Sergeant Paul Edward “The Hunter” Guthrie

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HOME LIFE



Paul was born March 11, 1933 in Cincinnati to Cecil and Christine Guthrie. It is possible that Paul never saw his father. A year after Paul’s birth, Cecil was living in Lexington. We have no account of him living in Cincinnati at or near Paul’s birth or any time thereafter.

At age seven, Paul was living with his mother and maternal grandparents at 1937 Dalewood Place in Bond Hill. He attended Purcell High School and graduated in May 1951. Paul worked parttime in the evenings at the Public Library of Cincinnati on Dale Road from September 1949 to August 1952.

After high school, he attended Xavier University, majoring in History, until May 1952. During the Korean War, the Red Cross needed drivers and with many of the men at war or in jobs supporting the war, the Red Cross employed mostly women. But they needed to be home in the afternoons and evenings. An XU Spanish teacher convinced nine of his students, including Paul, to take up the effort in the late afternoons.

From August 1952 to March 1953, he worked as an assistant stock

room manager at Timken Roller Bearing Company on Tennessee Avenue.

MILITARY



Paul joined the United States Marine Corps Reserves on March 18, 1953. His boot camp was at Parris Island. He was assigned to the 4th Signal Company in Quantico. During June 1953, he completed the Marine Corps Schools Extension Course at Quantico, Virginia. By then, the Korean was over. He completed Marine Field Music School at Parris Island, South Carolina, then Marine Noncommissioned Officers' School, also at Parris Island, in October 1953. During February 1954, he was promoted to Corporal and appointed Drum Corps Instructor. Corporal Guthrie was honorably discharged from active duty in March 18,1955 with a National Defense Service Medal, and he continued in the Reserves. On June 14, 1955, Corporal Guthrie played the bugle at a flag raising ceremony on Fountain Square, a flag which had previously flown over the United States Capitol.

He worked at R. F. Johnson Paint Stores, Inc. on St. Lawrence Avenue from April 1955 to December 1955.

LAW ENFORCEMENT

Paul joined the Cincinnati Police Division as a Police Recruit on January 9, 1956. He was promoted to Patrolman on April 16, 1956, issued Badge 165, and assigned to District 4 (7017 Vine Street). At the end of 1957, he was rotated to District 1 (310

Lincoln Park Drive).

DISTRICT 7

A year later, Patrolman Guthrie was rotated to District 7 (813 Beecher Street) where his individual efforts began to be noticed. He was assigned to the Columbia Parkway beat and took on the task of interrupting the speeding that was prevalent there, in a manner that would mark his life's work – with a vengeance.

During February 1959, he was in court for a man driving 79 MPH on Columbia Parkway. During June 1959, within an hour and fifteen minutes, Guthrie was in two high-speed chases. A chase on Columbia Parkway resulted also in a gun arrest. Another ended in the pursued vehicle crashing into a parked car.

In December, while chasing another vehicle in Columbia Parkway, the driver started to go right to 3rd Street and then changed his mind and tried to go straight but hit an abutment. He and his passengers were all entrapped but survived.

During May 1960, he caught two vehicles racing on Columbia Parkway at 82 MPH. One was the president of W. E. Hutton Company, a brokerage firm. Hutton demanded a jury trial on May 22nd and was found guilty and fined on June 23rd.

In February 1962, he arrested a man in a stolen vehicle on Columbia Parkway.

During April 1962, he was driving by Acme Supply Company at 1109 Broadway at 10:15 p.m. and with sharp observation skills, found the door ajar. Inside he found two burglars.

During May 1962, he saw a man slumped over the wheel of a slowly moving vehicle. He jumped out, chased the car, opened the front

door, and was able to stop the car. He arrested the driver for driving under the influence.

In September 1962, he stopped a driver whose license was suspended. When the driver told him that his boss told him to take the car, he arrested the boss for permitting the vehicle to be driven by a suspended driver. Both were convicted. He left no stone unturned.

In November 1963, he walked by another door that was ajar, this one at the Kemper Lane Hotel Building on McMillan Street and noticed an illegal poker game in progress. He arrested the participants, including two lawyers.

