

Transcript of a Saint Paul Police oral history interview with

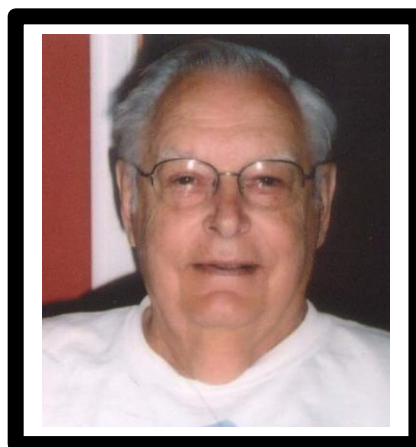
Detective Earl Miels

Saint Paul Officer

1949 – 1982



1949



2008

June 30, 2008

By
Oral Historian Kateleen Cavett

At

The Miels' home, Maplewood, Minnesota

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All pictures are from the Saint Paul Police Department
collections and the personal files of the Miels family.

ORAL HISTORY

Oral History is the spoken word in print.

Oral histories are personal memories shared from the perspective of the narrator. By means of recorded interviews, oral history documents collect spoken memories and personal commentaries of historical significance. These interviews are transcribed verbatim and minimally edited for accessibility. Greatest appreciation is gained when one can listen to an oral history aloud.

Oral histories do not follow the standard language usage of the written word. Transcribed interviews are not edited to meet traditional writing standards; they are edited only for clarity and understanding. The hope of oral history is to capture the flavor of the narrator's speech and convey the narrator's feelings through the timbre and tempo of speech patterns.

An oral history is more than a family tree with names of ancestors and their birth and death dates. Oral history is recorded personal memory, and that is its value. What it offers complements other forms of historical text, and does not always require historical corroboration. Oral history recognizes that memories often become polished as they sift through time, taking on new meanings and potentially reshaping the events they relate.

Memories shared in an oral history create a picture of the narrator's life— the culture, food, eccentricities, opinions, thoughts, idiosyncrasies, joys, sorrows, passions—the rich substance that gives color and texture to this individual life.

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Earl E. Miels

was appointed reserve patrolman November 1, 1949;
patrolman July 18, 1951;
military leave September 20, 1950 – September 30, 1952
promoted to detective March 1, 1962;
retired February 5, 1982.

EM: Earl Miels

HM: Helen Miels

KC: Kate Cavett

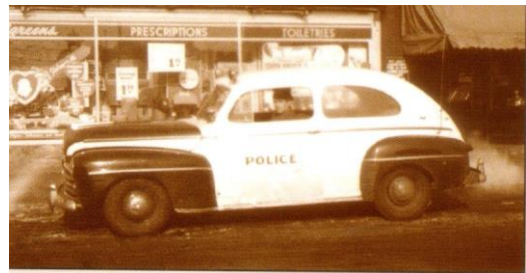
EM: I'm Earl Miels, detective, retired from the Saint Paul Police Department. I was appointed a patrolman in 1949. I was with the department for a couple of months. I was drafted into the Army. Went into the heavy artillery. Went to Germany for a year-and-a-half. Came back. Asked the department for my job back and Bob Dunning,¹ who was the secretary of the chief at the time, told me to wait on the bench and he'd talk to me later. That was at 0800 in the morning. At noon, he came out to go to lunch and he said, "You still sitting here?" I said, "Yeah." He said, "What do you want?" I said, "I want my job back." He says, "You don't understand, kid. You have to go through all kinds of tests and

¹ **Robert "Bob" W. Dunning** (Dec 26, 1910) was appointed junior clerk-typist April 10, 1931; promoted senior clerk-typist December 1, 1932; appointed patrolman March 1, 1937; provisional appointment secretary-stenographer October 16, 1947; provisional appointment secretary to Chief of Police April 6, 1948; promoted to detective February 18, 1949; appointed secretary to Chief of Police March 1, 1949; Leave of absence—appointed license inspector June 7, 1960; reinstated as detective June 2, 1964; deceased December 2, 1965.

personnel things." I said, "But I did all that. I was a patrolman and I just came back from the Army." "Well, why didn't you say so?" he said. Well, of course, that made me feel real great. He wouldn't talk to me to begin with, but anyway.

I went to work and I was working about a week and Deputy Chief Frank Schmidt² stopped me in the hall and he said, "Miels, you're not here for two months." I said, "What'd I do?" He said, "You didn't do nothing. You got two months vacation coming. Get out of here before you can't have it." So I was off for two months.

When I came back, I was put in the evening shift with Patrol. The fellows looked at me and they didn't want to have too much to do with me because here I was a patrolman they barely knew. I left and come back and was put out some place they didn't



Squad 1950

know where and I went back again. Am I a snitch or what am I? And I was kind of on the blackball list for quite a while. But I made friends with some of the fellows, and they realized what was going on and that kind of smoothed things out, so I was accepted a few months later as one of them.

KC: What were some of your assignments, sir?

EM: I was a beat man like everyone else, off and on. My patrol was 308, which was West Seventh Street from Seven Corners to the bridge out at the end of Seventh Street. I had some interesting things there. I worked alone. First of all, I had a partner, or a partner had me.

² **Frank A. Schmidt** was appointed patrolman April 30, 1919; promoted to sergeant August 1, 1927; lieutenant August 1, 1931; inspector April 23, 1936; lieutenant June 2, 1936; captain March 16, 1937; assistant chief—Uniform Division February 9, 1945; and retired September 17, 1963.

KC: Who was your partner?

EM: Bert Duxbury.³ And the first call we had together was a murder. A man from West Seventh Street had gotten shot, one of the criminal element. They couldn't find him and they had an idea who did it, because of the gang. We went around the different places that Bert knew and tried to dig up something, but we couldn't. We weren't on that case anymore except to ask about the people who we knew, or he knew, to give information. We never did get anything solid at that time.

After some time, Bert got promoted and I had the squad alone for quite a while. One of these nights I was working alone on the midnight shift. At Seven Corners I stopped for coffee at the Coffee Cup, and when I left, I went down the alley, going west down the alley, and I got to the end of the alley. This was a contracting office at that time, and I saw a man with a crow bar prying on the door. I jumped out of the car and arrested him and picked up three crow bars, took them back to the squad, put him in the back seat. We didn't have handcuffs at that time. We didn't have locks on the back doors that we could control.

I got in the car and he went out the opposite side of the car. So I got out and was going to chase him, but he was about thirty or forty feet ahead of me going like a deer. I took one of the crow bars, and I didn't want to shoot him, so I threw the crow bar at him. Hit him in the back. He went down spread eagle. I went over and picked him up, put him back in the car. He went out the other side again.

³ **Francis A "Bert" Duxbury** (December 5, 1923) was appointed patrolman July 25, 1949; promoted to sergeant Sep 16, 1955; and retired January 29, 1982.

I got on the radio and called for help. I said, "This man has gotten away from me," and about six squads come around there, and they were chasing him all over that area in apartment buildings, in basements and out the other side. There was some shooting going on. I'm running all over and never saw the man again until the – Buick had a garage at Smith and Kellogg. There was an underground basement that you could approach from the backside door. In that basement, he had 20, 30 antique cars. All beautiful cars. And everybody was running around looking for him. Finally one of the fellows looked down in the stairwell and there he was hiding. He pointed a shot gun at him and told him to come on out of there. So he came out and they had other men then take him in. Nobody had handcuffs at this time, so we had to have people there to hold him.

Got him into headquarters and Captain Lauer is talking to him and he got kind of smart with Captain Lauer⁴ and Captain Lauer hauled off and slapped him one across the face and told him to watch his mouth. And he hit pretty hard for an old man and that really made him angry. That was the end of that. He got sent back to prison. He was on parole from Stillwater.

KC: [laughing] Now, and you didn't have pack sets then, did you?

EM: Didn't have anything. We had the car radio.

KC: You did have a car radio.

EM: Yeah.

KC: Do you have any idea what year or decade this was?

⁴ **Art R. Lauer** was appointed reserve patrolman March 17, 1941; patrolman full-time April 1, 1942; military leave June 19, 1942 to December 11, 1945; promoted to detective September 20, 1948; detective lieutenant May 1, 1956; rank changed to captain February 1, 1965; and retired July 17, 1973.

EM: About 1952, '53. Another time I was working with Don Legato⁵ and we were out of gas. It was on empty and we had to go out to Rice Street garage⁶ to get gas. That's the only place we could get it. So we were on the way out and heard on the radio there was a car of two men took off from a gas station and they had a gun. Well, they were coming by us as we – so I said, "Well, we're empty, but maybe we can catch them before we run out of gas. If we can't, then we can at least tell the other cars where they're going." So we chased them down to an area in back of Schmidt's Brewery.⁷ That was not too populated at that time. There were some older buildings along the side of the brewery, but going east there was just weeds and grass.

Don took after the one going east in the grass, and I took off after the one that was going towards the building. And it was black back there. When they said they had a gun, I drew my revolver and was running back there. He ran into a yard. It was fences on both sides and they ran right up to the building, up to Schmidt's Brewery. Couldn't get through, but I didn't know where he was back there. I couldn't see. I told him to "Stop! Police!" but I didn't hear anything. Evidently I shouted loud enough that the fellow that owned the house turned on the back light, and he was hiding behind a clothes pole, a wash clothes pole. Just enough to break up his outline, you know, but he had the gun there. So I said,

⁵ **Donald Anthony Legato** (August 23, 1922) was appointed patrolman March 28, 1955; and retired April 29, 1988.

⁶ **Rice Street Garage** was at 1441 Rice Street at Arlington.

⁷ **Jacob Schmidt Brewing Co.** was located at 882 West Seventh Street. Beer was first made on this land in 1855 by German settlers. Cave Brewery was at this location in the 1800s. They sold to Saint Paul Brewing in 1897, who sold to Schmidt in 1900. By 1936 Jacob Schmidt Brewing Co was the seventh largest brewing company in the US. The facility was sold several times in the later 1900, with Minnesota Brewing closing the doors in 2002.

“Drop the gun or I’m going to shoot you!” And the guy said, “What’s going on back here anyway?” I says, “Police officer. Go back in the house so you don’t get hurt.”

Well, he dropped the gun. I went over and arrested him. Took him back to the car, and as I’m in the back, they’re talking to this kid, turned out to be fifteen years old, which I didn’t know about. I heard a shot. If this other guy’s only fifteen years old, we might be in trouble. We didn’t know how old they were, you know. So I did take him back and here come Don with the other guy and I said, “Did you shoot?” He says, “Yeah, I shot at his legs and it ricocheted up and hit his foot.” And he got all kinds of stuff from the higher ups that he shouldn’t have shot at a fifteen-year-old kid. But we said, “It was dark back there. There was no way we knew how old these guys were. They were big, you know. They were 5’10” – bigger than some policemen. And they had a rifle. I happened to be the guy that had the one with the rifle. The other kid wasn’t armed, but how did we know that? Anyway, we just got reprimanded for it, and he was pretty angry about it and I was too. I thought that was not a square deal to give a guy when they’re trying to arrest somebody not knowing their size or age or anything.

KC: What was the philosophy around juveniles at that point in time?

EM: Before the rules came out that you couldn’t touch a juvenile, they were treated like everybody. If they were fifteen years old and six foot tall, if they were big and they acted like an adult, they got treated like an adult. If they wanted to fight with a police officer, the officer would always use enough force to control them.

