

Patrolman Donald Emery Ronnebaum, Sr. | Covington Police Department



Badge: 47

Age: 40

Served: $10\frac{3}{4}$ years

September 4, 1957 to July 26, 1968

Don was born August 28, 1927 in Cincinnati to a paper company truck driver, Harry R., Ronnebaum, and his German wife, Katherine (Storr). During 1930, the couple gave birth to a daughter, but she died of natural causes four years later.

They would have no more children. By Don's 10th birthday, the family had moved to Covington.

During July 1945, at 17, Don enlisted in the United State Navy to fight in World War II and trained at the Great Lake facility. Within a month, the war was over. By November, he



was a Seaman 2nd Class serving on the U.S.S. Block Island (CVE-106) a Bogue-class escort carrier in Guam. He then transferred to the Puget Sound (CVE-113), a larger Commencement Bay-class escort carrier. The Puget Sound had entered Tokyo Bay during October and her aircraft joined in the show of strength and conducted anti-mine patrols in support of the landings of the 10th Army at Matsuyama and Nagoya. From February to May 1946, Puget Sound made "Magic

Carpet" runs transporting 1,200 troops and surplus aircraft. She steamed north on May 24, 1946 to prepare for inactivation at the Puget Sound Naval Shipyard. She was decommissioned in October and Don was honorably discharged as a Fireman 2nd Class.

Upon returning home, Don took a job as a fireman for the C&O Railroad. He continued in that occupation for almost ten years and began building a family.

On September 4, 1957, the Covington City Council voted to hire four additional police officers, including Don. By 1968, Patrolman Ronnebaum and his family of six were living at 218 Pike Street.

At 7:00 a.m., during the rainy morning of July 26, 1968, Patrolman Ronnebaum relieved Patrolman Al Bosse at a two-car auto accident on northbound Interstate 75 near the Jefferson Avenue exit.

While Patrolman Ronnebaum investigated, at 10:20 a.m., Darrell Dean Marks was operating a tractor trailer truck, hauling watermelons, and crashed into the traffic which was stopped due to the crash. He plowed into ten cars while swerving off the highway and through the guardrail where the truck overturned. Patrolman Ronnebaum was smashed between the truck and the guardrail. His lifeless body was found beneath the tractor.

Patrolman Ronnebaum was survived by his parents; wife, Doris Lee (Northcutt) Ronnebaum; and children, Donald Ronnebaum Jr., Daniel Lee Ronnebaum, Vernon E. Ronnebaum, and Vonda G. Ronnebaum (all still living at home). Visitation and funeral services were held at the Allison and Rose Funeral Home on Sunday, July 28, 1961. He was buried in the Floral Hills Cemetery.

Marks was arrested, charged with Involuntary Manslaughter, and

initially held under a \$5000 bond. He told police that his brakes had failed. Two weeks later, a preliminary hearing lasted 5½ hours. Witnesses testified that the tires on the tractor trailer were bald. Marks testified that his brakes were bad and that they went out at the top of the hill. His speed at the time of the crash was estimated at 60 miles per hour. Instead of binding the case over for the grand jury, as was expected by nearly everyone in the courthouse, Trial Commissioner Richard Nelson immediately found Marks guilty of negligent homicide and sentenced him to 24 hours in the Kenton County Jail.

Patrolman Ronnebaum's Badge No. 47 was retired on May 9, 1998.

Mrs. Ronnebaum remarried another Covington Police Officer. In doing so, her line-of-duty-death pension was discontinued. Her new husband died within a year from cancer, leaving her no pension. She was forced to sell the house they were building.

Darrell Marks is still living in Washington Courthouse.

If you have 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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