

Transcript of a Saint Paul Police reflective oral history interviews for

OFFICER JAMES THOMAS SACKETT, SR.

Saint Paul Officer

September 3, 1968 – May 22, 1970



1968

**Reflective interviews conducted in 2008
by Kate Cavett of HAND in HAND Productions**

This is a collection of reflections from officers who worked with Jim Sackett and still remember.

These Saint Paul Police memorial books are created for the families of officers who have lost their lives in the line of duty.

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2013

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

James Thomas Sackett, Sr.

Appointed September 3, 1968
End of Tour Friday, May 22, 1970
Saint Paul, Ramsey County, Minnesota

[Minnesota Death Certificate No. 1970-MN-013838]

Fatally injured by gunfire from a sniper while
responding to a fake emergency “OB” call.

U.S. Air Force Veteran

Shortly after midnight on Friday morning, May 22, 1970, Patrolman James Thomas Sackett Sr., Badge No. 450, was shot and killed by two suspects after he and his partner, Patrolman Glen Kothe,¹ working unmarked traffic car Squad 327 responded to a fake emergency “OB” (maternity) call to 856 Hague Avenue in the City of Saint Paul. The time of the call was 0007 hours (12:07 a.m.). When no one responded to their knock on the front door, Kothe went to the rear door. When he heard a gunshot, he returned to the front where he found Sackett lying on the sidewalk with a bullet wound to the chest. Patrolman Sackett had been fatally injured by a sniper with a high-powered rifle.

¹ **Glen David Kothe** was appointed patrolman November 13, 1967; promoted to sergeant November 14, 1982; retired June 30, 1997.

Squad 337, Patrolmen John Cameron LaBossiere² and Edward James Steenberg,³ were taking a written report at Grand Avenue and Oxford Street, about six blocks away, when they heard Patrolman Kothe's call for assistance. They arrived at the shooting scene within minutes, but the sniper(s) had already faded into darkness. Assisting officer Kothe in bandaging the injured Sackett, LaBossiere later accompanied Sackett to Saint Paul Ramsey Hospital,⁴ administering oxygen on the way.

Two recent Central High School classmates associated with the Black Panther movement, Ronald Lindsey Reed and Larry Larue Clark, both nineteen, were questioned, but no charges were filed due to a lack of hard evidence. They remained persons of interest for the next thirty-five years.

In 1972, an eighteen-year-old Black female, Constance Louise Trimble, Ronald Reed's girlfriend, was tried for making the telephone call requesting help from the police. Although forensic spectrograms proved that Trimble made the fatal call, she was acquitted of first-degree murder. Found guilty of contempt of court, she served thirty days for refusing to identify the man who told her to make the call.

The same two Black male suspects, Reed and Clark, were finally arrested and charged with Patrolman Sackett's murder in January 2005, thirty-five years after the murder. Both suspects were ultimately found guilty and sentenced to life in prison in 2006. In 2008, one of the suspects, Larry Clark, had his conviction overturned and was awarded a new trial. He pleaded guilty (Alford plea) to "Conspiracy to Commit Premeditated Murder." The deal stipulated five years of prison time, then a year on supervised

² **John Cameron LaBossiere** was appointed patrolman January 16, 1967; promoted to sergeant October 14, 1972; retired September 8, 2000.

³ **Edward James Steenberg** was appointed patrolman November 2, 1964; later assigned the ancillary task of Ordnance Disposal; promoted to sergeant July 19, 1971; appointed lieutenant (emergency) January 11, 1975; promoted to lieutenant (permanent) November 19, 1976; appointed deputy chief of police August 16 1992; received title change to senior commander April 29, 1995, and retired July 2, 1999. For the next ten years, Steenberg wrote a weekly column for the FBI's Virtual Private Network (VPN), Law Enforcement Online (LEO).

⁴ Ancker Hospital opened in 1872 as the City and County Hospital. In 1923, it was renamed 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, and in 1997, renamed Regions Hospital.

release. The second suspect, Ronald Reed, having lost all his appeals, remains in Minnesota's Oak Park Heights Maximum Security Prison to this day.