I had a bunch like that. I was walking the beat out on Dale and University, of all places. And because there was not much going out there, but we had quite a few people on that shift that night. Nobody was on vacation and there wasn’t any holiday, so being the youngest man, I got Dale and University.

So I was walking there and there was a group of colored kids that were mulling around. I said, "You guys aren't up to no good are you?" "No, no. We're not doing anything." "Well, it seems that the older people coming out of this restaurant after having dinner are always getting waylaid by young colored boys that harass them, take their wallets, and run." I said, "You wouldn't be one of those?" "No, no."

About that time, I was walking away and a couple came out of the restaurant and they dashed across the street. I went over and cornered them and I said, "You guys just lied to me. You told me you weren't that bunch and you are." And one says, "It don't make any difference. You can't touch us because we're only juveniles." And I said, "You see the size of that toe of that shoe? Boy that's going to hurt when it plants in your backside." And they all took off running. That ended the problem up there for quite a while.

KC: When was this that you weren't allowed to touch juveniles?

EM: That came out in, I suppose, 1954, '55. There was a Supreme Court ruling that juveniles were supposed to have their parents there and you weren't supposed to touch them.

KC: Chief Proetz⁸ came out of the Juvenile Unit and became Chief in 1961

EM: He might have been part of that night.

KC: But it was a federal ruling?

EM: Yes.

KC: Did they start the Juvenile Unit when this federal ruling came out so that they were –?

⁸ **William F. Proetz** was appointed patrolman March 1, 1937; promoted to sergeant March 16, 1948, detective September 20, 1948, lieutenant December 1949, and chief March 11, 1955; returned to detective lieutenant March 13, 1961; and resigned June 12, 1963.

EM: No, they had a Juvenile Unit before that. They were very active. They did a good job. When Proetz was on, I suppose you heard the Proetz-A-Rama?

KC: [laughing] Tell me about the Proetz-A-Rama?

EM: Never heard of Proetz-A-Rama?

KC: I don't think so.

EM: That was a weeklong police thing to get the public to understand the police and know about the police, and we'd like to help the public understand what was going on in the police department. We'd just got all kinds of things in the crime lab that we didn't understand, but there was, I think, ten of us who took people around the Police Station and showed them all the different offices, what they did in the Crime Lab. We kind of build our own police image there. We said, "Here they can tell you not only your fingerprints, but your blood type and your hair and if your hair is your hair or somebody else's." They can now, but they couldn't then. [Kate laughs] So the chief got a big kick out of that when some of the people came back and said, "Can you really do all those things?" And he said, "Maybe you guys shouldn't exaggerate quite so much." [Kate and Earl laugh] But we had a good time for that week.

KC: Chief Proetz was the chief from 1955 to 1961.

EM: Okay. It must have been around '55 or '56 then. Because it was when he first got in there.

KC: So, in other words, you were a visionary. You knew what we were going to be needing to do better investigations.

EM: Our Crime Lab kind of figured that this was coming. Up there, Elzerman⁹ at the time, Ted Elzerman was a great criminologist.

We had one fellow that would come down into the loop all the time around midnight and cruise around the loop, and as the streets got a little sparser populated, he had a Pontiac and he would race around the loop

and then take off on Seventh Street. And they say, "He's coming out your way," so I take off after him. We had Ford Sixes, Fairlanes, at a top speed of about sixty miles an hour on the level. We couldn't go up Grand Avenue hill without shifting down. They weren't automatic at the time.

Anyway, we were going down Seventh Street and he was leaving me, but he got to the Fort Snelling Bridge and burned his engine up. It just went too fast, too far, too many times, and didn't check the oil or whatever, burned the engine up. Caught him! That was the end of his racing around the loop. [laughs]

KC: How young or old of a –

EM: Oh, he was about twenty-four years, something like that, at the time. Feeling his oats about probably his first car. I don't know. He was known around other parts of the city for his shenanigans, but I don't know whether it was the car, but I know he was in the loop. And chased him up Grand Avenue hill, which was an impossibility unless somebody was up there blocking the street.

KC: Can you talk about drawing your weapon and what weapon you had at that time?



1962 Ford Fairlane
Fairlanes were sold between
1955-1970

⁹ **Theodore R. Elzerman** (October 13, 1930) was appointed criminalist March 1, 1961; promoted to criminalist II January 13, 1963; and resigned June 9, 1967.

EM: It was a .38 Colt¹⁰ at the time, revolver. I went onto the Pistol Team. They told me to come down and try out for the Pistol Team, and I went down there with that. And I went out to the first convention and I



shot as well as the masters but I was one X short. I had a hundred, but one X was out in the ten, not in the X ring. And of course, the other one supposedly had them in there. I did shoot the target, but he'd been a master for so long, couldn't



kick him out. That's what I always thought. They guys were telling me, "If you're going to shoot, why don't you get a decent gun? Get a Smith and Wesson." Because it had a different site on it and there was better grips and so on. I sold

my .38 and got a Smith and Wesson.

KC: You had to buy your own weapon?

EM: Oh, yeah. Buy your own gun. You got wadcutters¹¹ from the department, which were flat lead and wouldn't go through anything. One night when we were on patrol, I was working West Side at that time. There was a stolen car and they were chasing him up Smith Avenue and a detective – he shot, went through



wadcutters

¹⁰ Introduced to the firearms market in 1908, The **Colt Police Positive Special** is a small frame, double-action revolver with a six round cylinder, primarily chambered for the .38 Special cartridge, designed and manufactured by the Colt's Manufacturing Company. The Police Positive Special was intended primarily for sale to law enforcement agencies and enjoys the distinction of being Colt's most widely produced revolver design with over 750,000 built. —Wikipedia

¹¹ **Wadcutter** is a special-purpose flat-fronted bullet specially designed for shooting paper targets, usually at close range and at subsonic velocities typically under approximately 900 ft/s (274 m/s). Wadcutters have also found favor for use in self-defense guns, such as .38 caliber snub-nosed revolvers, where due to short barrel lengths, maximum bullet velocities are usually low, typically under 900 ft/s (274 m/s), and improved lethality is desired. Wadcutters are often used in handgun and air gun competitions.

the rear window. The guy stopped shortly after that and got out and ran. And they saw blood in the car and he said, "I know I hit him with the bullet."

So I'm running around. This might make it sound like this is all me, but this is what I did. We were running around and I see an open garage door, a service door. So I go in there and flash my light around and I don't see anybody, but I said, "Would I stand in the open?" So I get down on my knees and there he was, under the car. So I said, "Come out of there! Come out of there! You're bleeding to death." I said, "You were shot in the neck! You're going to die!" And he come out and he says, "Oh, don't let me die! Don't let me die!" So I put a band-aid on him from our first aid kit and took him to Ancker Hospital.¹² And he was kind of mad when he found out he just had a tich, you know.

KC: [laughing] Just had gone by his neck?

EM: Well, had gone by and just took the skin a little bit. It bled a little bit, but it didn't really hurt him.

KC: So what you're telling me is that if you wanted strong ammunition that was going to make a difference, you had to buy your own ammunition as well as your own weapon.

EM: Right that. Everything but the badge and the shield for the cap, we bought. You wanted handcuffs? Nobody even thought of handcuffs at that time. Didn't have that kind of problem. There wasn't gangs or anything, and the policemen were all big enough to handle anything that came their way.

KC: What was the height requirement at that time?

¹² The City and County Hospital opened in 1872. In 1923, it was renamed **Ancker Hospital** in honor of its late superintendent Arthur B. Ancker. Over the years it encompassed twelve buildings over several acres with a mailing address at 495 Jefferson. In 1965 it moved to 640 Jackson Street and was renamed Saint Paul-Ramsey Hospital, renamed again in 1977 Saint Paul-Ramsey Medical Center. In 1986, the hospital became a private, nonprofit facility and was no longer county-operated; in 1993, it merged with HealthPartners; and in 1997, it was renamed Regions Hospital.

EM: 5'10". It was a high school education and that was it. But you got all the things you needed in sixteen weeks of schooling from the department, from the FBI. I thought it was good training. We didn't get much for traffic control, but we'd go out and traffic on Tenth and Robert once in a while just to get to know how to blow the whistle and put your arms out. [Kate laughs]

Most of it was good law we would handle, mostly misdemeanors. Felonies were kind of self-explanatory. They said what they were, and you knew that if somebody pulled a gun on you, then it would be a felony. Or if they stuck up somebody or burglarized. A lot of fellows had difficulty differentiating between robbery and burglary. They say you go into a house and steal something, it would be a burglary. True, unless there was somebody in the house. Then it was a robbery. You could go into a garage and it was a burglary, but if you went in there and there was somebody working, then it was a robbery, because there was a person involved. That kind of thing, it got to you, but you knew what you was supposed to do.

I had one guy at Mike's Tavern on West Seventh Street. I was working with Officer Dick Schmidt.¹³ That was the chief's nephew. He was driving and I was a passenger, and I saw the transom open and a known burglar was standing out in front of the place. I said, "Hey, I bet he's a lookout. Go around the back. I'll take the back, you come around to the front again and watch the front." So he dropped me off in the back, which was kind of a dumpy parking lot. It wasn't paved. There was just weeds all over it. And I could hear somebody back in there

¹³ **Richard John "Dick" Schmidt** (May 9, 1928) was appointed patrolman July 11, 1955; retired August 30, 1991.

making noise. Then I saw a head come up out of the window well in the basement, so I thought, "Well, he's still in there."

I just waited and it was black back there. No flashlight on it, no arc lights. And pretty soon the back door opened and he came out. Crow bar about that long. I said, "Stop! Police!" and I heard you're supposed to say it three times so I said, "Stop! Police!" three times. And he turned and that crow bar, I shot. Shot him in the neck. And he went just like water down the wall. I grabbed him and choked off his neck so it wasn't bleeding so bad, and a fellow came up in the apartment next door on the balcony and said, "What's going on?" I said, "I just shot a man. I'm a police officer. Get the ambulance back here."

Pretty soon the ambulance came and here come the station commander

for the night and everybody. And the doctor stitched up his trachea and sent him off to the hospital. And the boss says, "How do you feel?" And I says, "I feel all right." And he said, "Maybe you better go home for the night." And I said, "What for?" I said, "I'll go in and write my reports. Then I'll go home." He said, "That's good. Go ahead and write your reports and go home." So I did that.

Five days later I got a subpoena to go to court for this man. The judge and the attorneys got up and were talking and he says, "You were shot? You spent five days in the hospital in the burglary of a three-two joint?" He says, "You're guilty, but you



Officer Miels
1962

suffered enough. You're free." So we both went home.

There was rumors out that he was looking for me. He was going to kick my – but we told him where I worked and where I was every night. Never saw him again, although I did see his partner who was standing at the door that time, but when Dick had come around the front to apprehend him, he'd already took off someplace. We didn't know where he was. But he did come back then after he heard the shot.

KC: Now at the time you were on the department, there were these two divisions. There was the Patrol Division and the Detective Division. And you went into the Detective Division in –

EM: 1962.

KC: In '62. What inspired that?

EM: Promotion. We took an examination for promotion for Detective. I passed and we went to detective school for six weeks.

KC: Where was detective school?

EM: At the headquarters. FBI had that.

KC: Do you remember about what detective school was like?

