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Ed Bettinger remembered...

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Although recently-deceased Harrison police officer Edmund "Ed" Bettinger was police chief for just four months, he served during what many claim is the worst disaster to ever hit Harrison - the tornado of 1990.

Bettinger, 69, died Tuesday, Sept. 14. He will not only be remembered for his role during Harrison's recovery following the tornado but as lead investigator of the November 1991 murder of 10-year-old Harrison resident, Amber Garrett. Bettinger played a large part in the investigation that resulted in the 1993 conviction of Jeffrey Wogenstahl who remains on Ohio's death row. Harrison assistant police chief Capt. Jack Tremain worked with Bettinger for more than 10 years and delivered remarks at his funeral. Tremain said Bettinger was always fair and impartial while exuding an air of authority. "He reminded me of Clint Eastwood in a uniform," said Tremain. Bettinger served in the U.S. Air Force and was a Hamilton County Park District Ranger before joining the Harrison police force in 1976, said Tremain. Following the retirement of former Harrison police chief Tom McDaniel, Bettinger was named as interim chief in May 1990. He held the rank of sergeant at the time, said Tremain.

The tornado hit Harrison on June 2 of that year, destroying more than 50 homes and damaging at least 113 others. Immediately following the tornado, Bettinger cordoned off the city, restricting people entering the area to residents and those offering aid. Thanks to his quick response, no looting or additional damage took place in the days after the tornado.

Bettinger worked with the American Red Cross, Ohio Governor Richard Celeste's office and other agencies to coordinate aid for area residents and was later praised for his efforts. Damage was so extensive that President George Bush eventually declared Harrison a federal disaster area, making it eligible for federal aid.

During the summer after the tornado, a petition was circulated to name Bettinger as permanent chief. However, Harrison City Council selected Gary Foust in August 1990 and Bettinger resumed the rank of sergeant, said Tremain.

On Nov. 24, 1991, 10-year-old Amber Garret was taken from her family's apartment in the 300 block of Harrison Avenue by Wogenstahl who lived in a nearby apartment. Police searched the area and after three days, responding to a tip, found Amber's body along the side of Jamison Road in Bright.

A grueling investigation followed, led by Bettinger, who worked tirelessly with the FBI to bring about Wogenstahl's conviction. For his efforts he received the Ohio Blue Coat of the Year award by the Knights of Columbus.

"He poured his heart and soul into it - he gave 100 percent to this case," said Tremain. "He was a really, really good cop."

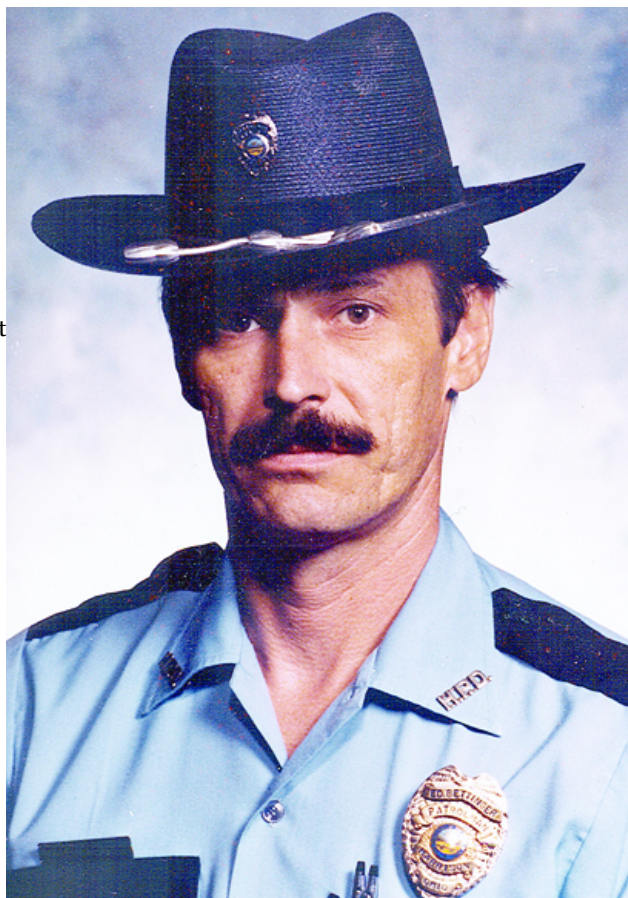
During the investigation, he was promoted in 1992 to serve as Harrison's first lieutenant detective, said Tremain. Bettinger held the position until his retirement.

Bettinger took the Amber Garrett case to heart and it eventually took a toll on his health and mental state, said Tremain. Bettinger retired in 1994.

"This was one of the biggest cases he ever handled," said Tremain. "It really pulled him down, I think."

Although the Amber Garrett case may have been the most important of his career, Bettinger successfully concluded other noteworthy cases.

During a routine traffic stop in the mid-1980s, Bettinger uncovered a \$5 million multi-state scam involving the counterfeiting of automobile



vehicle identification numbers. His work on the case led to the arrest of a person listed as one of Canada's top 10 most wanted criminals. As a result, Bettinger was named as the American Legion Lawman of the Year in Hamilton County.

In 1990, a rape investigation conducted by Bettinger resulted in the conviction of a suspect and the successful conclusion of 30 rape cases throughout Ohio. The case was the first time DNA evidence was used in Hamilton County to convict a suspect. Bettinger was named as American Legion Lawman of the Year in Ohio for his work on the case.

During his career in the late 1970s, Bettinger was part of a close-knit group of Harrison police officers known as "Mondary's Marauders" who worked under former police Chief Frank Mondary. The group remained friends for many years and consisted of Bettinger and deceased officers John Klump, Tommy Rycroft, Peter Honaker, Elmer Bischoff and Bob Kercheval, said Tremain.

Even though Bettinger was a dedicated law enforcement officer, he had a quirky side, said Tremain.

Tremain recalls an instance when he and Bettinger attended a local carnival with Bettinger's pet goat on a leash.

"Ed told the carnival worker that the goat was really a dope goat and they worked far better than a dog," said Tremain. "You could see people slipping around corners and going to their vehicles to get rid of their forbidden stash while Ed and I paraded the goat down the midway."

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