Born on September 29, 1942, and raised in Ramsey County, twenty-eight year old James Thomas Sackett Sr. had been with the Bureau of Police since September 3, 1968 and had previously served with the United States Air Force. He was survived by his wife, Jeanette, and four children: James Jr., Jennifer, Julie, and Jerel, a new-born infant. Patrolman Sackett's funeral took place on Monday, May 25, 1970, at the Wolff Crestwood Park Chapel, and he was buried at Fort Snelling National Cemetery, Minneapolis, Minnesota.

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 histories 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.

Kate Cavett Oral Historian

HAND in HAND Productions
www.oralhistorian.org

Retired Captain Laurence Francis McDonald

My name is Larry McDonald⁵. I'm seventy four years old. I came on in 1955, April. And I retired in April of '95 as a captain.

We started to change, and this is because we were forced to change. We sometimes don't change very easy. Some of it occurred in 1968 with the Democratic Convention and the Vietnam War. The other piece was the Miranda warning.

You know, the Miranda warning tells you that you have to give people their rights. And that was designated for people that were suspects that we had arrested or were about to arrest. It goes back to, if you're old enough to remember, *Dragnet*⁶ TV shows, where Sergeant Friday and his partner would go in and they would ask the questions. The people would respond, because the people, the public, felt obligated to answer your question. And that was very well displayed. "Just give me the facts, ma'am." And that was it. And so we had that sort of style going where we just said, you know, "We're it and you're something else. Just tell me what I want to know."



2006

⁵ **Laurence Francis McDonald** was appointed patrolman July 11, 1955; promoted to sergeant February 26, 1966; lieutenant January 14, 1971; captain July 5, 1989; lieutenant January 12, 1991; captain August 31, 1991; and retired March 31, 1995. Awarded the Medal of Merit Class B on August 26, 1993.

⁶ **Dragnet** was the first successful television crime drama. It originally ran 1952—1959 with Sgt. Joe Friday played by Jack Webb, who also directed and produced the series, and Ben Alexander, who played Officer Frank Smith. The TV show was revived in January of 1967—1970. Friday and his new side kick Bill Gannon, played by Harry Morgan, continued to track down criminals in Los Angeles, California. Universal and NBC hired Webb to produce "World Premiere: Dragnet," a made-for-TV movie that aired January 1969.

Well, the Miranda Warning⁷ and all the anti-police era told us that we had to communicate or interview people in a different fashion. Miranda forced some of it. But even our approach to people was more of a friendly sales approach. I prefer to use the word “sales approach.”

In fact, I can remember recruiting Jim Sackett off a Pepsi-Cola truck, and he was a route salesman, I guess you’d call him. And how when we were giving classes, he would say Pepsi-Cola even had some tapes or recordings of how you’d go in and meet the store owner. “How are you this morning? I’ve got a few items today! Where would you like me to display them? Could I display them out in the front here where they’re better seen?” And so he brought his tapes in, and we even played them as to the sales approach to get what you want people for you to do. He was great.



1972

⁷ In 1966 the United States Supreme Court ruled that the statements made to the police could not be used as evidence, if persons had not been advised of their rights under the constitution. A minimal **Miranda Warning**, as outlined in the *Miranda v. Arizona* case is: *You have the right to remain silent. Anything you say can and will be used against you in a court of law. You have the right to be speak to an attorney and to have an attorney present during any questioning. If you cannot afford a lawyer, one will be provided for you at government expense.* Note that one need not be Mirandized to be arrested, or asked to provide name, address, and Social Security number.

Retired Sergeant Robert B. Winger Jr.

My name is Bob Winger⁸ and I was on the Saint Paul Police Department for thirty-three years. I was on the street for ten years, and I was on the street as a street sergeant, a supervising sergeant for three years, and then I went into the detective units – burglary division and then into the homicide division. I was a homicide detective who'd been given on loan to the DEA as an



1977

undercover narc. And I was the only person that worked opium and came out of there, and I was kind of an acting lieutenant with some detectives up until the time I retired—1999, December.

Jim Sackett was my partner for eight or nine months. It might have been a little bit longer than that, but I'm not positive right now. It's been a long time. He was very good. He was a very good partner and he was a good learner. He liked being a police officer, because I was very much into being a police officer and we were good partners. He was a good worker and he didn't have any problems on the job with anybody that I knew of.

