

Sergeant Robert Anthony “Bob” Lally | Cincinnati Police Division

50 YEARS AGO – DECEMBER 8, 1975



Badge: S114
Age: 37
Served: 19 years
June 18, 1956 to December 8, 1975

OFFICER

Bob was born February 14, 1938, the 5th child born to Joseph and Mary Catherine (Finley) Lally. On April 4, 1940, the family of seven was living at 1117 Elgin Place (between East Court Street and Paradrome Drive in Mt. Adams), Joseph was working as a bookkeeper, and Mary Kate was pregnant with their sixth child.

Bob's father died a month later on May 5th when Bob was two years old. Bob's younger brother and Mary Kate's sixth child, Donald, was born the next month on June 26th. Mary Kate raised her six children alone. By 1950, Bob's older sisters were providing for the family, Rose Mary as a Juvenile Court Records Clerk, and Ruth as a Cincinnati Board of Education Secretary. Bob attended Elder High School where he was known as "Ace" and served as the Spokesman for the Senior Class. He graduated in 1956.

Two weeks later, at the age of 18, on June 18, 1956, Bob was one of eight men who joined the Cincinnati Police Division in their second Cadet Class. Cadet Lally worked in the Identification Section (City Hall) and Central Station (City Jail also in City Hall). On October 12, 1959, he and four other cadets entered the 37th Cincinnati Police Recruit Class. He was promoted to Patrolman on March 3, 1960, issued Badge Number 197, and assigned to District 2 (314 Broadway). Two months later, on May 22, 1960, being a devout Catholic, Patrolman Lally was one of four Patrolmen that served Mass at the 22nd annual Police Holy Name Society Communion-Breakfast celebrated at St. Peter in Chains Cathedral. On January 22, 1961, Patrolman Lally rotated to District 5 (1012 Ludlow Avenue).



On May 21, 1961, he took a six-month leave of absence to join the National Guard (Armored) and served at Fort Knox. He was discharged from active duty on November 19, 1961, was reinstated to the Police Division and to District 5, and married Cathleen M. Loney, RN on November 25th at St. Teresa Church in Western Hills.

Following a competitive examination for the new rank of Police

Specialist (replacing the rank of Detective), on February 27, 1966 he was among the first group of officers promoted to the new rank, issued Badge PS-36, and assigned as a District 5 investigator. Specialist Lally was transferred to the Criminal Investigation Section on February 7, 1971 (222 E. Central Parkway). Having finished second in another promotional examination for Police Sergeant, he was promoted again on November 5, 1972, issued Badge S-114, and assigned to District 7 (813 Beecher Street). In March 1975, Sergeant Lally transferred back to District 5. By December 1975, Sergeant Lally had served our country and community for 19 years and earned 12 letters of appreciation and/or commendation, during which, according to Police Chief Carl V. Goodin, he was "conscientious to his brother officers", was an "exceptional and tenacious investigator," and "displayed a legendary sense of humor."

Sunday, December 7, 1975, started out fairly well for the Division. Cleophus Collins was found guilty in the murder of Police Officer William Loftin back in July 1975. It was also "Change Day" – the first day of a four-week pay period on which reliefs traditionally rotated to the next shift. And, on this Change Day, District Five switched to a modified method of shift deployment called Community Sector Enforcement. With the changes in off-day groups and sector assignments, for this day, the only sergeant scheduled to work third relief was recently promoted Sergeant Michael C. Snowden.

The ever-conscientious Sergeant Lally chose to change his days off in order that the new sergeant would not be alone on the first day of the new deployment. At the beginning of the shift, he suggested that Snowden would handle roll call, he and Police Officer Bob Oliver would go out together on patrol, and later the three would meet somewhere for coffee.

Neither of them could know that the new sergeant would be thrust

into performing the most difficult supervisory tasks there are, managing the scene of an officer murdered in the line of duty and notifying his widow of his death.

MURDERER

Richard B. Struck was born about 1945. We do not know the date or location of his birth, nor his whereabouts for the first 24 years of his life.