EM: Oh, yeah. It was explaining evidence: how to find it, what to do with it, what to do with crime scenes to protect them. We didn't have the yellow tapes or anything. You just had officers stand there and keep everybody away and tell the patrolman what to do. [As a detective], you were the boss at that time. You were the boss at the scene until the superior officer in the Detective Division came, if they would. Then you would report to them.

When we got through, Don Blakely¹⁴ and I were going to be partners, but we had to go through an examination and it was literally finding a needle in a haystack to convict this man, which was the plot. And I went through last and I guess because everybody had dug everything else up, I found it. And so George Barkley,¹⁵ who was head of the Homicide Division says, "He's going to be one of my detectives." And Don Blakely, who scored so high on everything, he was also put in there. So we were partners in Homicide Division while George was there.

KC: So you were there in March of 1963 when T. Eugene Thompson murdered his wife and were involved in that investigation.

EM: Quite heavily. Not directly with T. Eugene, but with an awful lot of evidence and people who knew him, people that [Norman] Mastrian had contacted to do the crime, and what went on in the house prior to the murder, so that his wife would



not have any aid or help available. The phone has been disconnected to get a new, fancy princess phone, I think they called it at the time. And they took the dog out because he wet the rug and they were getting a new rug. So the dog wasn't there. The kids were in school. So anything that went in the house, nobody knew about. Until she went to the neighbors.

¹⁴ **Donald Blakely** was appointed to the Saint Paul Park Police for four years, then was appointed patrolman January 4, 1954; promoted to detective March 1, 1962; captain August 28, 1968; deputy chief December 26, 1970; and retired January 31, 1984.

¹⁵ **George G. Barkley** was appointed patrolman November 21, 1938; military leave March 13, 1942 to November 1, 1945; promoted to detective November 18, 1947; detective lieutenant May 1, 1956; rank changed to captain February 1, 1965; and retired January 14, 1971, and died February 1974.

The first neighbor saw this bloody thing out there and wouldn't answer the door, so she ran to another one. And so they let her in because they recognized her, and the husband was home and I guess the other one was just a lady home, so she was scared. They let her in, called, and took her to the hospital, where she died.

But T. Eugene was at work, and we very nonchalantly called him and he came to the hospital. "Oh." You know, didn't show any emotion really. What they said – I wasn't there – but he didn't show any emotion. But when George Barkley started going back to how come the house was empty and everything, and it didn't sound right to George. George was an old cab driver. George Barkley. And he knew how to read people. I mean, he was a cab driver for so

many years. He was good with people. And that made a lot of policemen unhappy, because he knew what they were doing when they weren't supposed to be doing it or what they had been doing when he didn't tell them to do that.

Carol Thompson's Murder Case

On the morning of March 6, 1963, 34-year-old homemaker Carol Thompson was surprised in her bedroom by an intruder. He knocked her out with a rubber hose and tried to drown her in the bathtub; when she came to and escaped, his pistol wouldn't fire, so he beat her with the gun's butt. He then stabbed her in the neck.

Thinking she was dead, he went to wash up — only to find she had fled out the door to a neighbor's house. "I never saw anyone who wanted to live so hard in all my life," he was later quoted as saying.

But she died four hours later at Ancker Hospital in St. Paul. Her husband sobbed when he got the news.

Police were suspicious of T. Eugene Thompson from the start. Police finally linked - fragments of the pistol's grip found at the scene to a gun given to ex-boxer Norman Mastrian, who had passed it to a two-bit thief named Dick Anderson. The case broke open when Anderson confessed he had killed Carol Thompson for \$3,000 at Mastrian's behest, who he said had been hired for the job by her husband.

T. Eugene's trial was covered in exacting detail (down to what spectators wore in court) by all four Twin Cities newspapers, along with TV and radio.

So I was sent out to talk to people who were just mentioned by them that somebody had talked to them about finding somebody to kill this woman. Then it turned out that Mastrian was the one that approached this one. And then this fellow was going with a girl who was also going with a jeweler over on Minneapolis University campus who was fencing stuff, and she started talking to him, and he talked to them and he talked to me and of course, that was gone back. It was a big, big circle and how many girlfriends T. Eugene had around the country and how many he supported. And Bayport was the big place where he took all his girlfriends. They knew him pretty well down there.

KC: How early in the investigation did you realize that it had to be him?

EM: Within a day.

As the investigation went along and, of course, everybody's "What's happening to Thompson?" you know. They named him. You can't talk to – the case about it. It's too involved and I'd be hung out to dry by the department if I talked. A guy says, "I give you a thousand to one that he don't spend a day in jail." I said to him, "I'd like to take that, but you know it's against the rules for me to be on a conviction, because that would make me a partner to the conviction. So you can't do anything like that. You know, you hear sportsmen

doing their gabbing. Look at [Pete] Rose¹⁶ what happened to him after a while. Anyway, they went through the District Court and our Supreme Court and the Appellate Court and all of them, and he was found guilty of all.

His kids lived a block-and-a-half from me with an aunt. They were putting a freeway through. 35-E was being built. They were just on the other side of the freeway.

Anyway, when we went out to arrest Thompson, they arrested Mastrian. We were looking for the gun in the house, and his wife and couple of kids were in the house and this attorney was there. Thompson was his name. I think it was Thompson? His father was a judge, this attorney's father. So he says we can't come in here without a warrant, so we went to the car and Ernie Williams¹⁷ and I and Tom Opheim¹⁸ went out there and said, "They won't let us in and they said

¹⁶ **Peter Edward "Pete" Rose** (born April 14, 1941), is a former Major League Baseball player and manager. Rose played from 1963 to 1986, and managed from 1984 to 1989. Rose, a switch hitter, is the all-time Major League leader in hits (4,256), games played (3,562), at-bats (14,053), and outs (10,328).^[1] He won three World Series rings, three batting titles, one Most Valuable Player Award, two Gold Gloves, the Rookie of the Year Award, and also made seventeen All-Star appearances at an unequaled five different positions (2B, LF, RF, 3B, & 1B). In August 1989, three years after he retired as an active player, Rose agreed to permanent ineligibility from baseball amidst accusations that he gambled on baseball games while playing for and managing the Reds, including claims that he bet on his own team. In 1991, the Baseball Hall of Fame formally voted to ban those on the "permanently ineligible" list from induction, after previously excluding such players by informal agreement among voters. In 2004, after years of public denial, Rose admitted to betting on baseball and on, but not against, the Reds. — Wikipedia

¹⁷ **Ernest H. Williams** was appointed patrolman November 1, 1949; promoted to detective October 1, 1954; detective lieutenant July 1, 1964; rank changed to captain February 1, 1965; and retired August 25, 1975.

¹⁸ **Thomas W. Opheim** (born March 4, 1922) was appointed patrolman January 4, 1954 (Badge No. 288); promoted to sergeant October 1, 1964 (Badge No. 123); retired January 4, 1979.

we got to have a warrant.” County Attorney Randall says, “Kick the door in and go in and arrest them.”

So that’s what we did, kicked the door in and searched for the gun to see if it was in their drawer or maybe in the bedroom with the kids or something. Didn’t really tear the house apart or anything, but kind of a cursory thing, because we were happy to get Mastrian out of there, because the attorney was making all kinds of noise. And he threatened all three of us on the way to headquarters that he was going to get our families and us when this was over.

KC: Did you arrest Thompson, too?

EM: Yeah, I was the only Saint Paul officer that arrested Thompson. And Crime Bureau¹⁹ and the captain from the Sheriff’s Department²⁰ from Ramsey County went out there to arrest him.

KC: Because he was in Forest Lake, so he was out of your jurisdiction?

EM: Mm-hmm. Well, it wouldn’t have been direct pursuit anyway. We could have done it because it was a felony, but so that everybody would be kept happy and they wouldn’t come into my area without asking me and all that. So we went out there.

We figured that he was one of the playboys and he wouldn’t come home until after the joints all closed. This was in summer and the weeds were about seven foot high and we’re standing out there and getting eaten up by mosquitoes and I said, “This isn’t any good. Can’t we get closer to the house? We could hide

¹⁹ **Bureau of Criminal Apprehension** is a division of the State of Minnesota’s Department of Public Safety. The BCA provides complete investigative assistance, forensic laboratory services, criminal justice information system, fingerprint information, and training to the criminal justice community throughout Minnesota.

²⁰ **Ramsey County Sheriff Department** title of captain was changed to undersheriff in the 1980s. Captain Don Johnson retired with the title in 1989.

the car someplace and get around the house, and if he's not there, let's see if we can get in the house." "Hey, you're not too dumb for a kid, you know."

We went in there and the babysitter was there, the nanny. She was sitting in the kitchen. The kids were in bed and the porch about this size. There was a furnace and everything in the corner. And the Crime Bureau man sat in the kitchen table with the nanny and the deputy went to the other door so he couldn't get out that door.

We were there forty-five minutes more and a car pulled into the driveway and Thompson got out and walked into the house. We're pretty sure he couldn't see me because the furnace and all the pipes and everything. And I ducked down when I saw him coming, and he had to walk up a couple of steps to get into the house. He got up and opened the door, and he saw this man sitting there not in uniform and he said, "What?" and I said, "Police officer!" right behind him. "You're under arrest, Thompson, for the murder of your wife." You know, kind of "What?!"

And then the other deputy came in from the other room, and Thompson said, "Do you mind if I go to the bathroom?" I said, "Be my guest, but I'm going to be holding your hand. You're not going to go out through that bathroom window and make me look foolish." He said, "Well, I really don't have to go."

So we got him in the car and took him to headquarters. And if we go in the front door, then all the reporters have contact on the radio, and they knew what 560 was homicide and they heard that go off, so they knew something was happening with Thompson, because it was imminent. So I said, "We can't go in the front door because they'll be waiting. We can't go into the garage because that's part of the front door. They see us come in. They'll all be standing there at the desk there waiting for us. I said, "Let's go in through our parking lot. We'll go through our hallway, and we'll try to sneak around and go up the steps

instead of the elevator to the Homicide Division," because we knew that McAuliffe²¹ and Randall and George Barkley would all be waiting.

So we got to the steps and came up the steps to the elevator, and the fools all came up the elevator and were standing there waiting for us anyway. [laughs] So they snapped their pictures and everything. Took him in there, into the office. Sent us home.

And then on Sunday, I went to church and the vice president of Northern Pacific Railroad, or Great Northern Railroad came up to me and he says, "Earl, you don't want to go out to North Dakota." I said, "Why not?" He said, "I stopped on the way and picked up a paper and here's your picture in the paper, only they got the caption you're Thompson and he's Earl Miels." [Kate laughs] So I said, "Can you get me a copy of that paper? I would just love to have that." But I never did get it.

KC: [laughs] You're notorious in North Dakota. The Thompson case was probably one of the most infamous cases in recent times, that investigation. Who were the heads of Homicide that you worked for?

EM: George Barkley was the head of Homicide at that time.

KC: Can you talk about Detective Barkley?

EM: Well, he was a little fellow. He wasn't very big. Smart when it comes to people. He got the couple that were setting fires to lumber yards. Had them in a couple of times and he found out they were spotted around the place but never accused of anything. They were trying to find if they saw something, you know. And finally they broke down that they were in the lumber yard and they got their jollies by watching the fire. So the fire in the lumber yard, the bigger it burned,

²¹ **Lester E. McAuliffe** was appointed patrolman March 24, 1936; promoted to sergeant December 16, 1947; detective March 16, 1948; detective lieutenant December 1, 1949; assistant chief November 15, 1955; and chief May 23, 1961; and retired March 31, 1970.

the happier they were. And they did that twice before they were caught. It was George and his persistence in knowing there was something wrong with those two. I thought, "That guy's got a lot on the ball."

