

Police Specialist Thomas Edward Gardner PS-208 (1931-2019)

Tom was born June 11, 1931 to Harold Charles and first-generation Irishwoman Helen (Nolan) Gardner. Both of his parents contracted tuberculosis. Helen died when he was 13 months old and Harold simultaneously went into a home for disabled soldiers. Tom and his older, Harold Joseph, went into St. Aloysius Orphanage. When Tom and Harold J. were 8- and 10-years-old, respectively, their father died. Both brothers attended Purcell High School; Tom, for two years from 1945 to 1947.

Both brothers also enlisted in the military. Twelve days after his 16th birthday, Tom joined the United States Marine Corps. He finished his high school at Camp Lejeune and was assigned to the Mediterranean during the Greek Civil War as a truck driver and 81mm Mortarman. Private First-Class Gardner was honorably discharged on June 22, 1950. Harold joined the United State Army during the Korean War.

On August 1, 1953, Tom married Marian Kay Haslinger. Eight months later, Harold married Marian's sister, Virginia.

From 1950 to 1954 Tom worked in sales at Tom Nolan Jewelers. He attended the University of Cincinnati from 1952 to 1953 and majored in Accounting. For several months during 1954 he worked for the Refrigeration Discount Corporation. He then was a salesman for Prudential Insurance Company until 1959 and then for P. Lorillard Company until 1960.



During 1955, Harold joined the Cincinnati Police Division as a Police Recruit. Tom joined the Division on May 29, 1960, having finished 7th on the entrance examination. On September 11, 1960, he was promoted to Patrolman, issued Badge 283, and assigned to District 2 (314 Broadway). On February 18, 1962, Patrolman Gardner was rotated to District 5 (1012 Ludlow avenue). He transferred to District 6 (3295 Erie Avenue) a year later and then to District 4 (7017 Vine Street) during November 1963. On February 27, 1966, as a result of the first promotional examination given for that rank, he was promoted to Police Specialist, issued Badge PS-208, and assigned to the Homicide Squad. Within two weeks, he had already solved a murder. During the next 18 years, the squad investigated more than a thousand homicides, rapes, and bank robberies, including the deaths of ten Cincinnati Police officers. During his last two years, the Homicide Squad solved every homicide in Cincinnati; a feat unmatched before or since. He was considered a “model homicide investigator” by his supervisors. He retired July 2, 1984 with 31 letters of appreciation and/or commendation; including four from police chiefs and others from a city manager, Hamilton County assistant prosecutor, the FBI, and a Batesville, Indiana judge.

During September 1986, Specialist Gardner joined the Hamilton County Prosecutor's Office as an investigator. He retired again on June 9, 1993 with almost 34 years of service to his country, city, and county.

Specialist Gardner had been battling cancer for a while. While surrounded by family at his home, he passed away from complications at 5:30 a.m. on August 19, 2019 at the age of 88.

He was predeceased by his son, Jimmy Gardner, and brother, Cincinnati Patrolman Harold J. Gardner. Specialist Gardner is survived by his wife of 66 years, Marian Kay (Haslinger) Gardner; children, Tom (Kim) Gardner, Cincinnati Police Sergeant Michael P. (Hamilton County Sheriff's Deputy Deborah S.) Gardner, Jenny McElroy, Bob (Peggy) Gardner and Katie (Glenn) Schnell; grandchildren, Tom Gardner, Tony Gardner, Tim Gardner, Jaclyn Wyatt, Tom McElroy, Heather Siemer, Jimmy Gardner, Mike Gardner, George Gardner, Bob Gardner, Steven Schnell, and Madison Schnell; and numerous great-grandchildren.

Visitation will be held 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. on Thursday, August 22, 2019 at Dobbins Muehlenkamp-Erschell Funeral Home at 427 South Ft. Thomas Avenue in Ft. Thomas. A FOP service will be held at Noon. A small funeral service will be held, followed by burial at St. Joseph new cemetery.

Memorials may be made to are suggested to the KIF1A.org, 808 Columbus Avenue 10A, New York, NY 11025