We worked downtown Saint Paul. And we worked probably—the most calls you have in downtown Saint Paul back in those days were bar fights and traffic and accidents. And that was about it. Most of the officers really didn't appreciate working downtown because it was kind of limited. You just went in and found out what was going on and

⁸ **Robert B. Winger Jr.** was appointed patrolman November 13, 1967; promoted sergeant April 1, 1978; and retired October 29, 1999.

then either kick someone out of the bar or broke it up if there was something visually going on and if it was one thing or another. Maybe they were arrested for disorderly conduct. Back in those days, there was like twenty-eight bars in downtown Saint Paul. That was the extent of it as far as calls go. A bar room fight's a bar room fight. [laughs] A traffic accident's a traffic accident.

He was a good husband and my first wife, she and I and Jeanette and Jim were friends. We'd go to his place or come over to my place.

When we were on the street, we were serious. We were serious police officers, because being a police officer means getting out and doing it. If you're sitting some place all day long and hardly doing anything, nothing's going to be going on. You got to get out there and, to be a police officer, your eyes, ears, and nose. Jimmy Sackett was for that, and I was definitely for that. Some police officers are just kind of there, and other ones are there to do their job completely. And Jim wanted to do his job, and that's all relative to the individual and how they're willing to work or not work.

At the funeral, I was by his casket to act as a casket person and to see my partner laying in a casket was unbelievable.

He was a good police officer and he liked his job and he did a good job and he was a good partner and a good husband and a good father. That's about a hundred percent.

Retired Sergeant Daniel B. Bostrom



2008

I'm Retired Police Sergeant Daniel Bostrom.⁹ I was a street supervisor on the night of May 22, 1970 when Officer James Sackett was assassinated while responding to an OB call.

I was Saint Paul Police Officer for twenty-six years. I was appointed to the department in March of 1964 and retired in November of 1990. During that period of time I was promoted to sergeant in 1968. I created something called the Power Shift and there were two platoons that worked the Power Shift. One started at – I believe it was seven o'clock in the evening, and then one started at eight o'clock in the evening. We really had squads of guys that patrolled basically the high crime areas. I was on the – I believe it was the sixth platoon – and had, I think, about eight or ten patrol officers that worked for me. One of the crews that worked for me was Jim Sackett and Glen Kothe¹⁰ as partners.

We did normal patrol and then occasionally got a special detail. One time we were working on a robbery detail because there were a bunch of stick-ups that were happening in the area of Dale and Selby and Dale and Concordia. So we sent the crew out to work undercover during the days to see what in the world they could find out and what they could see. Jim Sackett and Glen Kothe as partners – and these guys were quite creative – and in those days you could go to all the car dealers on University

⁹ **Daniel B. Bostrom** was appointed patrolman March 2, 1964; promoted to sergeant February 29, 1968; retired November 30, 1990. Elected to the Saint Paul City Council 1996.

Avenue and tell them you needed a car for a project or something. They'll say, "Well, take whatever you want out there. Bring it back. Don't worry about the gas either. Just don't bang it up to bad." [laughs] So we borrowed cars. We borrowed taxi cabs. We borrowed trucks. We did a whole bunch of things like that, and these guys would do different tactics to try and appear as though they were just, you know, just blended in with the community. So these guys were out working. One day, they had a taxi cab that they borrowed from Yellow Cab Company. And they'd take turns. One would ride in the back seat and the other would drive, you know, like they're looking for some place to drop this fare off. And put on different hats and all sorts of different disguises just to keep driving through these intersections looking for somebody.

And then one day, they got an old yellow truck. It looked like an old public works truck. And they parked that thing down on Concordia and Dale and they started sweeping the street. And they were sweeping and sweeping and sweeping, and some guy came up to them after they'd been there a couple of hours and swept about a hundred feet because they were watching the liquor store across the street. Sackett said, "Jeez, it took you



1971

guys a long time to get a hundred feet done." They said, "Well, we're working on it." He says, "You know, with a little more experience, we can make this job last all day." [laughs] They were just a couple of great actors along with everything else.