A lot of guys didn't like him because he was so thorough, but I think I told you that I worked for him about six months, maybe less. He called me in the office one day when there was nobody around. He says, "Miels, if I was twenty-five years younger, I'd kick the shit out of you." I said, "George, if you were twenty-five years younger, do you think I'd stand here and let you?" He began to laugh and there was no more boss/detective then. I mean we were comrades. He sent me out on some details that were bad, but he had to. It was there, you know. Sent me out when an officer supposedly committed suicide after a Cop Hop at the old Prom.

KC: What was a Cop Hop?

EM: A dance that the police officers gave once a year. He lived out by the old workhouse.²² And went out there and his wife was all packed up and evidently they had a big argument about something. I know what it was, but I'm not going to get into that. And he shot himself.

To prove that she didn't shoot him, that he shot himself, was she was just about 5'11", worked in the Fire Department, and he was standing in the doorway in the hallway next to his bedroom and he put the gun to his head. And powder burns were there. It wasn't a shot that went up like she'd a had to do. She'd a had to be reaching like that to shoot him, and I don't think he'd a let her do that. So anyway, it went through his head and then through the wall which gave me a trajectory. Checked her hands for nitrates. The crime lab did that. And we were satisfied that this officer killed himself.

²² **Workhouse** at Como and Lexington.

A real handsome guy, real handsome fellow. He was a good friend of Ernie Williams and they worked together. I think they worked together on 308 for awhile. Not on my shift, but – Ernie and I and Don Blakely were three of the fellows that came into Homicide together. And Don and I were partners, and Ernie was the social figure. He was very good at that. He was Grand Potentate of the Shriners. He was a good investigator.

KC: What made him a good investigator?

EM: Same as anyone. He was careful. Precision. Do what you're trained to do. Don't let anybody at the crime scene. Don't let any other officer that's been there go without a report. What did he touch? What did he do? Then you take pictures and you go in there and find out what's going on. But it's a kind of a piecemeal thing. You have to do all these things. The person's dead. There's no perpetrator. So you try to get all the evidence you can so if you do find somebody suspicious, you had something to go on. Maybe hang on them.

George Barkley called me years later. He'd had a couple of heart attacks. He was in the hospital after the third one. He called up and he says, "Earl, I'm dying." I said, "George, you're too young to die. You're only fifty-seven or so. You're too young to die." "No, but I am. They tell me I haven't got long to live. Would you do me a favor?" I says, "Anything you want." He says, "Will you be a pall bearer at my funeral?" [silence]

KC: Tears.

EM: Tears. I said, "George, you're—" Even now it's hard. I said, "The answer's yes," but I said, "I don't believe this is happening or going to happen." Well, it wasn't a week he was dead. And I felt very honored that he had asked me directly.

KC: Was this from the stress of the job?

EM: I don't know what his physical condition was. I didn't know if he had a heart problem. His wife was a nurse, like my wife. They knew each other. Great gal. I'm sure if there was anything, she'd know about it.

He smoked. Not all the time, but he smoked. And he drank. I never saw him drunk. Kind of a social drinker. I think at home some. As far as I know, he never went to any of the things where the department was social except for the Christmas party or something. There again, I never saw him drunk. I'm not saying he didn't, I just don't know the man in his social life that well.

He sent me out on an afternoon 4:30 grocery store shooting. Clerk was shot and killed. And that was up on Western area, the little two-by-four pop and mom grocery. At that time of the day everybody wanted to come in and get milk and stuff for home, for supper, whatever they were short. And I was by myself trying to do an investigation, trying to keep them out of the front door of the apartment, so I called for help. I says, "Send somebody up here to keep the people out of the store while I try to make an investigation." Well, uniform officers came up and they did that. But pretty soon, here comes George Barkley and the chief. They were very happy in what I was doing and they left! Crime lab came out and that was it.

KC: [laughs] Did you know why he and the chief showed up?

EM: Because I was probably the one newest. We weren't neophytes in the homicide anymore, but we weren't going out by ourselves on these investigations. But in the afternoon, everybody's gone. They're branched out doing investigations, on assaults, even broken windows at that time.

Property damage was also ours, along with sex and robbery. Then our division was seven people and we did all these things. And our radio was in the car. We didn't have any of this other stuff. When they started breaking it up so that Robbery was taken out as a separate division and we got Sex Division, then

we got two more men and Carolen [Bailey],²³ a woman that was in there. So they pretty much took care of that. There was enough sex crimes going on. That also came into the Homicide if somebody was killed. Or if we didn't have a homicide working, we would work sex cases.

KC: It was, I want to say innovative – at that time it was unusual for a woman to be taken out of Juvenile, but Carolen Bailey was taken out of Juvenile. She had joined the department in 1961. She was taken out of Juvenile and put into Homicide. So you were one of the first departments to be working with a woman outside of Juvenile. What was that like for you, sir?

EM: Well, by that time, there was two other women down in Juvenile. Mrs. Freischel.²⁴ Why they brought Carolen up into the Homicide Division, I don't know. She was a sergeant. There weren't sergeants as detectives at that time.

KC: And when she came into Homicide she wasn't a sergeant yet.

EM: No, she wasn't.

KC: She was just a policewoman.

EM: Right.

KC: But she had unusual skills and probably more advanced skills.

EM: Well, she was able to talk to people. I think she was a social worker prior to that.

KC: Right.

EM: Or had at least that kind of training and was good in doing that.

KC: Did you have much interaction with her?

²³ **Carolyn Fay Bailey** was appointed police woman July 17, 1961; resigned December 3, 1963; returned to the department September 16, 1964; promoted to sergeant December 25, 1971; lieutenant May 25, 1985; and retired January 31, 1991. President of the International Association of Women Police 1980-1982; Minnesota Association Women Officer of the Year – 1980, Minnesota Assistant Commissioner of Public Safety 1992-1997; IAWP's Dr. Lois Higgins-Grote Heritage Award, 2003.

²⁴ **Dorothymae Freischel** was appointed police woman October 1, 1954; promoted to sergeant December 25, 1971; and retired October 19, 1979.

EM: Yeah, a couple of times we went over to Minneapolis to arrest somebody for a sex crime, and I said we should call Minneapolis Police and tell them that we're coming here in their jurisdiction. "Ah, they don't have to know about this." I said, "Well, I hate to have it bounce back on us." "No, we'll just arrest him and get out of there and that'll be it."

So we went up to the second floor of this apartment and she rapped on the door and I heard click-click. And I said, "That sounds to me like a shot gun. Get out of the way." A blast came through the door. I said, "We should have called Minneapolis." So somebody called Minneapolis Police because of the shotgun blast and they were there in no time and made the arrest. It was funny, but it wasn't funny, you know. Carolen says, "I got to listen to you more often." I said, "Well, maybe if we listen to each other, we might get along a lot better, might live longer."

KC: This was unusual. What was it like for you working with a woman?

EM: I didn't work with her very often. And that kind of really cut me – I really didn't want to work with a woman very often because we got the right – we didn't have the right really, going into another jurisdiction, and I just kind of hoped that I didn't get put with her too often. I guess the boss must have known that, because I never – well, not never, but it wasn't too often that we went out on something together.

Jerry Bodin²⁵ at the time was the senior investigator in the office. He knew a lot about everything and he and one of the fellows that was in the Crime Lab would change barbs every day about something in police work. "Did you know this?" "Of course I do," and he'd do a description and the next day the other one

²⁵ **Gerald L. Bodin** (12/25/1915) was appointed reserve patrolman March 10, 1941; patrolman full-time August 3, 1941; military leave February 16, 1943 to December 8, 1945; promoted to detective September 20, 1948; and retired March 11, 1977.

would come in with something. And so listening to those two guys, you learned a lot of words that may come up once in ten years, you know. But Jerry quit and I was surprised when he quit, because he was lie detector test man. And he hated it. He just hated it. He says, "What I decide could send a guy to jail forever or maybe even get him killed.

KC: He was a lie detector expert?

EM: Yeah, and testified a lot of times. He just was a nervous wreck with that. So I think it was one of the reasons he probably quit, and he went to Paradise, California. I remember one time he wrote a letter to me and he said, "Today thou shalt be with me in Paradise," which I always thought was kind of clever. So I went out to see him once, and he lived in Paradise, California, up on a mountain hilltop. A little house. Very nice house, but it was all wild around there. Even getting in there with a car, you almost had to have a Jeep or something. The corners were so sharp, you were scraping your fenders or something on the trees.

We had a good time and about a year later, Harriet called me up, his wife, and said that – I'd sent him a Christmas card – and then she called and said that Jerry isn't feeling too well and it turned out he had Alzheimer's and he died within a couple of years. Nice fellow. A real nice fellow. Him and the fellow I always thought just like him worked in Juvenile and he had Lou Gehrig's Disease, Larry Swanson.²⁶ And he died.

KC: What made Bodine a good detective, a good investigator?

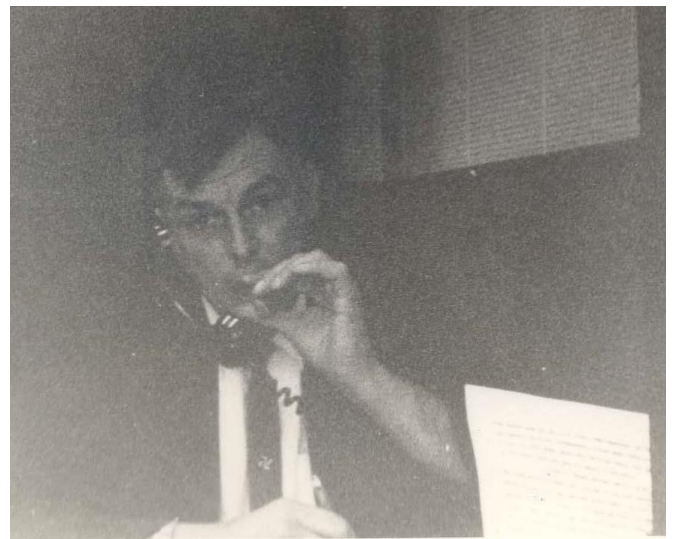
EM: Experience. That's all I can set it to. And he was willing to give that information to the guys in the division that wanted to listen to him. If you wrote a report –

²⁶ **Lawrence F. Swanson** (November 18, 1925) was appointed patrolman July 25, 1949; promoted detective February 5, 1959; deceased July 22, 1986.

you know, I said, "Jerry, will you look at this? Is it complete or do I have to have something else? Is there County Attorney going to make me go out and do it anyway?" and he'd tell you if that was all. Once in a while, he'd say, "I think it's good enough," but he might ask you to do this. Well, you'd go over there, and sure enough, the county attorney would say, "I need this, too." You'd have to go back before you got your warrant.

KC: How did you work together as a team in Homicide?

EM: We really didn't work together as a team. We got cases. We got blues, they called them. That was your copy of the crime. And the captain would say, "You take this one. You take this one. You take this one." And if you were working on something heavy, they got the other stuff and you got something light, so you could just kind of piddle with it.

