Lester Paul (Paul L.) Steuer

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- ***Cincinnati Police Detective Lieutenant***
- ***Mr. Cincinnati and Mr. Ohio***
- ***University of Cincinnati Director of Public Safety***

Paul was born October 31, 1913 to Edward Adam and Mary “Mayme” Bernadette (Stricker) Steuer. He attended Withrow High School, Miller Business College, and Elmira Business Institute.

Paul joined the Cincinnati Police Division as a Patrolman on November 27, 1936 and was assigned to District 4 (754 West Fifth Street). Within a year, on October 7, 1937, he shot and captured a man that stabbed a deputy sheriff.

In little more than a year, he was assigned as a Motorcycle Patrolman in the prestigious Safety Patrol. In the next 5½ years, he was involved in eight crashes, always returning to work in short order. Once, the crash destroyed the motorcycle and he merely retrieved another and completed his tour.

Others were not so lucky. On April 30, 1940, Patrolman Steuer served as one of the pallbearers at Motorcycle Patrolman Robert Leigh's funeral.

The rough and (literally) tumble motorcycle cop, on September 23, 1942, competed in the heavyweight division at the Greater Cincinnati Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) weight-lifting championship and finished second.

On October 7, 1942, his life might have been lost, not in the crash, but in its aftermath. Patrolman Steuer chased bandits immediately after a bank robbery, and the robbers shot out his front tire, causing him to wreck over an embankment. As he lay dazed on the ground, one of the robbers came to him, gun in hand, and took his revolver from its holster. Fortunately, the robber left him.

On June 28, 1943, Patrolman Steuer was selected "Mr. Cincinnati" after any annual bodybuilding competition. We do not know when, but he was also selected in another competition as "Mr. Ohio."

On September 1, 1943, he was promoted to Detective. He was assigned to Crime Bureau's Vice Squad, partnered with Detective Floyd Niswonger, and assigned almost every type of investigation from vice and grand thefts to robbery and rapes and the occasional kidnapping and murder.

On May 4, 1944, he responded to the area of a murder and found the murderer and subdued him before he could get the pistol out of his pocket.

In January 1947, Detective Steuer began a short but illustrious career as a professional wrestler. He wrestled almost weekly, usually at Music Hall on Friday nights. He won his first 23 matches before July. Ironically, beating men from all over the United States, his first loss was against a Columbus policeman.

On October 1, 1947, he was promoted to Motorcycle Sergeant and reassigned to the renamed Highway Safety Bureau.

We believe he continued wrestling without another loss until July 30, 1948, when he was one of eight scholarship recipients nationally awarded for the Northwestern University Traffic Institute (NUTI) at Northwestern University, one of the four highest-rated secondary education schools for law enforcement officers. Sergeant Steuer graduated, along with 26 other officers from around the country, on January 22, 1949.

He did return to wrestling, but in exhibitions, usually for fundraising. On June 13th, 1949 at Music Hall, he grappled in the main event for a Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) show.

Having studied Judo for a number of years, and with his wrestling accomplishments, he was a natural as a self-defense instructor for the Policewomen in January 1951, and for all recruits until after his retirement from the Police Department.

On September 2, 1951, he was promoted to Lieutenant, issued Badge L-11, and continued his assignment in the Highway Safety Bureau.

In October 1951, Lieutenant Steuer and Detective Mires Stein opened a for-profit gym on Main Street, at which they saved one day a week to give free lessons to underprivileged youth. Beginning February 2, 1952, he was featured on weekly WCPO-TV episodes entitled, “Body Development Through Wrestling.” He wrote a companion booklet distributed to youths for free,

through the Fraternal Order of Police, Queen City Lodge 69.

In July 1952, Lieutenant Steuer tested heretofore classified radar for speed detection. He first tested it on Cincinnati Street Railway cars.

On August 22, 1952, the Highway Safety Bureau moved into their new office in City Hall, formerly the Police School classroom, and began daily briefs using the “air squadron style briefing,” a Cincinnati Police Department development. He then developed a four-night traffic school as an alternative to being fined in court for Jaywalking. Lieutenant Steuer was one of the instructors and the school was open to the public.