By November 1963, Patrolman Guthrie had gained a reputation as "a man things happen to." The latest incident was him delivering a baby in his cruiser on the 26th at 31 Bowman Terrace. It was the third time a baby was born in his cruiser.

On July 3, 1965, at 3 a.m., Guthrie pursued drivers who were racing on McMillan Street and during the pursuit the driver sped to 90 MPH, went through 7 red lights, and crashed into a police roadblock.

INVESTIGATOR

By the end of 1965, his District Commander saw enough in him to assign him to plainclothes. On November 8, 1965 he was one of few applicants chosen to attend the prestigious Kettering Laboratory Homicide Seminar.

On February 27, 1966, he was one of the first group of men promoted to the new rank of Police Specialist, which had replaced the rank of Detective. He was issued Badge PS-165 and

assigned to Vice Control Bureau. He took his demeanor with him.

Within a month, he was conducting an investigation at the New Warren Hotel at 17 West Twelfth Street and the clerk was uncooperative. On April 20, 1966, the clerk was in court for a little-known violation of failing to produce a hotel register. The drug investigation failed, but the clerk was convicted.

Eight days later, on the 28th, he was in court having charged a man for possession of 3000-4000 “pep pills”, or barbiturates, at 3733 Colerain Avenue. Two weeks later, he was in court again with a man charged with selling paint thinner as a drink at 518 Richmond Street.

After a six-month stint in Vice, on August 27, 1966, he was transferred back to District 7 as a district investigator. A month later, he arrested some youths in possession of pornography. On October 31st, he found the man suspected in the burglary of the Sears store on Reading Road and recovered of most of the $8000 in loot.

On February 21, 1967, Specialists Guthrie and Thomas Oberschmidt surprised a burglar. The burglar ran and, as was the common procedure at the time, Specialist Guthrie resorted to shooting him in order to make an apprehension. The wounded suspect was found guilty and sentenced two weeks later. Seven days later, he arrested a man wanted in two robberies. On February 16, 1968, he shot another escaping residential burglar at 2614 Kemper Lane.

SUPERVISOR

After ten years of civil service eligibility, Specialist Guthrie deemed himself to be ready for leadership. He loved being a policeman and did not want to prematurely take on the onus and

restrictions of supervision. But, in 1968, he studied for the sergeant’s exam. On April 11, 1968, having finished sixth, he was promoted to Sergeant, issued Badge S-63, and assigned to District 2 (314 Broadway).

TACTICAL UNIT

One month later, on May 5, 1968, the Division considered him already seasoned enough to supervise the newly created and prestigious Tactical Unit. His or their effectiveness was immediately noticed by the criminals in the community and on July 29, 1968, he came under fire from a sniper who succeeded only in striking a streetlight near where Sergeant Guthrie stood at Beekman Street and Millvale Avenue.

On March 8, 1969, Sergeant Guthrie shot another burglar fleeing the United Dairy Farmers at 1205 Linn Street.



Serving as spokesman for the Tactical unit on June 22, 1969, Sergeant Guthrie reported that since the Tactical Unit was established as a permanent unit in March 1968, the 46 men assigned had apprehended 1,100 criminals and made 2,500 traffic arrests. He also explained some of their tactics, crime analysis, and focus on burglaries.

A month later, July 24, 1969, Sergeant Guthrie led a raid at 2 East McMillan Street, arrested 16 people and recovered pills, powder, needles, etc.

On March 9, 1970, he and Specialists Dick Tessendorf and Jack Basham made multiple arrests at 2582 West McMicken Avenue and

recovered pills, mostly amphetamines.

VICE CONTROL BUREAU

His propensity toward vice and his leadership having been proven, Sergeant Guthrie was assigned as the assistant commander in the Vice Control Bureau on June 7, 1970. For the next fifteen years he would form a well-earned reputation that resulted in his widely being called “The Hunter.”

Two weeks later, on the 22nd, he conducted a raid at 6347 Beechmont Avenue and arrested eight people. On October 24, 1970, another raid, this one at 1985 Kinney, netted 19 arrests. Ten days later, he raided 2233 Park Avenue, the biggest junkie pad in the city, arresting three people, and seizing twenty packets of heroin He was probably involved in more than one felony and/or vice arrest every working day, but the newspapers reported the more significant ones, including: November 6th for drugs, December 3rd for drugs, December 8th for drugs, and December 24th for nude dancing.