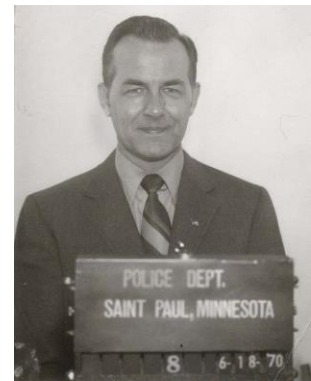


Detective Miels
1964

If it came to that where we all went out, it worked fine. Nobody was against each other or anything, but we tried to say, "I'll take this part of it. You take that." In other words, "I'll look for physical evidence out here, you look for it there" and "If there's somebody to talk to here, I'll talk to them and you talk to them there," or whatever it was. But, it wasn't that we all ganged up on somebody.

In fact, sometimes you didn't know what they did. The only one I ever know that went out on a case that did anything was my friend and cohort Bob Dunning, the chief's secretary, who was made detective and came into the Homicide Division. He was a pleasure to work with, because I'd go out and talk to somebody and never have to worry about a report. Him and his shorthand, he'd get it all down. We'd get in and he'd type it all up and I'd read it and sign it and he'd sign it. That was the best kind of work of anybody I liked to work with who could take down all those notes without me having to write something down to remember it. That was it. That was great.

Then I worked with Don Blakely a lot. We were partners when we could be. He could remember anything written, but he wasn't all that great on conversation because he was thinking about writing, and so we'd get back to headquarters and I'd say what he said and he'd say, "I got that, but I missed a little bit more." Together we'd have a complete report. And we worked great together, but then he studied more for the captain's exam and he eventually made chief, deputy chief.



Don Blakely
1970

So I rubbed elbows with all of them, I guess. [Chief] Rowan²⁷ and [Deputy Chief] Bob LaBathe²⁸ and everybody but [Chief] McAuliffe, because he was chief when I made detective.

KC: Any memories you have about McAuliffe as chief?

EM: Well, he was considered a policeman's policeman. As far as I know, I never heard anybody talk bad about him. He was big, maybe that's why. They figured they might say the wrong thing and he'd come after them. I know he was kind of rough with some of the guys that he was patrolman with that came in to work



Lester McAuliffe
1963

with the department. They'd knock each other around once in a while. Playful stuff, but he never did it to me.

We went to a convention one time and went to the Policeman's Dance. That was Saturday night. Him and his wife were sitting there, and I knew he didn't drink because he had problems with it. I asked him if I could dance with his wife. "If she wants to." So I got to dance with her, and I come back and he says, "You're a pretty good dancer. I better not let you dance with my wife anymore." [laughs] That kind of broke the ice between him and me, too. It's just those little offhand things that make you kind of brothers. Otherwise, you're just another policeman.

Guys on other shifts probably didn't know him very well. They knew of him and he knew what they did if they were involved in something that he read about. He got their reports. Patrolmen, we get their reports because everything

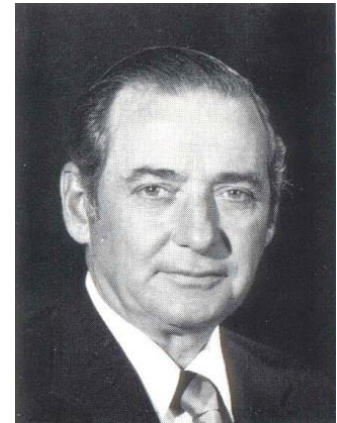
²⁷ **Richard H. Rowan** (1922-2005) was appointed patrolman October 13, 1947; promoted detective June 20, 1955; deputy chief April 17, 1964; chief June 30, 1970; and retired December 31, 1979.

²⁸ **Robert F. LaBathe** was appointed patrolman July 6, 1948; promoted to detective September 16, 1955; deputy chief April 17, 1964; acting chief April 1, 1970; returned to deputy chief June 30, 1970; emergency chief January 1, 1980; deputy chief April 2, 1980; retired July 18, 1986.

that started had to start from there and came in to us. So you knew men by their name and by the way they worked, but you didn't probably know them more than the face.

KC: What was Rowan like as a chief?

EM: Rowan was fine as far as I was concerned. This is where we got sold down the drain as detectives. When they had this new exam for sergeants and had this big list of men eligible for sergeant. The detective division was down to not very many. And so McAuliffe says, "Don't worry about the reorganization of the department. The detectives will not be hurt. You will still be lieutenants." Lieutenant rank in the Uniform Division.



Richard Rowan
1980

As it went on, they were made sergeants. The sergeants were the same pay as the detectives, and we said, "Hey, what's going on? We were supposed to be lieutenants as compared to sergeants, and now we're detectives compared to sergeants instead of lieutenants."

Well, the detectives decided they're going to fight this, so we got an attorney, took it to District Court. District Court found in favor of us that we should not have lost our title, but the city, feeling hurt, took it to the Supreme Court of the state and our attorney said, "I have to have more money to go to the Supreme Court." But it happened at the District Court that he says, "Earl, you were the one that gave me all this information. You testify in district court and I'll—." So we got the ruling for us, but then we went to Supreme Court and he wouldn't come and the guys wouldn't pony up any more money, because for seven years we were lieutenants and all of a sudden we're going to lose it. Half

of them were going to retire in a couple of years, and they weren't going to put out a lot of money. They wouldn't get anything back, you know.

So he wouldn't come, and I went to the Supreme Court hearing with a couple of the other detectives. Because the City Attorney gave the same argument he did in District Court and I shot it full of holes. He didn't have anything. It didn't have anybody to it. And they asked the bailiff, "I know it's probably impossible, but can anybody but an attorney that's got the right to come before the Supreme Court ever get up and talk before them?" He says, "I'm afraid not." Well, there was nobody to talk for us. We lost. So we were detectives and they were sergeants, but we never lost our titles. We just lost the money.

KC: So when the two leg system, when the patrol system and the detective system were combined, you lost money?

EM: We didn't lose money. They just came up to it.

KC: The sergeants?

EM: Yeah.

KC: And there were a group of sergeants too that went to court and became starred sergeants to bring their money up to the detective level.

EM: That was automatic. If they had time and grade as a sergeant, they had time and grade as a detective. Same as with a detective. You got three raises as a detective and they got three raises as a sergeant. If they had that, you were equal.

KC: And a detective lieutenant?

EM: They changed the captain of the detectives to a lieutenant detective after Jerry Kissling.²⁹ They changed it because – maybe he was a captain before. I’m not sure. He may have been captain of some other division and got transferred up there. But after that they were all lieutenant detectives.

KC: A detective became a lieutenant detective, which was just a name change.

EM: Oh, no. They got raises like a captain. Only they lost the captain title, because uniform has sergeant and captain so they had to have detective, lieutenant, and captain. And the captains were probably one of several divisions. I don’t remember how that worked, because I never got there.

KC: Were you in Homicide until you retired in 1982, sir?

EM: Entire time as a detective. Loved every minute of it. It was considered the pinnacle of police work. Nobody told you what to do. The pinnacle was you did the work and if you didn’t do it all and somebody would suggest that this is missing, then you went out and found it. But nobody was there on your back, and as long as I worked there, nobody was on your back to “Do this.” or “Do that.”

They gave you their reports and you went out and did it. The pinnacle of my career, we had the Rasmussen hearing³⁰ and trials. You recall the Rasmussen hearing?

KC: Yes.

²⁹ **Gerald C. Kissling** (July 17, 1925) was appointed patrolman July 25, 1949; promoted to detective October 1, 1954; lieutenant December 7, 1968; captain December 9, 1972; and retired August 7, 1981.

³⁰ **Rasmussen Hearing** in Minnesota is a pre-trial evidentiary hearing on defense motion(s) to suppress evidence that is the fruit of illegal conduct by police and other government agents. If evidence against the accused is suppressed, it cannot be used at trial. If all evidence against the accused is suppressed, the charge(s) may be dismissed for lack of evidence.

EM: You went in and you built a court – the evidence that you had. We'd have the other investigators and patrolmen and was it enough for a trial. So I was called three times in all my murders, "Did we have enough for a trial?" Only three out of twenty-two years of homicide. They'd say "Who was on the case?" And the county attorney told me this. He said they want to know who went on the case and if your reports were on it. Or if they read your reports, and that was it.

KC: Were there ever some cases you didn't turn over to the county attorney saying, "I can't get enough for a trial"?

EM: I never took that on myself. I took them over there and he would say that I didn't have enough, but there was enough because someone else had made an investigation and came in with their report from another case that overlapped into this particular one. So, no, I never had anybody turn down a case. I'm not saying they didn't screw up on some of it, left something out.

I know that the girls in the Records Division hated me because I wrote everything out in longhand. I couldn't type. Wrote everything out in longhand and then they had to type it. They said, "Can't you cut some of those reports shorter?" I said, "Not if I'm going to get the information." I says, "I got to remember it." I never thought thirty years would go by, but I got to remember this stuff two years from now. But every once in a while, "Oh, Miels got another murder going. We're going have reams of paper."

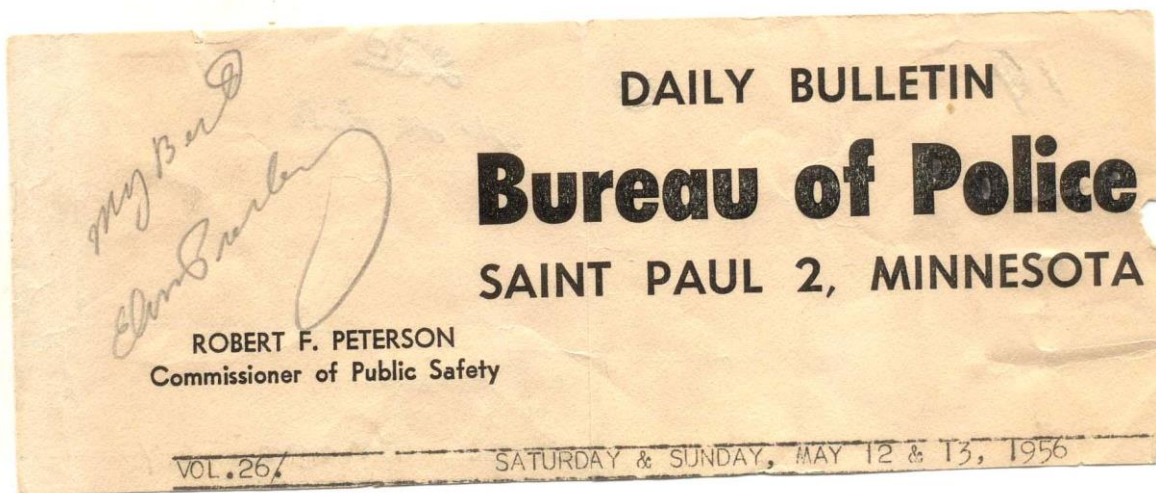
KC: In 1956 – let's talk about the adventure that you had with the famous star.

EM: I was hired off duty with six other policemen to take care of the crowd around Elvis Presley.³¹ I was stationed at one end of the stage with another officer. The

³¹ **Elvis Aaron Presley** (January 8, 1935 – August 16, 1977) was an American singer, musician, and actor. Regarded as one of the most significant cultural icons of the 20th century, he is often referred to as "the King of Rock and Roll", or simply, "the King".

rest of them were by the ticket group and in the crowd, which was mostly young teenage girls from ten to sixteen years old as I could tell.