On January 17, 1953, at 39 years old, he participated in another wrestling fundraiser for a Silver Grove, Kentucky school bus. He won the match.

On March 1, 1953, Lieutenant Steuer was reassigned as a Detective Lieutenant in the Crime Bureau. Within a month, the experienced detective masterminded the investigation, surveillance, and an arrest in a four-state (Colorado, Florida, Ohio, and Kentucky) blackmailing scheme. He actively participated with his detectives in a wide variety of investigations including embezzlement, scalping, extortion, grand larceny, all types of fraud, and occasionally robberies, burglaries, shootings, murders, and suspicious deaths.

On July 3, 1953, it was announced that he had attended Yale Summer School of Alcohol Studies in New Haven, Connecticut, and would be the first police officer in the nation trained to direct a program in handling alcoholics. During his career, he also studied Police Administration, presented by the International City Manager Association; a 13-week course in Supervision and Leadership by the Supervision Conference Training Company; and a nine-month correspondence course in

fingerprinting and identification.

On February 12, 1954, he entered another exhibition wrestling match at Music Hall, and won. Then next day, the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) announced a free spring sports activities school, co-chaired by Cincinnati Police Chief Stanley Schrotel, including Judo sessions with Lieutenant Steuer as the instructor.

On June 30, 1958, Lieutenant Steuer, with Detective Howard Smith, located a suspect fleeing the scene of a shooting. A long shootout ensued resulting in multiple, albeit nonfatal, wounds to the suspect. The detectives were unscathed.

He was still teaching Judo in March 1959 at the YMCA and beginning October 1959 he contracted with the Fenwick Club for eleven sessions of Judo instruction.

On November 23, 1959, he responded to the scene of a shooting and while there a female pulled a revolver from her brassiere and held the detectives at bay until Lieutenant Steuer grabbed the pistol, putting his finger between the hammer and bullet, and wrestled it away from her. Her defense was that the victim, while a boyfriend, was trespassing in her apartment. She was convicted but released on probation and ordered from the city. Less than three years later, she shot and killed a Las Vegas gambler during a robbery.

On April 1, 1960, he and eight detectives staked out a business they had evidence would be burglarized. It was, and when the burglars were told to raise their hands, they fired at the detectives. Lieutenant Steuer and another detective fired shotguns killing one and wounding the other.

On August 16, 1960, Lieutenant Steuer's son, Gary, like his father decades earlier, was named "Mr. Ohio." On November 24th,

he and his father began conducting Judo demonstrations on WCPO's Saturday morning show, "Play it Safe." On February 6, 1961, Gary, again like his father in 1943, won the "Mr. Cincinnati" title. Gary and his brother joined the United States Marine Corps in 1961.

Lieutenant Steuer transferred to District 7 (813 Beecher Street). As he had throughout his career, he was as much a cop as he was a commander. He was not involved in any other shootings but was often involved in arrests, investigations, and led raids on bars and after-hour joints, etc. in his district. Consequently, on August 16, 1962, Lieutenant Steuer was named Police Officer of the Week.

In January 1965, at 52 years old, Lieutenant Steuer began a three-month, weekly series of self defense and judo classes at the Cincinnati Club gymnasium.

Lieutenant Steuer retired in 1968 with 31 years of service and 27 letters of appreciation and/or commendation, though he continued to serve as an instructor at the Cincinnati and Norwood Police Academies until at least 1973.

His official date of retirement was February 9, 1968; however, he was hired at the end of 1967 by the University of Cincinnati as the first Police Chief of their fledgling security force. In 1965, the University and General Hospital administrations decided that a formal police department had become necessary. Prior to 1965, they had private police and contract guards.

Once again, while he referred almost all suspects and arrests to the Cincinnati Police Division, he initiated many investigations, solved most, and planned responses to several campus disorder incidents common to the 1960's. Eventually, he was named Director of Public Safety at both the University and the Hospital.

Director Steuer resigned on April 23, 1977, at the age of 64, having added another nine years of service to his community.

Director Steuer died March 13, 1993 at the age of 79.

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