In May 1969, while living in Covington, he married Barbara N. Sheppard. It was not a happy marriage. Allegedly, on a few occasions, Struck threatened to kill his wife. During March 1975, Barbara filed in Hamilton County for dissolution of their marriage. On March 31, 1975, Richard countered with a suit for divorce. Both he and Barbara filed restraining orders against each other. Their cases were set for a final decree on January 12, 1976. With both living in apartments, we perceive the only division of property would involve his businesses and properties at 5522 Colerain Avenue. He had been "hyper" for weeks as the court date approached.

INCIDENT

After midnight on December 8, 1975, Sergeant Lally and Officer Oliver were patrolling the Colerain Avenue and North Bend Road area where there had been a recent spate of burglaries. They found a vehicle parked behind Top Part Boutique and Struck Audio Co. Ltd. At 5552 Colerain Avenue. The station wagon was the only vehicle absent of frost and its hood was still warm. Blankets were spread out in the cargo area as if ready to receive delicate merchandise. Several feet from the car was a television

repair shop, and the lights were turned on inside. It had all the appearances of a burglary in progress.

Unknown to the officers, the car, property, and two businesses belonged to Struck and that Struck was inside. At 12:55 a.m., Officer Oliver attempted to ascertain the registration of the vehicle, but due to high level radio traffic volume, he and Sergeant Lally began checking doors before they knew to whom the vehicle belonged.

The back lot was well lit, and Sergeant Lally and Officer Oliver were in full uniform including their white hats. Sergeant Lally checked the door at the rear of the TV repair shop. He eased open a screen door, checked the door, found it locked, and withdrew.

After Sergeant Lally and Officer Oliver were certain that all the windows and doors were secure, Sergeant Lally, as he was prone to do when relaxed, put his hands in his pants pockets and his flashlight tucked underneath his arm and he and Oliver discussed going to a nearby bakery for coffee.

Suddenly, Struck flung open the door, stuck a 9mm handgun out, and fired a shot at Sergeant Lally. The bullet went into his chest. Sergeant Lally exclaimed, "Oh my God, he shot me, Bob!" Officer Oliver returned four shots through the door, striking Struck in the wrist, as Sergeant Lally crumpled to the ground.

Officer Oliver called for backup and a Rescue Unit.

Struck yelled out to Oliver, "I've been shot," and Oliver told him to get on the ground and stay there until backup arrived.

It took Officer Carl Cossman 2½ minutes to arrive. Cossman made entry while Oliver tended to Sergeant Lally. He found a pool of blood, the 9mm automatic, and a spent casing on the floor three

feet inside the door. He heard Struck talking on the phone with, as it turned out, his insurance agent. Later, the insurance agent would later testify that Struck called him in a panic and advised that he shot a police officer.

Cossman yelled for Struck to come out from behind an interior partition, at which time Struck came out with his hands up, saying, "I'm sorry I shot the policeman. I hope he's going to be all right."

Cincinnati Fire Department Rescue 38 arrived and transported Sergeant Lally to General Hospital. Another officer transported Struck to General Hospital.

DEATH

Sergeant Lally died en route to the hospital. He was pronounced dead upon arrival at the hospital by Dr. Palmer 1:32 a.m. Police Officer Bruce Armstrong, driving a scout car (Call Number 5215) transported his remains to the Hamilton County Morgue at 2 a.m.

Sergeant Lally was survived by his wife of 14 years, Cathleen M. (Loney) Lally, and like his mother she would have to raise their children as a single mother. His children, Mary Lally (13) and Daniel Joseph Lally (11), like himself, would live the preponderance of their lives without a father. He was also survived by his siblings, Rose Mary (Frank) Berning, Ruth C. Lally, Edward James Lally, James J. Lally, and Deer Park Patrolman Donald Lally.