The job that Sackett did and the way he handled people, when he got to a call he wasn't the kind of guy that went charging in like Rambo or anything like that. Basically, he was a very gentle guy, but he didn't want to get them all riled up and misread that as a sign of weakness by any stretch of the imagination. You know, you offend a person like

that or do something you shouldn't do, and he'd do whatever was necessary to effect a lawful arrest. I'll guarantee you that. [laughs] So he had the ability to really work with – and I think that's what we really stressed is his ability to work with people and not to overreact to situations. And that's to me again the reason that this all hurts so much is the fact that that's the kind of guy he was. He wasn't anybody that would be out there provoking an incident where something like this could happen. Just so totally uncalled for then. [sighs] I'm still working my way through it. [laughs]

He hadn't been on the police department a long time—came on in 1968—so only a couple years at this time this happened. So he'd been on just a short period of time when this happened, but over this course of working for me, there was an interesting deal.

Back in those days, the University of Minnesota used to bring classes to the police department and we could take classes, college level courses. And I was taking some of those. Jim was taking them along with a couple of dozen other policemen. And it was kind of an interesting deal.

Well, anyway, Jim was in some class, and I don't know if it was philosophy or something. But he had to do a paper on some subject. Because of the political bent of the professor, he could tell the direction that the professor wanted him to go with this paper. And he says, "You know, Sarge, I gotta tell you. I don't believe in this stuff." And he says, "If I write what I think this guy wants me to write, I know how to do that and get an A. If I write what my heart tells me is right, I'll be lucky if I even get a passing grade, even a D on it. What do I do in a case like that?" I said, "Well Jim, I'll tell you what. You don't get a second chance at creating your character. You are who you are, and if that's who you're going to be – you know, every time the wind blows one

way or the other, you got a little problem. So you're going to have to make up your mind what you want to do. I'm not going to tell you to take a D in the class. And I'm certainly not going to tell you to go against your principles and give this character what he wants just so you get a good grade out of him." So ultimately, Jim, I think, wrote what he believed in his heart. And I don't even know what he got graded on it. He might even have gotten a good mark for that because of the fact it was a good paper. But he sensed that this instructor wasn't from the same bent as he was, and he didn't want to create some hard feelings with this guy. But on the other hand he says, "I can't do that." That was one of the things, right then and there— that was long before this other happened – that I said, "You know, this is a young man of character. I like him." Character, something about his integrity that really struck me and maybe that's why I can't get over it. Yeah. That's why I had a special place in my heart for this guy.

And I suppose why I still do today.

Retired Sergeant Gerald E. Dexter



2008

I'm Gerald E. Dexter¹¹ and most people here call me Gerry or Dex. I was a Saint Paul Officer from April twenty-fourth of 1961 until October sixteenth of 1987.

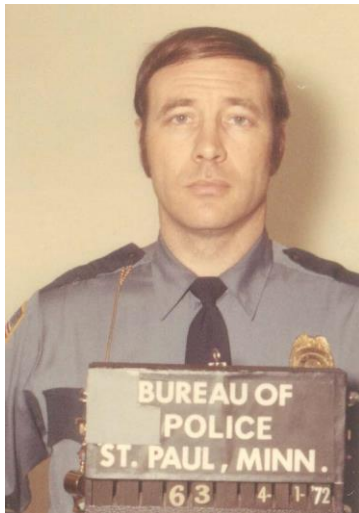
They decided at some point that they were going to try to somewhat saturate the city with more officers. They were going to try and do it in response to what was going on crime-wise in the city. So they decided to put on a Power Shift. Power Shifts traditionally work the evenings when there's a higher crime incident or higher incidents of calls for police service. So they put the word out and they really asked for volunteers and I was a street boss – a sergeant – on the fifth platoon and Dan Bostrom¹² was the sixth platoon sergeant.

Kothe and Sackett were a pretty good team. They were productive. They wrote traffic tickets. They were aggressive. They showed some initiative in going and stopping people, in talking to people and doing a good job, answering their calls. And they didn't seem to need a lot of supervision. They would do their job, and they didn't get into a

¹¹ **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 of police in St. Croix Falls, Wisconsin 1987- 1990.