As Elvis had a part to go back into his dressing room for a rest, why I was in the dressing room with him. I asked him why he had all these gyrations and everything, because it was pretty new in music at that time. In fact, it was brand new. He said he was doing it because it was making him popular and he was getting money and he wanted to build a home for his mother and father, who were living in poverty up until this time, which I thought was a commendable thing. And I asked him for his autograph at that time, and I put it on the top of a police bulletin that we had.



He went back and had another part to play. Then when it was all over, he came back to his dressing room and they had a plywood wall set up from the stage to his dressing room that he could go back and forth and couldn't be seen by the public. But they knew where he went, and they knew that this wall was very temporary, so the wall started to get smashed down.

And as all these girls come running through screaming and screeching and wanting his autograph, and we were standing on the top step of the entrance to the auditorium, which is about twenty feet from the street. A lot of steps, metal and cement. And they came running, and he was going to stand there and sign autographs, and he signed one or two, but the crowd was pushing so much that I said, "Elvis, we're going to get knocked down these steps, and I'm not going to get killed because of you."

So I put my hand around his neck. Not the hand, but the forearm. Turned him around, grabbed him by the belt, and lifted him off the ground. Like a ramrod I took him down the steps and the other officer was there. He saw what was happening and he said, "Good for you," and he opened the door. I ran out the door with him. The limousine driver opened the door for the limousine. I put him in, and at about that time, a little thirteen-year-old girl ran around the other side of the limousine and got in. I was going to go back and pull her out and the driver said, "No, leave her. With the crowd coming, I'm going to get out of here. I'll drop her off a

The King and the cop

Earl Miels of Rush Lake called to say the photo of Elvis Presley published Monday in the Star Tribune was taken backstage in 1956 at the old St. Paul Auditorium, not at the Minneapolis Auditorium as the caption reported. Miels said he ought to know: He was the police officer in the photo.

A St. Paul cop, he was one of seven off-duty officers assigned to cover Presley that day. "I didn't know Elvis Presley from the man in the moon," said Miels, who was 31 when he did the bodyguard duty. The cop and the man who would be King chatted in the dressing room between the latter's two performances. Miels asked the singer why he was doing what he was doing. He recalled Elvis saying, "I want to do something for my mother. I want to get her something nice before she dies."

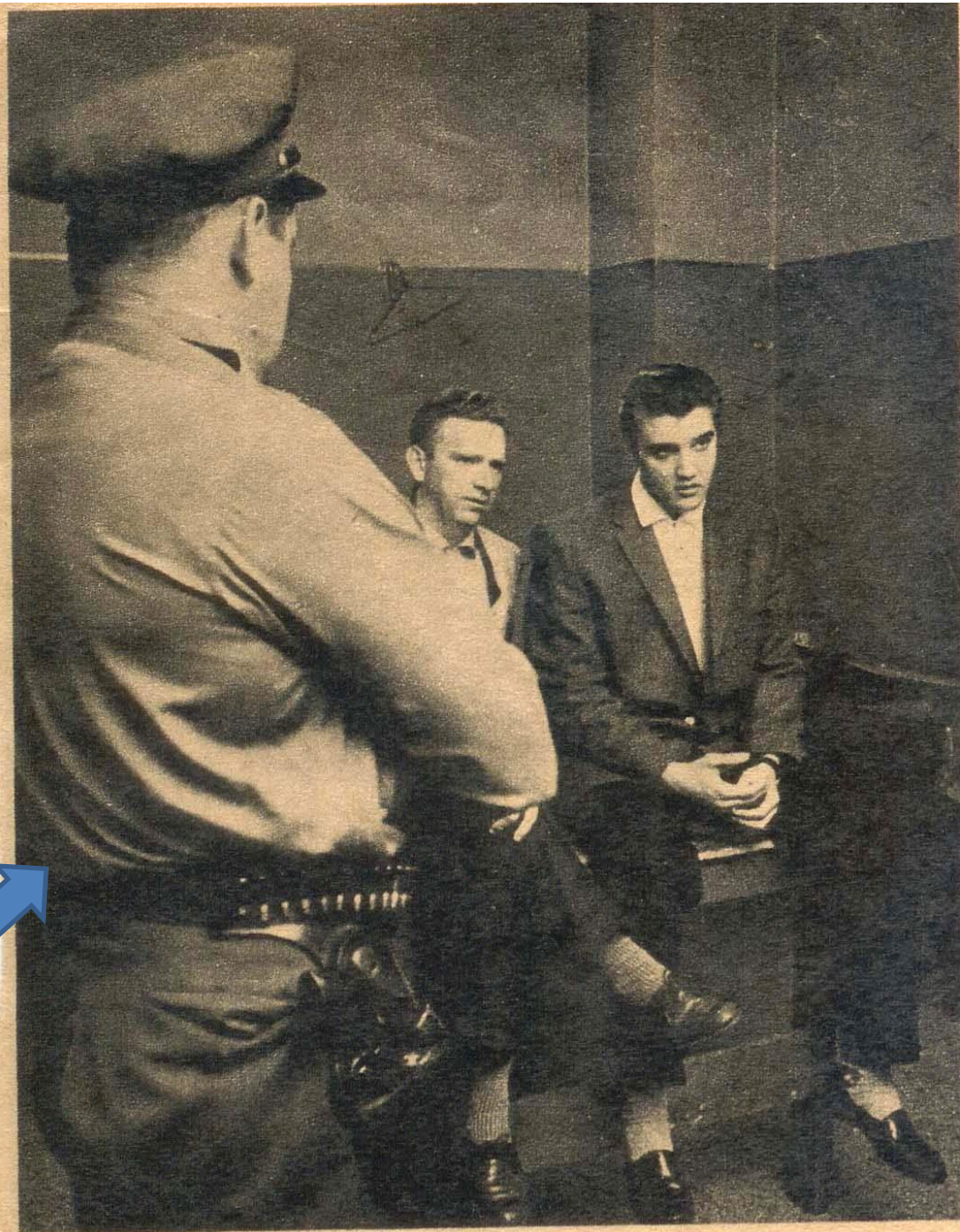
Protecting Presley was not all chit-chat, Miels said. At one point, as the star was walking from the stage to the dressing room, he was besieged by teenage girls pulling at his clothes and begging for autographs. "I grabbed him by the belt and collar and put him in the Cadillac," Miels said. "The mob was going crazy."

Miels, 69, never met another big star in his 30 years on the police force. He never saw Elvis again, either, except in the movies.

For the record, Presley also performed at the Minneapolis Auditorium in 1956.

couple blocks from here." So that was my big thing with Elvis Presley.

Officer
Miels



Not under arrest in spite of appearances, Elvis Presley had police protection even in his dressing room off the Minneapolis auditorium stage. His contract called for 10 police to be on hand—and \$15,000 in advance.

I never saw him again except in pictures like everybody else. I often thought of that as he was growing up and stuff.

I guess I was tapping my toes like everybody else. I didn't appreciate all the gyrations, but I did like his music. A lot better than The Beatles. [chuckles]

KC: Any other cases, sir, that stand out in your memory in Homicide?

EM: Well, I had one I think I told you about before that I was called in the afternoon. There was a shooting. A woman got shot or a man got shot. I can't remember who it was. But I called her and four patrolmen, two lieutenants in the Uniform Division there and told them, "Don't touch anything," but they were going to do the investigation, but they finally called Homicide. They said they couldn't find any information. That the guy must have been shot with a revolver, shot three, six times. But there weren't any casings, so it indicated there was a revolver.

This was in the front room of the house, and they showed me where the body had been and where the perpetrator evidently was standing. There was a big plant like a hosta plant in the house. Big leaves, and the plant was right next to where they said they figured he was standing, or the witnesses said he was standing. So I looked around the pot and there wasn't anything. And I moved a couple of leaves in the pot and there was six casings. Bang, bang, bang. All within an area of that big in the plant. And that's where I got one of the titles to Eagle Eye Miels. [Kate chuckles]

But there are a lot of them that weren't that pronounced in my brain or anything. They did it and they went to trial. One got overturned. He had killed somebody. I went out to arrest him and he was a big man. He was some kind of a laborer. He had arms on him like my wall up here. Cuffs wouldn't fit around

him. My partner that I went out there with wasn't as big I was, so I said, "You drive and I'll sit in the backseat with him." So he just gave us grief going down to the car and his girlfriend who was up in there hollering and swearing at us that he didn't do it and all that stuff. Got him in the car and went down to headquarters.

Then he went to trial and he was found guilty, but they appealed it and something in the trial got him off, this thing the attorney did or something. And he had served three or four years and the county attorney didn't want to go back and so he was out. What he did after that, I don't know.

KC: What does that feel like for you? You've done all the work. You know someone committed a crime.

EM: Well, it used to bother me, when I first started. Even as a patrolman, you'd get somebody for drunk driving, and for some reason or other, they might be found guilty or no punishment or they were not found guilty. It'd bother you. What's the sense of doing this stuff if the courts aren't going to back you? And we had one judge that if he did find him guilty, the punishment was very small. And he was related to one of the mayors at the time. And they didn't like him. The policemen didn't like to go in front of him at all. But I think he even got to the Supreme Court.

KC: Hmmm.

EM: In fact, much later on, after I retired, he came down with some rulings and I says, "You know, this still sounds like him." His ruling was the same as he'd come down with in Municipal Court or District Court. He just was an ultra-liberal, I think. Nobody did anything wrong, or they didn't mean to do it or something, you know. That was my feeling that he got that kind of – because how could anybody have all that evidence and still say that he didn't deserve to be

punished more than they gave him. [Judging,] it was not my job. All I had to do was go out and start over with somebody else.



Detective Miels
1972

KC: What other investigations did you do as a detective that are memorable to you?

EM: Well, the Sackett case.³² I was the original detective there.

³² Police officer **James Sackett, Sr.** was shot by a sniper at 12:30 a.m. on the night of May 22, 1970, while responding to a fake police call to a home in the 800 block of Hague Avenue, near Selby Avenue and Victoria Street. An 18-year-old woman, Connie Trimble, was charged with making a fake call for help, telling authorities that her pregnant sister was ready to give birth. Trimble refused to reveal the names of others involved and served time in jail for contempt of court. In the spring of 2006, Ronald Reed and Larry Clark were convicted of first degree murder when Trimble testified that Ronald Reed persuaded her to make the fake phone call that brought Officer Sackett to the ambush. Both Clark and Reed received life sentences.

KC: Tell me about that case.

EM: Well, the body – Sackett was gone by the time I got there. They rushed him right off to the hospital.



Glen Kothe
1972

KC: Did you get a call at home that night, sir?

EM: Yeah. And when I got there, the Crime Lab was there trying to figure out where he got shot. His partner, [Glen Kothe³³] who was really all shook up and had shot into the porch because he saw somebody in the porch and he thought maybe that's where the shot came from that got Sackett. Thank God that he didn't hit anybody. Then they said he was standing at the steps rapping at the door, so we looked and saw a hole in the framing of the door. The Crime Lab

dug that out and Sergeant Dexter³⁴ said they gave it to him and he gave it to me, but I remember them giving it directly to me, because I said, "Chain of evidence. I don't want this going to – if you're not going to take it directly, give it to me." And then I put it in an envelope, gave it back to Alfultis,³⁵



Carolen Bailey & Mike Alfultis
In crime lab 1967

³³ **Glen David Kothe** was appointed patrolman November 13, 1967; promoted to sergeant November 14, 1982; and retired June 30, 1997.