Close friends and officers only were invited to attend a Mass of Christian Burial celebrated at St. Lawrence Church on December 10, 1975. There were none of the usual police and Fraternal Order of Police ceremonies at the request of the family. The

pallbearers were Sergeants Terrence Colley (District 5), Thomas Mullin (District 3), Lester Muse (District 6), William Smith (District 7), Robert Thoss (District 5), and William Vogel (District 5). He was buried immediately thereafter in Saint Joseph (New) Cemetery.

The first reaction by City Council came on December 10, 1975 when Mayor Bobbie Stern suggested to council that they ban the ownership of handguns in the city. Cincinnati City Council passed a standing resolution honoring Sergeant Lally.

INVESTIGATION

Though the entire Homicide Unit investigated, Detectives Henry "Hank" Snodderly and Thomas Gardner were officially assigned the case.

Struck claimed that he thought Sergeant Lally was a burglar. There had been a rash of burglaries in the area, but not at his business and all the other business owners told police that he kept to himself. So, he probably did not know about the burglaries.

He also stated that he had been sleeping, but the rear of his station wagon being open seemed to disqualify that contention.

There were also the issues between him and his wife, his alleged threatening to kill her on several occasion, their countersuits for divorce, and their counter motions for restraining orders. An unidentified acquaintance told a Post reporter that Struck slept at his place of business, perhaps because he was afraid to leave, and that he had been "really hyper over the last two weeks." The apartment complex manager where he lived recalled that he was "security conscious" and "paranoid about his wife."

The most plausible theory the detectives had to work with was that Struck had been expecting his wife when he took a shot out the rear door, the perfect solution to all his problems, he might have thought.

During the morning following the shooting, Homicide Commander Lieutenant Daniel Cash reported that no charges would be filed against Struck until after his detectives met with the Hamilton County Prosecutor's Office.

JUSTICE

After a contentious discussion with Hamilton County Prosecutor Simon Leis, Jr., Detective Snodderly, on December 9, 1975, charged Struck with Involuntary Manslaughter, carrying a possible sentence of one to ten years in prison.

Struck was under police guard at General Hospital recovering from his wrist wound. On December 10, he did not appear for his hearing and Judge Thomas Crush continued the case and held him without bond.

On December 13, the case was continued again and Struck was ordered held on a \$125,000 bond. Struck, was "extremely distraught," according to Lt. Cash. Judge Crush also ordered a psychiatric evaluation. At a preliminary hearing on December 18, 1975, Struck was bound over to the Grand Jury and Judge Crush reduced his bond to \$75,000. On February 4, 1976, a Hamilton County Grand Jury returned an indictment for Murder, carrying a possible penalty of ten years to life. Struck was arraigned on February 6, 1976 and pleaded not guilty.

Struck was out on bond when the trial started on April 22, 1976, four months after the incident. The case was prosecuted by

Assistant Prosecutor William Whalen, who declared that it mattered little if Struck intended to kill an officer, his wife, or an unsuccessful burglar. That by unlocking his door and shooting anyone in the parking lot, he was clearly intent on murder. Defense Attorney Harry McIlwain, apparently in agreement, now proffered another excuse, that Sergeant Lally pulled the door open when Struck unlocked it and that he somehow caused the semiautomatic pistol to discharge. The trial concluded at noon on April 27, 1976 and Judge Frank Gusweiler found Struck guilty of Involuntary Manslaughter. On May 28, 1976, 5 $\frac{3}{4}$ months since the killing, Judge Gusweiler sentenced Struck to one to ten years in prison. Attorney McIlwain, recognizing that his client had dodged the murder verdict, did not appeal. Instead, he immediately declared he would file for Shock Probation.

Attorney McIlwain did file, alleging that Mrs. Struck, with whom he had had so many problems and was more than likely the target of his attack, needed companionship and support. On July 30, 1976, Judge Gusweiler denied the motion, noting that Shock Probation cannot be granted when a firearm is involved. Less than one year later, on April 19, 1977, 16 months after killing Sergeant Lally, Struck was paroled.