¹² **Daniel B. Bostrom** was appointed patrolman March 2, 1964; promoted to sergeant February 29, 1968; retired November 30, 1990. Elected to the Saint Paul City Council 1996.

bind where all of a sudden they had to call for the boss to get them out of it because they should have called up first. Regardless of who he worked with, I can say you could always count on him. You didn't have to worry about these guys doing something, screwing it up, and, like in his case, if he worked with Pelton¹³ or if he worked with Kothe, you didn't have to worry about getting a call that, "Hey, we did this. Now can you untangle it for us?" I mean, that was kind of part of our job, but some of these—they would think things through. And that's what I recall about him, too. He was certainly thoughtful enough to take care of things the right way. These guys were young. They were aggressive. But before they'd call the boss and say, "We've got this, that, or thus." they'd tear a car apart or they'd do something and then when it turned out to be "Uh-oh", why they would call for us. When I say us, it'd be Bostrom and I or some other boss, and say, "We did this. What should we do?"



1972

Well, I remember a classic one where they'd ripped a car apart and Bostrom – his words just were, "I suggest that you put the man's car back together the way it was and let him be on his way." And that was the type of thing that you just never ran into with Sackett.

And they'd get a hot call and they'd – I don't recall them ever getting over-the-top excited about it. You know, sometimes you get a call of a bad accident or something and the adrenaline starts going and some of these guys, and probably myself even would get a little hyper on the air. You'd have to occasionally tell

¹³ **Joseph Earl Pelton** was appointed patrolman September 3, 1968; promoted to sergeant October 10, 1973; and retired March 31, 1998.

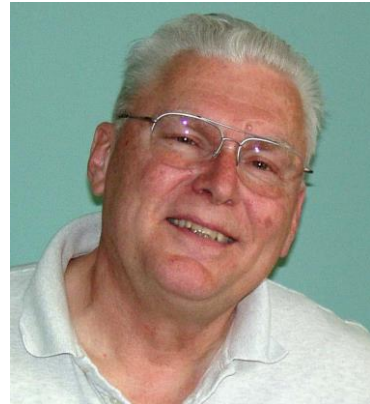
an officer on the air, "Calm down. Repeat that again. You're over-modulating the radio." But I don't ever recall Sackett doing that. He just took his calls and did his work and he did it well.

Again, I think that any one of us that worked with him would say the same thing. And any one of us that worked with him I think was a better person for having known him. He was a good guy.

I would say Jim Sackett probably had the potential, had he lived and had he had the desire to do it, I'm sure Sackett could have advanced in the department. Not just because he was a nice guy, but because he was bright. I believe he had been in the military. He had a maturity about him and I think he had a lot of leadership ability. Again, it was just a personal assessment on my part, but there are people in your life that stand out. Most of the time over the years I've been pretty right about it and, in his case, I think there were just so many positives about him.

Retired Sergeant Glen Kothe

My name is Glen Kothe. I'm a retired Saint Paul police officer. I came on the job November 13, 1967. Jim Sackett and I were partners – became partners in late 1969 and we worked together until his death.



2008

First of all, Jim was a few years older than I was as far as age went. I came on the job at twenty-two. I think he was twenty-seven or something like that when he came on the job. I suppose you want to say that he was probably a little more mature age-wise. His fourth child had been born three weeks before he was killed.

We kind of hit it off when we were teamed together, because we both ended up on what was called the Power Shift at that time. We started at seven at night and went until four in the morning. We were always assigned to special details and doing special things and stuff like that. We worked together pretty well. There was a number of stories where we had a lot of fun.

Well, there was one where we got involved – well, the department put out a list. It was a warrant list and some of these were very old warrants. They were a couple or three years old, and they hadn't been cleared yet. They were felony warrants. So they put this list out just in case anybody came across it. Of course, back then we didn't have computers and high speed stuff or anything like that. Everything was manual.

So we had these lists, so Jim and I decided we were going to work on these warrants. So we were doing stuff on our own time and everything. We were bugging our way into

different organizations, getting into their files and everything. First, we ran them through our files to get whatever information we could on these individuals. Then we even went down to the Draft Board. We even ran the list through the Draft Board. We got into the Insurance Commission. This was a long time before they had all this data privacy stuff. Got into the Insurance Commission and ran them through the insurance companies to see who had insurance, where they lived, addresses. We went down to Saint Paul Ramsey, or Regions Hospital now. We ran it through the medical records division down there. We were finding people all over the place. We ended up clearing, I think it was nineteen. We made nineteen arrests. We both got a commendation for it.