1971 began the same way: January 12th, commenting on the obscenity of the play, “Hair;” February 6th, arrests for drugs; March 3rd arrests for drugs; March 11th arrests for drugs; April 2nd arrests for drugs; April 5th, arrests for drugs; and May 26th arrests for drugs.

The most prominent drug dealer in western Hamilton County was James Perry Cravens of Woodlawn. He was widely known by law enforcement as a kingpin, but in interagency meetings, attended by the highest levels of managers, all lamented an inability to

catch him. The Hunter boasted, “I’ll get him.” On May 1, 1971, armed with a federal search warrant, Sergeant Guthrie gathered a Municipal Sewers District supervisor and the Woodlawn Police Chief. The MSD supervisor showed him where Cravens’s sewers entered the common sewers which came from Cravens’s three-acre estate and disconnected it. Guthrie duct-taped a large garbage bag to the outlet and served the search warrant. When they knocked on the door, they heard the scuffling of feet and the flushing of toilets. The Hunter had partially loaded a garbage can with bricks and threw it through the rear glass patio door. Every other door was barricaded. Besides the drugs captured in the sewer, they seized 27 ounces of heroin valued at $35,000, 79 firearms, including two machineguns and one silencer, and four Cadillacs and Lincoln Continentals. They arrested three women in the residence and Cravens surrendered three days later. He was convicted and sentenced to 138 years.

On June 6, 1971, a Cincinnati Enquirer columnist wrote a paragraph regarding a commendation he received from a police chief for Guthrie’s instruction at an Ohio Peace Officers Training Course.

Twelve days later, the newspapers reported his involvement with a liquor investigation and arrest. Then on July 17th, an arrest involving a Workhouse matron selling drugs. Three days later another drug arrest.

The Vice Control Bureau was so busy that, on July 27th, the Division added a second supervisor for round-the-clock supervision. Truth be known, Sergeant Guthrie was already providing round-the-clock supervision. Many wondered if he slept at all.

He continued his onslaught; the newspapers reported significant

drug arrests on July 28th and August 4th.

In October, *The Cincinnati Enquirer* ran an article focused on Sergeant Guthrie. In it they related his fifteen years of experience and seventeen months in the Vice Control Bureau. They called him the "Ace Narcotics Investigator." They also reported on his taking no vacation time except to travel to other police departments to learn how they manage the drug problem. In the previous three years, he had visited Los Angeles, San Francisco, Salt Lake City, and Scotland Yard.

During a November prostitution investigation, a pimp attempted to run him over.

Sergeant Guthrie not only educated himself in vice interdiction and supervised and taught others how to do it, he also became a spokesman on radio, television, and at various assemblies, including on November 9th on RAP LINE at WKRC-AM. He began speaking at a series of community meetings, the first on January 30, 1972 at St. Augustine Church on Bank Street.

By then, the vice enforcement, especially drug enforcement, was running the City's funding dry. Each line unit was budgeted with a quantity of funds called the Pursuit of Criminal Fund. The Vice Control Bureau's budget was $5000. The five officers assigned to the Narcotics Unit were spending so much in paying informants and purchasing drugs that the Bureau was constantly running out of funds. The dedicated covert officers were using their personal funds. By then, analyses seemed to indicate that 60% of all burglaries, robberies, and shoplifting were related to the illicit drug trade. A *Cincinnati Post* editorial called for the establishment of a four-county drug enforcement collaborative to be named "RENU" (pronounced "Renew").

More or less to show the seriousness of the drug problem, on

February 28, 1972, Sergeant Guthrie went up on Calhoun Street with a reporter and made four illicit drug purchases in ten minutes.

On April 4, 1972, the Vice Control Bureau Commander died suddenly leaving Sergeant Guthrie in charge. He was no ordinary bureau commander. On April 28, 1972, he investigated the robbery of 35 people at an illicit gambling house. On May 18th, a man tried to take a shot at him. Guthrie drew and shot first. He missed, but the man ran and was later arrested. A week later, he arrested another nude dancer in a bar.

