously did not realize he was dealing with a three-time-incarcerated, armed, career felon and he did not feel compelled to search for weapons, a fatal assessment.

Patrolman Althoff put his key into the callbox and unlocked it

about 4:30 p.m. McKibben tried to break and run, but Patrolman Althoff caught hold of his (actually Janser's) overcoat. McKibben pulled a revolver from the pocket, pressed it into the officer's side, and twice discharged it sending two rounds through Patrolman Althoff's torso. He slumped to the ground. McKibben and Andrews fled in different directions.

As McKibben fled, cries of, "Catch him, catch him. He killed a policeman!" filled the air. More than a dozen motorists pursued him. Cincinnati Fire Lieutenant Frank Treinen, who witnessed the spectacle, hurried to Patrolman Althoff and seized his revolver from his holster before giving chase. One of the pursuers, Joseph Lauer (42) of 2580 Liddell Avenue, caught him and McKibben shot him in the side, too.

McKibben commandeered a car from George H. Feltman of 2221 Loth Street. Detective William E. McCorkhill happened to be in the area and trailed the fugitive in his own car. Detectives William Luhn and Henry Loewenstine, also in the area, jumped onto a mail truck and pursued him. The pursuit through downtown and into the West End lasted a few minutes before the detectives forced McKibben's commandeered car off the road on Clark Street. McKibben ran down Van Horn Alley between Mound and Clark Streets. Detective McCorkhill entered the alley and fired a McKibben. He missed and McKibben stopped, turned, and after very briefly pointing his weapon at the detective, dropped it and yelled, "I give up the fight."

While the citizens and detectives pursued McKibben, other citizens, including Cincinnati Fire Department Lieutenant Frank Treinen returning to the scene of the crime, ran to Althoff and carried him to G & J Dinkelaker's butcher shop at 109 West 5th Street. A patrol wagon responded and carried him to the General Hospital.

Lauer, the wounded citizen, was also taken to the General Hospital, treated, and released to recuperate at home.

DEATH

Patrolman Althoff was pronounced dead on arrival at the hospital. Physicians advised that his heart was pierced by two bullets and that he died instantly. He was the fifth officer in the Fifth District to be shot and killed in four years.

Patrolman Althoff was survived by his wife of ten years, Florence Althoff; daughter, Jean Jewell Althoff (3); and mother, Katherine Althoff. When his daughter, Jean, woke up the next morning, she asked where her father and his whistle were.

Funeral services were held at his home beginning at 2 p.m. on October 23, 1935. Pallbearers included his four closest friends, Patrolmen Elmer Asimus, Robert Kuyper, Albert Siemer, and John Bracken. He was buried in Walnut Hills German Protestant Cemetery.

INVESTIGATION

McKibben was taken to Detective Headquarters where he confessed to Detective Chief Emmett D. Kirgan, Lieutenants Seebohm and Wehking, and Sergeant Fricke, “I shot him because I did not want to be arrested. I guess I would have shot others if I thought I could have escaped.” He also admitted with great detail purchasing the revolver and stealing the clothing. Without remorse, that evening he slept so soundly that he had to be called three times to awaken from his slumber for a visit from his mother. “What made you do it, son?” she asked. He replied, “I don’t know. I had a pistol, and I used it.”

Andrews was re-arrested later in a room at Eighth and Elm Streets. She gave the name of Elizabeth Krause and, at first, denied knowing McKibben. But when confronted with some of Janser's clothing in her room, she disclosed her real name and admitted being with McKibben. She also confirmed everything in McKibben's statement except that she did not see the actual shooting of the Patrolman Althoff as she was running away at the time. She was booked as a material witness.

JUSTICE

McKibben was arraigned on a charge of First Degree Murder the next morning before Judge George F. Eyrich, Jr. "Guilty or not guilty?" the judge inquired. "Guilty," came McKibben's feint, but emotionless response. "You are hereby bound over to the Hamilton County Grand Jury. I hope the jury acts quickly to send you to the electric chair."

Hamilton County Prosecutor Charles S. Bell and his staff were already preparing to present the case to the Grand Jury. Andrews was also bound over to the Grand Jury as a material witness. The Grand Jury returned an indictment on October 23, 1925 for First-Degree Murder, including the element of killing a police officer while in the performance of his duty. Attorneys Charles H. Elston and Raymond Ratliff were named to defend him. His case was scheduled to go to trial on November 16, 1925, two weeks after the beginning of the trial of John Henry Whitfield, admitted killer of Patrolman Clifford Cornish.

The trial began as scheduled before Judge John A. Caldwell and was prosecuted by Prosecutor Bell and Assistant Prosecutor Louis Schneider. McKibben's attorneys pleaded 'insanity.' With numerous witnesses, including Mrs. Althoff, Mrs. McKibben, and alienists brought in to testify as to his sanity and insanity,

the case did not go to the jury until shortly before noon on November 25th. The jury came back that evening with a finding of guilty but with a recommendation for mercy, which at that time mandated a sentence of life imprisonment without a possibility of pardon. When sentenced a couple of days later, McKibben showed the first sense, however brief, of emotion.

EPILOGUE

We have found no evidence of Joseph Lauer being commended by the City of Cincinnati nor its Police Department for his being wounded in the effort to apprehend Patrolman Althoff's killer.

Mrs. Althoff's brother, William Grauvogel, moved into the Althoff home at 1902 Highland Avenue.

In McKibben's fifth year at the Ohio Penitentiary, on April 21, 1930, a fire broke out killing over 300 prisoners, mostly due to suffocation. Two days later, McKibben was still in critical condition and not expected to live, but he survived.

In 1931, Florence Althoff suffered a fatal heart attack during gall stone surgery, having never seen justice done to her husband's killer and leaving Jean a nine-year-old orphan. Jean's life went downhill from there.

On November 24, 1935, at the age of 31, McKibben died in the Ohio State Penitentiary of bilateral pulmonary tuberculosis, a collapsed lung, and chronic intestinal nephritis. He is buried in St. Joseph (New) Cemetery in Cincinnati; Section NEP, Lot 22, Part N, Range 22.

By the end of 1940, 17-year-old Jean Althoff was living at the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA). She married that year and had a daughter, Jerilyn Davis, in 1947. After two more

marriages Jean died in 2010.

Before Jerilyn died at the age of 46 in 1994, she had two sons, Mark Mapes who died in the Cincinnati Children's home at the age of 17 and Randal Scott "Randy" Bauer. Randy currently resides in Florida.

If you know of any 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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