³⁴ **Gerald E. Dexter** was appointed clerk typist November 12, 1957; appointed to police steno June 26, 1958; appointed policeman to the Bureau of Police April 24, 1961; military leave October 25, 1961 to September 1, 1962; promoted to sergeant September 30, 1967; and retired October 16, 1987. He was chief in St. Croix Falls, Wisconsin 1987-1990.

³⁵ **Harold Michael "Mike" Alfultis** was appointed criminalist I May 16, 1963—title changed to criminalist II January 13, 1964; provisional criminalist III June 10, 1967; criminalist III December 27, 1967; resigned March 23, 1973.

who was the Crime Lab head, and they took pictures around of everything. When I got there, I guess Sackett had died. My wife was there working that night at the receiving room. She was in the emergency room.

KC: At Ramsey Hospital?

EM: And that was all right. I did an investigation there. I had the uniform men go around to different homes to see if they could get anybody up to answer the door or anything. They were kind of leery to go around, because they figured if there's somebody with a rifle, they might get it. I said, "Well, the way that bullet hole came in, it looks like it was maybe the third house down on the left there. Several of you go down there and see if you can find the evidence, somebody kneeling in the dirt or a spent cartridge or something, you know." But it was dark and they had flashlights and I supposed they missed it, but they figured it came somewhere in that area, and it turned out that the guy that did the shooting just went around to the next house and went in the back door. That's where they lived.

It took a long time to get that, as you know. It took from 1970 to –

KC: 2005, when they were arrested.

EM: 2005, yeah.

KC: 2006, I believe, when they were finally prosecuted.

SATURDAY, MAY 23, 1970

St. Paul Officer Is Ambush Victim

Patrolman, 27, Answered False Emergency Call

By SHARON BLINCO
Minneapolis Tribune Staff Writer

A St. Paul patrolman who was shot to death early Friday when he answered an emergency call was the victim of an ambush.

Patrolman James T. Sackett was the target of someone who wanted to kill "any policeman in an identifiable uniform," observed James Mann, one of two police-community relations officers working in the Summit-University

area, where the shooting occurred.

Sackett, 27, 1633 Atlantic St., died at St. Paul-Ramsey Hospital shortly after being shot in the chest by an unknown assailant at about 12:15 a.m. yesterday.

Sackett and patrolman Glen Kothe answered a call for a squad car at 859 Hague Av., where a pregnant woman reportedly



SACKETT



Minneapolis Tribune Photo by Pete Hohn

Ernest Lopez, right, pointed to the spot where the bullet that killed Patrolman James Sackett lodged in a window frame at 859 Hague Av. Roger Egge, left, was answering Sackett's knock on the door when the shots were fired.

Paul Officer Is Ambush Victim

Chief Calls Shooting 'Cold-Blooded Execution'

However, "an immense amount of manpower and hours is being expended" on the investigation, he said. Following the shooting, a rig from the St. Paul Fire Department was deployed in a search for a rooftop sniper.

Mrs. Mary Lopez, a son and two married daughters and their husbands reside at 859 Hague Av. Ernest Lopez, 14, and his brother-in-law Roger Egge, 19, said they were watching television when they heard knocking at the door, but were unaware that it came from two policemen.

By the time they went to the door, said Ernest, they heard shots and dropped to the floor.

"I don't know why they shot the man," he said.

Occupants in the Lopez household denied calling for the squad car. Egge's wife is pregnant, but is not expected to deliver for a few months.

Mann described Hague Av. as a racially mixed street with many whites, blacks and Indians.

Williams said: "It does not matter where it happened, it's the fact that it did happen."

Mann said the St. Paul community should ask itself: "What is this a symptom of? How do we deal with it?"

"If we get emotional and sympathetic when an officer gets hurt, we must also get emotional and sympathetic when anyone gets hurt."

La Bathe said that the more-than-400-member police force was "shocked by the incident."

Sackett, who joined the force in September 1968, is survived by his widow, Jeanette, and four children, ranging in age from three weeks to six years old.

He was the son of Mr. and Mrs. Melvin W. Sackett, 1582 Montana Av. E., St. Paul.

The St. Paul City Council ordered all flags flown at half mast yesterday in Sackett's memory.

needed assistance in getting to a hospital.

According to police, the call came at 12:04 a.m. from a young woman who said:

"My sister is having a baby. She's in labor right now and the pains are two minutes apart. Get a squad here right away."

Kothe said that when they arrived at the address and knocked at the front door there was no response, so Kothe went to the back door.

He then heard a shot and dashed to the front where he saw Sackett lying on the sidewalk. Kothe ran to the squad car, and fired two shots at what he thought was a moving body near the scene.

Police investigators yesterday had not determined where the fatal shot came from or what kind of weapon was used. They

Shooting
Continued on Page SE

did indicate that it may have been fired from a rifle held by a sniper across the street, to one side of the house.

Because of the likelihood of a sniper, police chief Robert La Bathe called the shooting the "cold blooded execution of an officer."

"No one could have known who was going there."

Sackett and Kothe were working on a traffic detail in an unmarked car, but answered the call because other squad cars in the area were tied up.

Capt. James Griffin said Sackett's death is the first in 21 years for a St. Paul policeman on duty.

Capt. Ernest Williams of the Homicide Division said that intensive investigation had uncovered no concrete evidence on the identity of the assailant or the weapon.

for his widow and children has been established



Kothe

by the American National Bank of St. Paul.

The funeral will be held at 1:30 Monday at the Wulff Mortuaries Crestwood Park Chapel in St. Paul.



Lopez

EM: We were called by the FBI [Task Force] to come down there, because the FBI got in it, because they were in other states. They talked to us for a couple of hours. They had Cecil Westphall³⁶ and Carolen Bailey there, and we weren't able to answer a question because it was answered by Carolen before we even opened our mouths.

KC: Well, Carolen Bailey was in Hom –

EM: She was not there, but she talked to the girl [Connie Trimble] involved.

KC: She was in Homicide

EM: Yeah, she was Homicide.

KC: And she did the voice prints, collected the voice prints.

EM: No, she didn't do the voice prints. A police officer from Lansing, Michigan, [Ernie Nash from the University of Michigan] who invented this thing was there to do that, and he was the one that did the comparison on the voice print.

KC: Yes, I meant that she had collected them. She had collected the voice prints [from Connie Trimble.]

EM: Oh. Yeah, she did that sort of thing.

KC: At what point did you – how did you define that it was Reed and Clark?

EM: I didn't.

KC: Who did? Who figured that murder out?

EM: That was Tom Olpeim and Cecil [Westphall] and John – his last name escapes me, but they are the ones that did a lot of work on that and came up with them through their connections. They worked up in that area where they were. I was

³⁶ **Cecil Claude Westphall** (January 13, 1928) was appointed patrolman January 21, 1963; promoted to sergeant January 16, 1966; and retired April 1, 1988.

all over the same as they were, but they seemed to get more cases that were up in that area than I did.

KC: Were you asked to testify in the Sackett case?

EM: Yes. Yeah, I was up there. I got a file about that deep. I went all through my reports and I thought I had them all. I said, "Do you have any reports that I don't have?" And they said, "No, no." We went to court and they asked me a bunch of questions, and then they got into some particular things at the scene that I says, "I know I wrote a report on it, but I can't remember what I wrote. It just leaves me." And she says, "Well, I have a report here. Do you think you could refresh your memory?" So she gave me the report, and I says, "Yeah, okay, now I know." And she asked me some more questions and she had to show me the report again. And she said, "Didn't I send you all the reports that you had?" I said, "You sent me all the reports, but I never saw this one. I haven't seen this one since they wrote it."

The defense attorney got up and said, "Isn't the protocol that the prosecuting attorney would send you everything that you're supposed to know about the case?" And I said, "Yes, and I thought they had. This particular report must have slipped through the time somewhere, because I didn't see it again until she showed it to me in court." She said, "Well, that's understandable."

KC: What was it like testifying –

EM: Thirty years later? [laughs]

KC: Thirty-five years later?

EM: I tell you, I did a lot of reading of my reports here to make sure that I knew what I was talking about. Even there when you got in court and they asked a question just a little bit different, you'd have to sit and think a minute. You don't want to say the wrong thing. You don't want to make yourself out dumb. And you don't want to make anybody guilty that isn't. Like I say, I didn't know Reed. I never

had met him. And they asked me in court, “Did you know these fellows?” I said, “No, I don’t. I know of them, but I don’t know them. I’d seen their pictures, but I never met them.”

KC: What was it like when you heard on the news that they’d been arrested for this case?

EM: Well, I was pretty sure they had, because the FBI had called us in and they were about to do the arrest and they wanted the girl to testify and she didn’t want to, but she did. And that gave them the warrant and they arrested them.

KC: And you would be referring to Connie Trimble?

EM: Tom Dunaski³⁷ was the one open case that put this all together, as I remember. And Tom gave me a bragging right. He says to all the officers down there, “You know, Miels is a legend in the Homicide Division.”

KC: He is! I’ve heard that, too.

EM: [chuckles] That’s the last thing I hadn’t heard. Not the last thing. After this was all over, Dunaski and this policewoman, [Jane Mead], – I don’t know her name –

KC: Jane Mead.

EM: – had a meeting of everybody that had been involved in the case, patrolmen and everybody else at the new station. This was the only time I was ever over there. And I had my cane, my stick that I use all the time. I was walking there and they said, “He used to be a pretty good guy, but he’s Moses now walking around with that big stick. The grey hair and the big stick.” [Kate laughs] Thanks, fellows, you know. [laughs]

³⁷ **Thomas Francis Dunaski** was appointed patrolman October 26, 1971; promoted to sergeant October 10, 1979; retired September 30, 2008. Named officer of the year 1977; received the Chief Richard Rowan Award in 2006.

Reed gets life for killing Sackett

Ronald Reed will have to serve at least 17½ years in the St. Paul officer's murder. "Today I feel comfort," said Jeanette Sackett-Monteon, the slain officer's widow.

By Paul Gustafson, Star Tribune

Last update: March 1, 2006 - 10:56 PM

Ronald Reed received a life sentence Wednesday for the murder of St. Paul police officer James Sackett. But Jeanette Sackett-Monteon told Reed in court that she had received her own life sentence long ago. The fatal ambush that killed Sackett, she said, "took away my husband, my lover, my best friend. But most of all it took away my children's father. ..." "I had to live with 36 years of crying, of pain, of missing Jim. Today, I feel comfort."

The unsolved case of who killed James Sackett ended Wednesday when a Ramsey County jury convicted Reed, 55, of first-degree murder and conspiracy to commit murder in the killing of the St. Paul police officer. It was a day of reckoning for Reed, a Chicago pipefitter who prosecutors said advocated killing a police officer to get national attention for his group of young St. Paul black radicals. For Sackett-Monteon and her four fatherless children, however, it was perhaps the first day of consolation since the officer was cut down by a sniper's bullet shortly after midnight on May 22, 1970.

Reed sat quietly with hands folded and showed no emotion as Ramsey County Chief District Judge Gregg Johnson read the jury's guilty verdicts. An hour later, Johnson sentenced Reed to life in prison. Under 1970 sentencing standards, Reed must serve at least 17½ years before he can ask for parole. Before he was sentenced, Reed called the convictions "unjust." But he added: "If my unjust conviction brings consolation and closure to officer Sackett's legacy and beloved family, then I accept the consequences gladly and without malice toward anyone."