By June, seven investigators were assigned to narcotics enforcement with an estimated $10 million being sold in Cincinnati annually.

On August 4th he spearheaded a raid that resulted in 20 arrests for Gambling. On the 19th, he and Officer Timothy Spurlock, while off duty, set up a purchase by a collaborative Drug Abuse Law Enforcement unit and they seized amphetamines and a Thompson submachine gun.

On November 7, 1972, the Cincinnati Police Division was awarded an LEAA grant of $120,000 to create a dedicated, countywide, twelve-man narcotics unit. They also received $185,000 from Cincinnati and other communities for a Pursuit of Criminal fund.

REGIONAL ENFORCEMENT of NARCOTICS UNIT (RENU)

On January 2, 1973, Sergeant Guthrie transferred to the new Regional Enforcement of Narcotics Unit (RENU). Two days later, Hamilton County Prosecutor Simon Leis publicized Guthrie and the

new unit in the newspapers.

Four days later, Sergeant Guthrie, working with the Vice Control Bureau on an operation he had planned, raided an afterhours joint where seven were arrested and one hundred were cited to court.

Guthrie and RENU made their first official arrest on January 13, 1973. Five days later, they made their 3rd and 4th, all felonies.

On March 1, 1973, the *Cincinnati Post* wrote their article on him, entitled, "Drug-Fighter Guthrie is Gung Ho Cop." In it, they also detailed his habit of using vacation time to visit other departments. They also commented on his extensive and most-detailed-in-the-County filing system of criminals that he maintained at his home. By then, he had also donated 59 days of overtime to the Fraternal Order of Police to pay the salaries of officers who were off extended time due to injuries or illness. He told the Post, "I've got no other interests. I've wanted to be a policeman since I was 16 years old."

He advised the reporter that his new unit was not limited by boundaries. His association with the United States Drug Enforcement Agency would take them anywhere in the United States.

The article recounted that RENU operated out of a secret location. Sergeant Guthrie called his investigators "agents" and supplied them all with fake identifications and falsely registered license plates, some of which were out-of-state plates. Agents reported to him their whereabouts at all times.

For the first and last time, he informed the public of RENU's composition. Of those initially in the unit, six were from the Cincinnati Police Division, four from the Hamilton County Sheriff's Office, one from the Indian Hill Rangers, and one from

the St. Bernard Police Department. They also had two women assigned who were not sworn police officers. Sergeant Guthrie viewed himself as a line supervisor, not staff, and would lead the unit in the street, as he had done as a supposed acting bureau commander. His primary operating thesis was that “pushers should be kept off the streets and addicts isolated from their environment.”

Not satisfied with the conventional forty-hour workweek, Sergeant Guthrie would often conduct surveillance during his off hours – sometimes with his mother driving the car and he concealed in the back seat. He called her, “my partner.” Sometimes when he went off duty, he would go to a district and ride with a beat cop. He lived and breathed police work.

Through it all, he was the consummate gentleman, always “yes, sir,” “no, sir,” and “if you keep fighting me, I’m going to hit you, sir.” Once a prisoner complained to the police chief that he had “sir’d” him to the point of irritation.

In the twelve days after the article was published, RENU made at least 15 felony arrests for drugs.

On August 3, 1973, RENU arrested a Hamilton County Deputy Sheriff with stealing 10,000 LSD pills and selling them. On November 27, 1973, after an extended investigation, RENU arrested eleven people after obtaining a sealed indictment for each from the Hamilton County Grand Jury.

Being a RENU agent was decidedly more dangerous than most law enforcement assignments. On January 13, 1974, an agent came upon a man bringing to bear a shotgun and the agent shot the man. On June 13, 1974 during a raid in Newport, RENU Agent William Nimmo was shot and seriously wounded. On February 18, 1977, a suspect who noticed surveillance being conducted, chased Guthrie and rammed his car five times.

On November 11, 1974, RENU arrested a mailman, along with his son and daughter. On January 23, 1975 they took down a drug robbery ring.

By then, with less than ten years in the Cincinnati Police Division, Guthrie's name appeared in newspapers on more than 100 days.

