

Specialist Richard W. Gross (1947-2019)

*By Lieutenant Stephen R. Kramer, Retired
Greater Cincinnati Police Historical Society*

Dic was born August 5, 1947 in Cincinnati to Odell and Gladys Irene (Profitt) Gross. He attended Withrow High School and graduated during 1965. He earned an Associate of Arts degree during June 1969 and a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1971 at the University of Cincinnati, majoring in History.

After high school and while attending college Dic worked at Saybrook Sunoco as a mechanic. During 1967 he was a truck driver for Valley Automotive. During 1968, he took a job as a salesman at Mabley and Carew downtown and two years later switched to Security. After achieving his bachelor's degree, while still working at Mabley and Carew, Dic considered and even tried teaching but decided it was not his vocation.

While the Vietnam War was raging, on May 28, 1972, Dic enlisted in the United States Army Reserves and was assigned to the Signal Corps. He was an Honor Graduate from his Advanced Individual Training course. After six months, he was discharged to the Army Reserves in the 812th Signal Corps and was eventually promoted to Specialist E-4.

Law Enforcement Career



On September 8, 1974 Dic joined the Cincinnati Police Division as a Police Recruit. On February 2, 1975 he was promoted to Police Officer, issued Badge 133, and assigned to District 7 (813 Beecher Street). A year later he rotated to District 1 (310 Lincoln Park Drive). Twenty-two months into his career, on December 6, 1976, Officer Gross and 123 other officers were laid off. He went to Pogue's Department Store and worked in their Security Department.

Dic and several others were recalled to the Division ten months later on September 18, 1977 and he was reassigned to District 1. His reputation as a dedicated officer who could be trusted on every level having been already been solidified, he was soon assigned as an undercover investigator. On December 8, 1985, Officer Gross was promoted to Police Specialist and issued Badge PS-9.

Four months later, on March 2, 1986, Specialist Gross transferred to the Pawn Squad of the Criminal Investigations Section (824 Broadway). Though his rank was "Specialist," he was universally known as "Detective Gross" – possibly because, as a badge collector, he found and carried Detective badge number D-9. As part of his duties, he searched out stolen articles in pawn shops at a time when most "mom and pop" shops were being gobbled up by regional and national chains. His expertise grew, as did his reputation. By the 1990s, he was known countywide and on both sides of the river as the "pawn guy." During August 2001, Specialist Gross was awarded the Rotary Club's Career Enhancement Award. During 2002, with a vote by his peers, he was inducted into the 1132 Living Legions.



Also during 2002 and a reorganization of CIS, the Special Investigations Squad was formed around him and a few other investigators in the new Major Offenders Unit. He was still the Division's pawn expert but was also appointed as a United States Deputy Marshal and teamed up with the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms to root out and prosecute Armed Career Felons. Within the first three years, the squad accounted for 135 federal cases with a 100% conviction rate. Specialist Gross also worked often with the Federal Bureau of Investigation and United States Secret Service. During 2006, after another reorganization, the Special Investigations Squad was transferred to the Intelligence Section. On May 22, 2008, he was given the 2007 Hamilton County Law Enforcement Appreciation and Achievement Award by the Fraternal Order of Police and Hamilton County Police Association.

Specialist Gross retired on January 21, 2012 with almost 40 years of service to his country and community. During his career, he amassed an astounding 57 letters of appreciation and/or commendation, including more than a dozen from almost every police chief and assistant police chief he worked for, two police chiefs from other cities, and the Attorney General for the State of Maryland.

For 36 years, during his "off time," he provided security for Cincinnati Sportservice during Cincinnati Reds home games at Riverfront Stadium and Great American Ballpark. While his police duties took priority, he rarely missed a game and became almost as well-known at the stadium as Marty and Joe.

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His passion was history – especially Civil War and law enforcement history. He became an avid collector of all things regarding the Civil War and Cincinnati Police Department and a nationally known police badge collector.

After the funerals of Police Specialist Ronald Jeter and Officer Daniel Pope, he met with a few collector associates and other interested parties to discuss the idea of establishing a police museum. This idea had been tried in the past; including by no less than Police Superintendent Phillip Deitsch in the 1890s, Assistant Police Chief Stanley Grothaus in 1955, and the Hamilton County Police Association in 1992. By May 1998, the Greater Cincinnati Police Historical Society was incorporated with a 21-person Board of Directors and Specialist Gross was its President.



Specialist Gross was only 2/3^{rds} of the way through his career and still working at the ballpark, but he worked tirelessly during his off time to lead his team in bringing a museum to fruition. The task required collecting, of course, but also finding a location, establishing a small business, securing volunteers, and above all, raising funds. When the Greater Cincinnati Police Museum opened during June 2006, he was its Curator and has been for these last thirteen years.

During 2016, Specialist Gross was afflicted with a spot of melanoma. The surgery to remove it was considered successful. In nearly the same spot, the cancer recurred in 2018 and surgery again was thought to be successful. However, it soon became obvious that the cancer was systemic. By July 19, 2019 he was bedbound. On August 4, 2019, he decided to live out his days at home, and was transferred there on Thursday, August 8th.

Dic made fast friends. When he went home, his life partner, Marie Dozier, and best friend, Specialist Dan Henson (retired) cared for him twenty-four hours a day. Almost 100 people inquired to visit him. He died on Thursday, August 15, 2019 at 1 a.m. at the age of 72 surrounded by friends.

An extraordinary number attended the visitation on Thursday, August 22, 2019 at the Spring Grove Funeral Homes. An FOP service will be held at 7:45 p.m. with a record attendance. He was honored at the next Hamilton County Police Association Annual Awards Banquet and his photo graced the cover of the program.