It was funny some of the stuff that we pulled. We'd find out names, addresses, places, and everything. When we ran the list through the data base down at Saint Paul Ramsey and everything, we found out that one of them had an appointment to see a doctor the next day. So we were sitting in the office waiting for him. When they called him in, we went and arrested him. We had another one we found that had joined the Navy. So we called the Navy and reported that we had a felony warrant for this guy, so Navy arrested the guy. Or FBI or



Jim Sackett

whoever. We found two or three other guys that had gone to other states, so we notified the FBI, and they were picked up for unlawful flight. Many of them we arrested ourselves.

It was a lot of fun. We had a lot of fun doing this, and we were laughing and joking all the time. Doing stuff to get into places that today are absolutely not allowed. You know, I mean the data privacy thing and everything. It's completely different now and stuff like that. But we were checking records every place to find out where these people were. And we'd just go in there and say, "We're looking for some people. Could you help us out?" "Well, what do you need?" And we'd hand them the list and they'd run the whole list and say, "Oh, yeah. We've got information on this one, this one, this one, and this one." And they'd go on and on, and we just used to have a lot of fun doing that stuff.



1972

And of course, playing a joke on each other once in awhile here and there. It's all part of the job and stuff like that. Well, there was one – because at the time we used to switch off driving. At the first half of the shift, one guy would drive, and at the second half, the other guy would drive. And whoever was the passenger was the one that had to write all the reports. Okay. We'd go on a call some place or respond to a thing and, of course, that was back then they had one set of keys for the car.

And they didn't have all these electric door locks or anything like that. Anyway, Jim was driving. He gets in the car. He doesn't unlock the door for me or anything, and he drives off! Leaves me standing there! And of course, we didn't have portable radios then. So I was standing there cussing and swearing at him and throwing things at the cars that's going by. And goes about a quarter block down and stops and laughs out the window and says, "Come on. Let's go." And everything. And I says "No, back up." He says, "No!" We're standing there hollering at each other about a hundred feet apart.

Then he'd start to back up. I'd reach for the door and he'd drive away. "You no good son of a..." and everything. And people are looking out their windows. [laughs] Finally we got going. Yeah, we used to have a lot of fun.

Well of course, then pay back. You got to have pay back. There's always payback. I'd do things like hide his ticket book. He'd be out on a traffic stop, and I'd drive away and leave him standing there talking to the guy with no ticket book. [laughs]

We used to pull stuff like that all the time and everything. And then there was some things like, when they first started issuing the pepper spray, we used to take some and smear some on something and someone would touch it and happen to scratch their face, and pretty soon their eyes are watering. Oh. Squirt gun fights. We'd carry squirt guns -- which would graduate into pails of water. [laughs] Fireworks and -- oh, there was a lot of jokes we used to do on each other. Not just against each other, but against other people and stuff like that. It was just a fun time. We used to enjoy ourselves a lot.

I can remember just before he was killed, his number four, Jared, was born and Jeanette was in the hospital. We went down, and we were both there, you know. And we're sitting there and we're laughing and she is laughing. We had her laughing and we were joking and -- I can't even remember what we were talking about -- but we were laughing so hard and had her laughing and, if I remember right, she'd had a C-section. So she was pretty sore. And of course, she's trying not to laugh and we're making her laugh, and it was just incredible. And that's a fond memory. And then, of course, three weeks later he was killed.

We both lived on the East Side, but he lived on the north end and I lived on the south end. And there were times where we had [gotten families together, but] it was mostly

just him and I. I'd been to his house, he'd been to my house and stuff like that, but the families weren't really that close. Because we hadn't been together that long to really – we had guys on the job that had been together for ten years. So they were like brothers and everything. Jim and I had only been together for a few months and stuff like that. We got to know each other personally pretty good and everything, and we got to know how each other thought and how we operated and everything else like that. We worked well together.