In November 1975, the Ohio legislature passed laws making the punishment for marijuana possession more lenient. But heroin was taking center stage. In February 1976, RENU reportedly made 41 heroin arrests in two months. And drugs had become a serious problem in public high schools. Sergeant Guthrie advised that more were reported at Western Hills High School than any other but attributed that to the fact that teachers and students there were more likely to assist by reporting observations.

On December 3rd, the Butler County Prosecutor announced $35,000 marijuana arrests by RENU. On the 15th, thirty-three homes were raided with arrests and heroin seizures from each. It was intended to take a significant percentage of heroin off the streets.

During 1977, Sergeant Guthrie earned a Chamber of Commerce award and received letters of commendation from the Police Chief and Safety Director for SWAT Activity. At the annual Police Appreciation and Awards Dinner, he was awarded the "Superior Achievement in Police Leadership" award. Simon Lies, Jr. penned an official commendation for case preparation in a drug arrest.

After 4½ years of incredible success and with the five-year LEAA grant running out, the Hamilton County Sheriff's Office wanted to take over RENU. After five years, RENU reported a 93% conviction rate and the seizure of 319 firearms. Days later, they seized $600,000 worth of cocaine.

On July 29th, RENU seized a “marijuana boat”. On August 22nd, they arrested 38 adults for drugs and gambling. On September 1st, an investigation led them to a seizure of $12,000 from a numbers racket.

As an advocate for the community, Sergeant Guthrie was becoming more and more vocal about the soft sentencing standards being passed by the Ohio legislature. During March and April 1978, he addressed the Cincinnati Oil Club monthly meeting, did an interview with a newspaper, and participated in a WCET panel regarding a heroin bill that was in the state legislature.

The Hunter doggedly pursued every case. On November 11, 1977, a woman posing as Barbara Brown passed a forged prescription at a Harrison, Ohio pharmacy. The RENU investigation determined that Miss Brown was actually the fairly famous actress, Judy Carnes. She was arrested at her next showing at the Beef and Boards Theatre. Then after Miss Carnes’ hearing, her friend, Madonna Crabtree was arrested for her participation in the ruse. On February 14, 1978, while awaiting trial, Ms. Carnes was arrested in Hollywood for possession of drugs in her home. She was then arrested for Auto Theft and drugs in Santa Monica less than a week later. On June 8, 1978, when Carne’s ex-husband came to witness her trial, RENU arrested him on a warrant issued also in 1977, but which he eluded then by lying about his identity.

July 1978 was another banner month for RENU. On the 1st, they arrested four for felony drug counts. On the 3rd, they arrested seven more. On the 11th, they arrested two for felony drugs and a shooting. On the 24th, they arrested two and seized $444,400 worth of cocaine. By the end of that July, Guthrie opined that there were about 7000 heroin addicts when RENU started and 1000 to 1500 five years later.

Sergeant Guthrie, on July 11th was vocal about the fact that doctors were being given special treatment in their contribution to addiction. Doctors' associations raised alarm at his assertions. On August 21, 1978, RENU arrested a Fairfield doctor. On the 30th, he reported his expectation to retire as soon as he was eligible, mainly "because I can't stand the over lenient activity of some judges." On September 15th, he declared war on "drug doctors."

As money was running out, the Cincinnati Police Division was in no position to take on the excess costs of the countywide unit. Chief Leistler posed a plan that had Prosecutor Leis administratively in charge of RENU and with Cincinnati contributing $500,000 to the unit. By then, several communities were not contributing to the project and on December 15th, a policy was adopted that investigations would not occur within these communities without the discretion of Guthrie.

On December 21, 1978, the Hamilton County Police Association agreed to take over RENU, under Guthrie's command, and the Prosecutor agreed to take on the administrative control.

1979 was a year of change in the drug market. In January, PCP and Angel dust were on the rise. The Columbian drug trade was beginning to prosper. Drug abuse was still on the rise. By June, nitrous oxide was becoming a major problem. Sergeant Guthrie commented on each of these over the intervening months.

During July 1979, he and RENU were investigating the pattern of drug store robbers and on the 17th, they guessed correctly in staking out the right pharmacies. They captured the robbers in the act, and he received yet another Chief's commendation.

September had him testifying before City Council regarding more

restrictions on the sale of whippets. He opined that heroin was being replaced by “Ts and Bs,” a combination of Talwin and pyribenzamine.