Jurors announced at 3 p.m. that they had arrived at a verdict, after perhaps a dozen hours of deliberation on Tuesday and Wednesday. Juror Raymond Cleveland, 45, of St. Paul, compared the prosecution's case to "a pile that was building and just got bigger." According to Cleveland, the first vote taken when deliberations began found seven jurors voting to convict and five undecided. By Wednesday morning, 10 jurors favored conviction. The final two holdouts moved to convict after the jury listened again to a tape of Reed's then-girlfriend, Connie Trimble, placing the fake emergency call that lured Sackett to his death.

Defense attorneys John Pecchia and Marcus Almon said Reed's convictions will be appealed. "It was a difficult case," Pecchia said. Reed's family members said they had no comment to make as they left the courtroom.

Prosecutors Susan Hudson and Jeffrey Paulsen said they could not comment about the verdicts because of the scheduled April 10 trial of Larry L. Clark, who is accused of participating in Sackett's murder along with Reed. Clark, 55, who lives in the Twin Cities, faces the same charges as Reed.

Controversial testimony

Sackett was 27 and working his first shift after a leave for the birth of his fourth child when he was fatally shot in front of 859 Hague Av. on May 22, 1970, while responding to the call placed by Trimble. At her own trial for Sackett's murder in 1972, Trimble admitted that she made the bogus call from a nearby telephone booth. She was acquitted, despite her refusal to say who had her place the call.

In 2004, however, she told a Ramsey County grand jury that Reed had her make the call and then drove her to Clark's home at 882 Hague Av., only minutes before Sackett was killed about 100 yards away. She repeated that statement in court last week, but added that she believed that Reed also had been tricked into making the call and that he wasn't involved with Sackett's death. Prosecutors said that Reed told her that story and that she didn't want to believe that Reed used her to kill Sackett.

Jurors heard from a series of middle-aged men who said they were in meetings in the late 1960s where Reed advocated killing police in hopes of getting a Black Panther Party chapter in St. Paul. One man, Joseph Garrett, said Reed tried to recruit him to kill an officer only a week before Sackett was ambushed. And prosecution witness John Griffin said Reed confessed to him several years later that he had shot Sackett. Pecchia called those witnesses unreliable and said prosecutors had to use them because they had no murder weapon or eyewitness to the shooting. But the defense rested Monday without calling a witness of their own -- including Reed.

A long time coming

Tyrone Terrill, St. Paul's human rights director, predicted that Reed's conviction could heighten racial tensions in the city. He said it was hard to believe Reed could be convicted despite the lack of evidence. And he wondered if jurors would have reached the same conclusion had Sackett been a civilian and not a police officer. "Somebody did it, but the question is: Are you sure you've got the right person?" Terrill said. St. Paul Police Chief John Harrington, who was in the courtroom as the verdict was read, said Reed's conviction brings some consolation to Sackett's family and to police officers who had worked with Sackett. But he added: "It certainly doesn't heal the wounds that his death brought to the police department ... [and] it doesn't bring Jim Sackett back."

Ron Ryan, a longtime St. Paul police officer and head of the Minnesota Gang Strike Force, went to the courtroom even though he admitted he was a bit afraid to go. "That night is burned in my mind. It's a long time coming," he said. For City Council Member Dan Bostrom, who was the supervising sergeant the night Sackett was shot, the verdicts brought relief. "This is something I've lived for nearly 36 years," Bostrom said. "It's not as if it's something that you dwell on every day. But it's something nagging that never goes away."

Staff writers Curt Brown, Herón Márquez Estrada and Jackie Crosby contributed to this report.

KC: You were on the department from 1949 to 1982. So that would be about thirty-three years?

EM: Well, it was the end of '49, so it was thirty-two years.

KC: So you were on the department thirty-two years, sir. What did that mean to you to have served?

EM: Well, it meant a lot. Because of my position there in the Homicide Division, it meant a lot. The first twelve years were do somebody else's bidding all the time and there was always somebody looking over your shoulder to do it grudgingly. That wasn't very pleasant and a lot of patrolmen felt the same way. They wanted to get out from under -- even those that made sergeant said there was it was altogether different in the world to be a sergeant. You were more friendly with the lieutenant and you talked to him.

Detective work, you didn't deal directly with ordering patrolmen to do something. If you had a crime scene and always a sergeant came around and you'd tell him, "This is what I want your men to do," and they did it. And you got their reports and you had nothing further to do with telling them what to do. The sergeant was supposed to know and they didn't, but they were supposed to.

KC: What prompted you to retire?

EM: Well, I had that time in and I was fifty-seven years old and they gave us an offer for \$5000 if we'd quit and it was going for eighteen months or something like that. There was twenty offers, I think, or twenty-two offers. And the last day, I says, "What am I hanging around here for? I got a place at the lake. I got only one kid still in high school." I came home and I told the wife, "What do you think? I think I'll retire." "What about the kids?" I said, "Well, you're working and I get a pension. We should be able to make it all right." Well, together with her working and my working, we were only making \$30,000 a year, and we had five kids and some of them were in or getting out of college, and this one was still in high school. "We'll make it," I said, "The good Lord's with us. We haven't got any problem with that." So she said, "Okay." So I retired.

KC: What thoughts do you have about being a Saint Paul police officer in the 1950s?

EM: We were in the dark ages. We didn't have radios – we had radios that we could carry around at the last. When I saw one with a microphone on a shirt, I said, "What's that thing?" A microphone. I was bewildered. Then I looked in a squad car and they had all these different things in the squad. They had computers and everything else, and I said, "Man, you guys don't have to get out of the squad to do anything. Now you're just typing in here. You don't have to go in and write reports or anything." "Oh, we still have to do some of that." But it was all together different. Still is. Fiber optics running everything.

They had computers in the office towards the last. I'd wanted something from the highway department or some federal or local agency, and I said, "Will you type this for me?" "When are you going to learn how to use the computer?" I says, "We don't have one in our office. I got to come to you." And I says, "And I haven't the slightest idea of what you do with it. Would you do it for me?" "Yeah, but don't make it a habit." But I did quite often go into there. Well, I'd go into the Burglary and the Robbery Division because I didn't want to go to the same one all the time. But we never did have a computer in our office while I was there.

KC: How would you analyze your career as a Saint Paul Police Officer?

EM: I think I did a good job. I was honorable in what I did. I made good friends in the department, in the neighborhoods I worked. I still have people come up and say, "I remember you. You did this as a homicide detective." It's kind of gratifying to have people know that you were there.

KC: Did it ever hold heavy on you to be investigating deaths over and over and over again?

EM: No. I felt it an obligation. That's what I was paid for. That's what I was trained for. And I think that twelve years in Patrol gave you an inkling of what you were going to do. Sometimes you wanted to go further, but you were told "Do this. Wait for the detectives or the coroner. Do what they tell you to do." You learn a lot if you keep your eyes and ears open. You don't know nothing if you don't.

I gave classes in homicide investigation to people, and I had guys now that retired say, "I remember you when you gave classes to us on homicides." I said, "Well, I don't remember you, because I don't remember any of the faces in that class." They were all maybe four or five years in the patrol, but I had never met them.

Union meetings are where you got to know fellows from the other shifts that were often time in the union meeting.

KC: Did investigating deaths – was it hard to come home then and transition to be a family man?

EM: My family might say so but I didn't think so. I didn't talk to my family about investigations, although my wife worked at Saint Paul Ramsey and Regions and Ancker by the way. All three of them. And she was in receiving room [emergency room], and if a shooting or a stabbing came in, she would tell me, "This is what the fellow said, and when the police came, then he'd button up and wouldn't say nothing." So when I got there, I'd write a report, "This is what I heard" and then go out and follow up on it. The guy says, "Man, that sure is nice having a wife down there in the receiving room that you've got all that information that you can go on." You can't use it, but you can sure follow up on it.

I wouldn't want to be a policeman now. To begin with, I don't understand all the automatic and all the electronic stuff that's going on. We didn't have drugs in the Cities as we have now. We might have had ten or fifteen percent and I believe it's eighty-five or ninety percent of our crimes now. I would be at a loss—I wouldn't know how to handle a druggy. Before, you just confined them and didn't let them do anything but now, I really don't know anything about handling that type of thing.

KC: Thank you, Detective

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Miels family
Earl, Helen Miels and children
1969



Earl and Helen Miels
May 2008

Reflections from Helen Miels

Detective Miels' wife

HM: I'm Helen Miels, wife of Earl Miels, retired police officer, and I'm also a registered nurse and worked in the emergency room at Regions, the old Ramsey at that time. I happened to be working the night that Sackett was killed, and even in my recollection, I don't believe that he was brought to the hospital, that he was dead at the scene, that he was taken directly to the morgue.

However, the word travels quickly. Especially on the night shift, people are – we worked very closely with the police department and the officers. Before the night was over, they brought Sackett's wife -- I think her name was Jeanette – into the emergency room. Of course, she was very distraught. She had just had this baby a short three weeks or so prior to this. I remember that I was the nurse on duty, that they asked to give her some valium, as I recall. Anyway, something to help calm her, relax her. It was a sad night that night.

KC: The first twelve years of your husband's career, he was a patrolman. As a wife with young children, did you worry about him?

HM: I really never did. I think God must have just given us peace in that regard. This was his occupation and you just flowed with it. You couldn't let that be a constant fear. You couldn't live with that. We were younger and I think you didn't have that closeness to death that comes now with getting older, that it's not all that far down the distance for us anymore. It's more accepting. It's tragic when young people are killed or die.

KC: Did your husband come home and talk to you about his days? His investigations?

HM: Not a whole lot. He had a quote. He'd say, "If I told you and you knew, I would have to kill you." [laughs] Things were not for the public when they were working on something. It was strictly confidential. No, I didn't know a lot about—

KC: Did other people expect you to get information as the wife of a police officer?

HM: Oh, not really. Not my co-workers. No. I think most of them were as familiar with the police department, police officers. As I say, it was a very close working relationship. We knew if we needed help, we were just a phone call away. And on the occasions when we had to call them, I'd always preface it, "Now don't send the whole department. I only need one squad," but invariably three, four would run in just, you know, if we had an unruly patient, or sometimes it was mob control. Back in those days, we did not have a security person on at nighttime. We were pretty much on our own and the doors were wide open. Anybody could come in and go through the hospital if they wanted to. So, we were a close knit group.

KC: When you had heard that an officer had been killed, were you concerned at all about your husband?

HM: No, actually because he was home taking care of our – at home, because our children were home. I worked the night shift, and I knew he, being the detective, wouldn't have been out on the street when something like that would have happened.

KC: What happens when your husband is called out at night and you're working the night shift?

HM: Our children were older at that stage, and he would wake up the oldest one and tell him he was in charge, and it worked. It worked for us. In fact, that was why I worked the night shift, because at that point, he didn't have the night shift to work anymore. He was able to work days and the afternoons, and it worked for us.

KC: Any other thoughts about Mrs. Sackett that evening?

HM: Just that my heart went out to her. I mean, I could put myself in her shoes being widowed at that young age and having all these small children, too. It was a sad, sad night.

KC: Any last thoughts?

HM: It was a good life. I would not have changed it. As I say, we've had a strong faith in God, and he's been there for us throughout. And we have a good retirement. It's been good.