In August 1977, Mrs. Lally sued Struck for \$500,000. In March 1978, Aetna Casualty and Surety sued Struck for a declaratory judgement. We do not know if it was related to Mrs. Lally's suit. We also do not know the outcomes of those suits.

FAMILY TRADITIONS

Sergeant Lally's siblings included Rose Mary Lally, a 40-year employee of the City of Cincinnati Engineering Department; Ruth Lally, an employee of the Cincinnati Water Works; Edward J.

Lally, a longtime employee of the Hamilton County Sheriff's Department and retired Hamilton County Deputy Clerk of Courts; James J. Lally, head of Cincinnati Water Works Security; and Donald Lally, who retired as the Deer Park Police Chief. Nieces and nephews include retired Cheviot Police Chief Joseph Lally, Hamilton County Sheriff's Deputy Michael Lally, Cincinnati Police Officer Ann Lally, and Judy Lally of the Hamilton County Central Warrant Processing Unit.

EPILOGUE

Sergeant Lally died fifty minutes sooner on the same date one year prior as did [Sergeant Charles Handorf](#). With Sergeant Handorf and [Police Officer William Loftin](#) in August 1975, Sergeant Lally became the third Cincinnati policeman shot to death in 12 months. With [Patrolman David Cole](#)'s death in 1974, he became the fourth in 18 months, and after [Detective Howard Smith](#)'s death in 1972, the fifth in $3\frac{1}{4}$ years. It took 48 years for as many to be shot and killed prior to Detective Smith's death. The spate of murders would continue for another $3\frac{1}{2}$ years.

The deaths of Patrolman Cole, Sergeant Handorf, Officer Loftin, and Sergeant Lally forever changed the tactical responses of law enforcement officers in the country. A Cincinnati Police Division Police Officer Survival training program grew from these four tragedies and soon received national attention. One aspect, the move to include shooting from within arm's reach in firearms training was groundbreaking in the mid-1970s. It is now common in almost all law enforcement officers' firearms training across the country and is required training for all Ohio law enforcement officers. The Division's Police Officer Survival program was used as models for the national Street Survival Program.

Barbara Struck's divorce suit was finalized on January 31, 1976. We have not definitively found Struck's whereabouts since he was released in 1977. A person with that name and age had some drug sales issues in Florida and died there, but we cannot confirm he was Sergeant Lally's murderer. If he is alive in 2025, he would be 85 years old.

Sergeant Lally missed his son's marriage to Susan D. Meyerratken in 1991. He was not there to walk his daughter down the aisle when she married Peter J. Ganzel in 1999. Nor did his grandchildren, Nicholas and Elizabeth, get to experience their grandpa. Cathleen joined her husband of 14 years, 26 years after his murder, on November 4, 2001.

During 1995, Police Academy Commander, Captain Christopher Robertson, Acting Planning Section Commander Lieutenant Stephne Kramer, and Recruiting Unit supervisor Sergeant Thomas Waller spearheaded a project to retire the badges of all officers who died in the line of duty since 1950 and to create a Cincinnati Police Memorial at the Police Academy. Then Cincinnati Police Chief Michael C. Snowden ordered the retirement of Sergeant Lally's badge. Sergeant Charles S. Powers, who had selected that badge number in honor of Sergeant Lally, voluntarily surrendered Badge No. S114 for retirement. It is now mounted on a plaque at the Police Academy.

Twenty-five years after Sergeant Lally's murder on September 1, 2000, [Police Officer Kevin Crayon](#) was killed yards from where Sergeant Lally was killed.

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.

© This narrative was further researched and revised December 5, 2025 by retired Cincinnati Police Lieutenant Stephen R. Kramer (Retired), Greater Cincinnati Police Museum President and CEO, with anecdotal assistance from retired Cincinnati Homicide Lieutenant Thomas Oberschmidt (Retired), Greater Cincinnati Police Museum Volunteer, who supervised the investigation of this incident. All rights are reserved to them and the Greater Cincinnati Police Museum.