The drug trade was also becoming more violent. James Perry (J.P.) Cravens was still running much of the Hamilton County drug trade, albeit from prison. On November 27th, Cravens’s lieutenant, John Lewis North, was murdered.

Nearing the end of 1979, Guthrie reported that since the establishment of RENU, they seized $10 Million in drugs, made 2,500 felony arrests, and still had a 93% conviction rate.

On December 28, 1979, Sergeant Guthrie commented on the serge of Quaalude abuse. On February 7, 1978, RENU made arrests in the case of 3,000 forged prescriptions worth $3M in drugs.

During April 1980 he attended an International Association of Chiefs of Police and United States Department of Justice National and International Narcotics Seminar, where by then he was well known.

During October 1980, an investigation led to the arrest of former Federal Bureau of Investigation Special Agent Conroy for selling drugs.

On October 14, 1980, Assistant United Sates Attorney James Cissel commended him for his efforts in a drug case. On the 31st, Hamilton Police Chief George V. McNally commended him for his enforcement efforts in Butler County.

On November 16, 1980, he was quoted in saying that 90% of drugs among kids on drugs started with marijuana.

On November 27, 1980 he arrested a man who boasted to the undercover cop that he would buy himself out of jail if caught.

He was caught and could not buy himself out. Also on the 27th, three others were arrested bringing drugs in from Denver.

On February 5, 1981, after an armed man came after a Bengal football player, the National Football League asked Sergeant Guthrie in for a consult.

On March 25th, RENU seized 150 pounds of marijuana. On the 27th, they apprehended a Miami Township Trustee.

By May 19, 1981, he was putting undercover agents in high schools, resulting in 37 arrests in and around two Cincinnati Public Schools high schools.

On July 28th, RENU found 200 pounds of marijuana being grown on three acres and made two arrests.

Assistant Police Chief William R. Bracke described him in his performance evaluation at the end of 1982 as a “splendid leader, supervisor, teacher, and investigator. Works in addition to and irrespective of normal duty hours. Presents excellent role model to associates. Motivates by example. Maintains complete and accurate records. Has striven for and achieved continuing success in his ten-year role as RENU Commander.

By 1983, Sergeant Guthrie estimated the number of heroin addicts was down to about 200, but that 5000 were hooked on the new heroin, Ts and Bs. He also lamented that even with his unit’s high percentage of convictions, only 28% of those convicted actually served time. The remaining felons were put on probation.

On April 9, 1983, during the largest undercover operation ever conducted in Hamilton County schools, 151 people, half of them students, were arrested.

On April 14, 1983, control of RENU shifted to the Sheriff, but Cincinnati Sergeant Guthrie still commanded the unit.

On August 21, 1984, he received a letter of commendation from John Morton, U.S. Customs Service Director and was honored by the Service on August 27th.

On April 3, 1985, Sergeant Guthrie announced his intention to retire. By then, RENU had made 3,334 drug arrests and 830 other arrests and convicted 98.2% of those arrested. They had seized almost $13½ million in drugs seized, 587 pistols, rifles, and machineguns, and $552,984.69 in cash.

For his mother's health, he announced he was moving to San Diego and would take some college courses.

On May 14, 1985 he received the "Superior Achievement in Police Leadership" award at the annual Police Appreciation and Awards Dinner. The next day, Deputy City Manager Michael Bierman commended him for a 2½-year drug smuggling investigation.

RETIREMENT

Four days later, on May 19, 1985, The Hunter retired with 35 years of service to his country, region, county, and community, numerous awards, and 64 letters of appreciation and/or commendation. He moved to the city of Romona in San Diego County, California.

Two years later, his "partner" and mother, Christine Guthrie, died June 10, 1987. She was buried in Nuevo Memorial Gardens.

DEATH



Sergeant Guthrie contracted cancer and died on January 8, 1996 in San Diego at the age of 62. He is buried next to his mother.

On November 19, 1996, the Narcotics Association of Regional Co-ordinating Officers of Ohio presented to the Fraternal Order of Police Queen City Lodge #69 a memorial plaque that is on display at the “Say No to Dope” display at the Greater Cincinnati Police Museum.