

Police Specialist David H. Massel | Woodlawn Police Department



Age: 37
Served: 7 years
1978 to February 9, 1985

OFFICER

David was born May 1, 1947 in Ohio, the only child born to Henry and Rebecca Bessie (Dunn) Massel. During March 1955, he played the King of Persia in a school holiday play. He sang in the Adath Israel Choir on Holy Days since he was a teenager. During June 1965, David graduated from Walnut Hills High School.

David attended the University of Cincinnati and earned an Associates of Arts Degree in 1967. While there, he also sang in the University Glee Club. He then taught automotive education

at Scarlet Joint Vocational Educational School but continued on in his studies. By 1985, he had earned his bachelor's degree and master's degree and was working on a doctorate in Criminal Justice.

During 1978, David became a Woodlawn Police Officer. Before 1981, he was promoted to Police Specialist. During 1981 he founded a crime prevention program in Woodlawn and gave talks to residents and business owners. He also gave talks regarding drunken driving.

On January 22, 1981, he was assigned to a panel of three with FBI Agent Tierney A. O'Rourke and Woodlawn's Police Chief Williams to answer questions of the Woodlawn Business Association.

Specialist Massel was also the computer expert for the 12-man Department.

When off duty he had a fondness for cooking, computers, and his synagogue's choir. He was a 'Big Brother', gourmet cook, trainer, and educator. His ultimate goal was to become a criminal justice instructor.

Though scheduled to be off duty on February 8, 1985, Specialist Massel agreed to cover for another Woodlawn officer that needed to be off.

DRUNK DRIVER

Devon Salyers (49) of 410 West Sharon Road was a native of Kentucky and employee of the Cambridge Tile Manufacturing Company. He was married with three children, ages ten to nineteen.

On February 8, 1985, he was out for a night of drinking and driving.

INCIDENT

Little more than two hours into his shift, on February 9, 1985, Specialist Massel was driving his marked police vehicle 25 miles per hour north on Springfield Pike.

Saylers, driving a late model Chevrolet Malibu with a blood alcohol content of 0.17, 70% over the legal limit, pulled from a bar (now Pike's Bar and Grill) parking lot at 10010 Springfield Pike, turned south, and accelerated. He was driving at a high rate of speed when his Malibu crossed the double-yellow line and slammed head on into Specialist Massel's patrol car at 12:25 a.m. on February 9th at Jones Alley.

Customers of the Party Tymme Inn heard the crash and ran to the cars. Joe Livesay, a friend of Massel's and employee of the Inn, and Danny Bishop pulled Massel out of the burning police car. Bishop, with an incredible feat of strength, ripped the door off the car. "But he was already gone," Livesay said. Specialist Massel suffered fractured skull, sternum, ribs, and left femur and subscapular hemorrhages. Woodlawn paramedics tried to resuscitate him and they rushed him to University Hospital in Cincinnati.

Several empty beer cans and whiskey bottle were found in Saylers' car.

DEATHS

Specialist Massel was pronounced dead at 1:18 a.m. by Dr. Steven

Bernardon. Salyer was also taken to University Hospital and pronounced dead on arrival.

Specialist Massel was survived by his mother, Rebecca Massel. Services were held at 1:30 p.m. at Wiel Funeral Home on February 11, 1985. A slow rain fell as representatives from almost every law enforcement agency in the region filed by his casket. Three rabbis gave eulogies at the funeral home; Sidney Zimmelson, David Indich, and Max Newman. He was buried on February 11, 1985, in the Northern Hills Synagogue (Covedale) Cemetery in Cincinnati.

EPILOGUE

On August 21, 1988, a plaque was erected commemorating Specialist Massel and past and current police officers, firefighters, and paramedics in the park shelter. By then, the village had already planted a tree at the municipal lot and lowered the flag to half-staff on each of the anniversaries of his death.

Plaques by fellow officers and B'nai B'rith, hung in the police station.

A thousand-dollar camera was purchased for DUI prosecutions through a memorial fund established by MADD and the Massel family and the community. A scholarship was established in his name in 1987 at the University of Cincinnati.

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.

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