He was a very conscientious guy. He believed, *right* and *wrong*. That was it. Here it is, you know. You break the law, you go to jail. Simple as that. I kind of believed the same thing. There were times when it was a situation where we had to question: “Are we doing the right thing?” Such as we'd get a situation where it's a domestic assault type thing, you know. And we're beginning to wonder, the woman wanted the guy arrested and as near as we could tell, he really hadn't done much. She actually attacked him and he pushed her away; she fell down. Got hurt in the process and everything, and it was more or less a self-defense reaction type thing. But she was demanding that he be arrested, and we really didn't want to, but *we had to* type thing. And it was things like that every once in a while bothered him. But most of the time, when we'd get involved in something, it was like *right* and *wrong*. That was it. That's the way we handled everything.

There was a couple of hairy instances over the timeframe we were together. You know, high speed chases, things like that that got a little bit scary. Oh well, there was a few times we had to pull our guns and threaten. Actually, we did fire a couple of shots a couple of times at different things. Tried to shoot out the tires. Of course, this is all things that you're not allowed to do anymore.

Anytime you get into a chase, there's always that unknown. But what was funny is that when you work together with somebody for a long period of time, you get to the point where you don't think about a lot of stuff. Jim would be driving, we were going to do a traffic stop, and the next thing you know, the chase is on. He's rolling down the road and I'm on the radio and we're going east here, west here, da da da da da da, giving directions and everything like that. And, of course, neither one of us are wearing a seatbelt. You didn't wear seat belts then.

[The night of the ambush.]

Jim and I were working an unmarked car. In fact, the car that we were using was a brand new vehicle. It had just been delivered that day from the garage. It was a burnt orange Plymouth 440. It was a traffic car, that's what it was. It had a badge on the right hand door and that was it and nothing external. It was burnt orange in color. That was one of the big colors for the hot cars back then. We had this car, and we were working traffic. We were parked up in front of the Capitol building, and we were working traffic. Finally, a call came up. They gave us a call to the address, and they said it was an OB which is, you know, a pregnant lady. We told them, we said, "We're a traffic car" which traditionally were two door sedans. They said, "Well, you're the only one we got. Everyone else is tied up." Because it was right close to shift change. So okay, we take off and we head up that way.



And we come down Victoria from University and we get to Hague and we take a right turn and realize we've gone the wrong way. Well, because we took the right turn, you couldn't see that right hand door. Jim backed up across Victoria and parked in front of the place. Anyway, we get out, and he was driving. We get out and we walk around the car, and he's standing to the right of the door as you're facing it, and I'm standing to the

left of the door. He tries the door, and it's one of those enclosed porches like used to be on the older houses. And he tries it, and it's locked. He says, "What the heck?" And there's no lights on the place. And so I look down the side of the building and I says, "Oh, there's a back door back down here. I'll go check it out." So I walked down and



went around to the back, and there's like two steps up on a little cement portico, porch thing. And I'm standing there, and I knock on the door, and a big dog starts barking. I lean over the railing, and I holler down and I said, "Watch it, Jim. They got a big dog." And about that time, the intersection lit up and a loud bang. And the first thing that popped

into my mind was an M80, because this was May and we were starting to get some firecracker calls and everything and stuff like that. And that's the first thing that popped into my mind was an M80.

Anyway, I heard somebody holler. And I run around the front, and I get there, and he's down. And there's a pool of blood like three feet across under him. And I crouched down over him, and I'm looking at him. And to this day, when I looked in his face and everything, I knew he was dead. You know. Even though I never took a pulse or anything. I just looked at him and I knew he was dead. And then out of the corner of my eye, I catch something. Well, when I saw the amount of blood and everything, the next thing that popped into my mind was a shotgun, that somebody had shot him with a shotgun from inside the house because of the way he was laying. And I caught this movement out of the corner of my eye and instinct took over. Survival instinct took over. And I thought, "Uh-oh, my turn. Here it comes." And I turned, drew my service revolver as I'm going away, and I fired two shots at the door. And I literally dove over the squad and landed in the street. And I came up, and what I didn't know at the time

is that I had actually exposed myself to the shooter who was actually across the street, behind where I was now. Anyway, then somebody from inside hollers, and I said, "Come on out!" And it didn't happen and he didn't come out. And he said something. I couldn't understand what he said.

