

Deputy Chief, Major Russell David Hess (1943-2024)



Russ was born August 29, 1943 in Middletown to Roland A. and Louise T. Hess. He attended Fenwick High School where he participated in the Christian Youth Organization and graduated in 1961.

After high school, Russ joined the United States Air Force and served as a Mechanic. He was honorably discharged in 1965.

Russ joined the Middletown Police Department as a Patrolman on October 13, 1966. Within three years, he became their head Canine Trainer. In 1972, Patrolman Hess joined the United States Police Canine Association (USPCA) and would serve that organization, in Region 5 and nationally, for the next 43 years as a Level III trainer, National Judge #105, a few offices and its first Director. Also in 1972, he presented himself as a make-a-wish-type gift to a dying girl who wanted to meet him because she loved his voice on the police

radio. In 1973, the Department purchased Smokey, a German Shepherd, to be Patrolman Hess's canine partner. On June 24, 1974, Smokey took 3rd place in the regional USPCA competition. He qualified for national competition from 1975 through 1977 and took 1st place in 1976 in the attack dog competition. Unfortunately, while conducting a search in Warren County, Smokey's legs got tangled in some vine and damaged his hip. He had to be put down on March 16, 1979.

Officer Hess was promoted to Sergeant on July 21, 1982. By then, he had another partner, Tiger. In 1983, Tiger took top dog honors in the USPCA regionals. He was promoted to Lieutenant on September 4, 1985. On August 16, 1988, he was serving as Vice President of the USPCA. He was promoted to Major and Deputy Chief on January 22, 1989. Also in 1989, Major Hess was elected President of the USPCA and held the office through 1991. A few times during his tenure, Major Hess would serve as Acting Chief, including after the Chief's retirement on July 7, 1995. Deputy Chief Hess retired on October 17, 1996.

Two weeks earlier, on October 3, 1996, he had been appointed Police Chief of the Jackson Township Police Department in Montgomery County. Chief Hess resigned from that position after two years, on January 7, 1999.

One week earlier, on January 1, 1999, he was named the first Executive Director of the UCPA. He was also the USPCA Historian. On January 1, 2009, he authored a book: *1970-2008 USPCA History (The U.S. Police Canine Association) Inaugural Issue 2007-2008 National Trial Results*. The USPCA has an award, the Russ Hess Lifetime Achievement Award, which is given out during national competitions to "individual(s) who, during their lifetimes, have made significant and selfless contributions to the field of K9" as selected by the USPCA Awards Committee. Director Hess finally retired in 2015 with more than half a century of service to his country, community, and law enforcement.

Chief Hess died on December 26, 2024 at the age of 81.

He was predeceased by his wife of 51 years, Joan Irene (Cramer) Hess (2017). Chief Hess is survived by his sons, James Russel (Stacie) Hess and Bill Hess, and brothers Michael Hess and Donald Hess.

A visitation will be held 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. on Saturday, January 11, 2025. at the Anderson Funeral Home-Franklin Chapel, 1357 East Second Street in Franklin. Funeral services will be held at noon. Interment with military honors will follow at Woodside Cemetery in Middletown.

Memorials may be sent to the [United States Police Canine Association](#).