And then I reached in and popped open the door and I grabbed the radio and, "327! It's an ambush! Get me some help!" My exact words. And then, of course, all hell broke loose. Cars were coming from every direction. Then I got on and I said, "My partner's down. I need a stretcher car." Of course, they're coming from everywhere then. And I can hear the sirens coming.

And you know how time and stress situations, time goes away. To this day I can remember being there. And I can see everything like it happened twenty minutes ago. And it seemed like it took forever for anybody to get there. The closest squad was three blocks away. And they were there in virtually nothing flat, but it seemed like an hour. Because time was gone. It was just gone!

When the guy didn't come out – I hollered for him to come out, then he didn't come out – then I ran back up to Jim and everything, and then the first car pulled up and it was Ed Steenburg and John Labossiere were the first two guys there. And John went to Jim and everything, and Ed's asking me what happened, and I'm explaining it. In the meantime, other squads are starting to arrive left and right.

And then pretty soon, the stretcher car comes up. Bob Patsy¹⁴ was driving that, and they took Jim and headed for the hospital, but in my mind, I knew he was already dead. And later on, I was told where he'd been hit, he was dead before he hit the ground because of where the bullet hit. It actually hit just above his badge and it went through at an angle and cut the main aorta going into the heart and then ricocheted off his right shoulder blade and exited his right shoulder and stuck in the wall on the building that we were standing in front of.

¹⁴ **Robert Richard Patsy** was appointed patrolman November 2, 1964; promoted sergeant September 6, 1975; and retired December 30, 1994.

Photo Memories



Young Jim Sackett
Growing up in Saint Paul



CLEVELAND JR. HIGH — 1955-56





Janette and Jim's wedding day
 Alexandria Louisiana
 England Air Force Base
 April 29, 1962



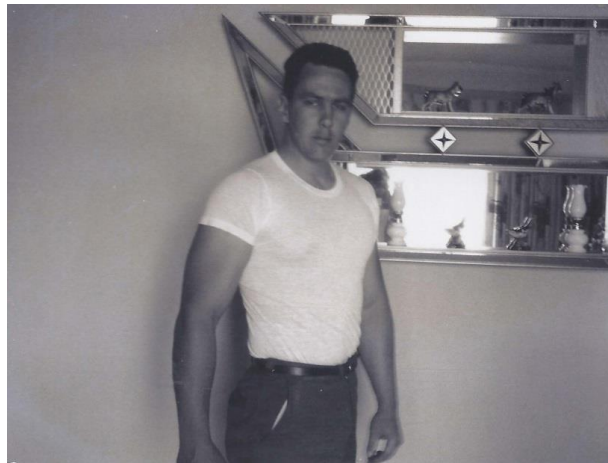
Jeanette, Jennifer, Jim Jr., Candy, Julie, Jim
 1969



Jim and Candy
April 1964



January 1961



April 1969



July 1969



Newspaper:

Jim and friend looking for Winter Carnival medallion
1968



Michelle Nowicki, Jennifer, Jim
December 24, 1967



Jim with children
December 1969



Jerry, Jen, Jim, Julie
1976

Twenty-third Psalm

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures. He leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies. Thou anointest my head with oil: my cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

IN MEMORY OF

James T. Sackett, Sr.

DATE OF BIRTH
September 29, 1942

DATE OF DEATH
May 22, 1970

SERVICES AT
WULFF CREST WOOD PARK CHAPEL
Monday, May 25, 1970, at 1:30 P.M.

CLERGYMAN
REVEREND GEORGE H. VOEKS

INTERMENT
FORT SNELLING NATIONAL CEMETERY

Wulff
Founded 1884

Friends are requested to go to their respective cars as soon as dismissed. Please turn on your bright lights while driving in the funeral procession.

TUESDAY, MAY 26, 1970



KNEELING at the casket of Patrolman James Sackett, Mrs. Jeanette Sackett, son, 6, at her left, and daughter Jenni-
for last respects to the husband and

father at Fort Snelling National Cemetery Monday. Officer Sackett was shot to death by a sniper early Friday.

—Staff Photo by Chris Ba

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 Six

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