

1991

Sergeant Judith Pugh
Lieutenant Edward Ebert

Lake County Narcotics Agency

1991 was a very difficult year for the Lake County Narcotics Agency. A highly publicized dispute had pitted the board that oversees the agency against Lake County Sheriff Patrick J. Walsh. Walsh had been removed as a member of the board, and in return, Walsh stripped all of the narcotics agents of their special deputy status. Most people caught up in this controversy would be content to quietly sit back, do enough to stay out of the controversy, and wait for everything to blow over.

This was not the case however with Sergeant Judith Pugh and Lieutenant Edward Ebert of the Lake County Narcotics Agency and recipients of the Jorge Medina Distinguished Service Award for 1991. On February 12, 1992, they were honored for a nine month investigation which they launched in 1990. The investigation had started in Painesville, stretched through Lake County and into Cleveland. As a direct result of their investigation over 30 persons were indicted on a variety of state and federal charges.

Several Painesville police officers were so highly impressed with the ability of these agents to remain focused on the investigation in spite of the political turmoil, that they nominated the agents for the award. Police Chief Jerry White and Patrolman Michael Holly stated that "in the face of adversity, these people undertook a mission and persevered to the end." Detective Dennis Soke and Lieutenant David Chappell also sent letters of nomination.

Christopher Collins, Narcotics Agency Director credited the dedication and loyalty of his agents, "They give 100 percent, no matter what's going on behind the scenes or in the headlines."

Ebert who had been with the agency for 9 years stated that the "last two years have not been the greatest. We (in Lake County) have a big drug problem and it's not getting any better. Crack cocaine use guarantees the presence of dealers in the county."

Pugh had started her career as a secretary with agency. In January 1983, she was offered a job as a special agent. At that time she feared she might be too old to make the transition, but at the time of her award stated that she couldn't imagine doing anything else. Of the conditions which existed while they

were conducting the investigation, Pugh said it only made them more determined. “We wanted to prove that we could do it if they would just let us do it.”

Both Pugh and Ebert have retired from the Narcotics Agency completing very successful careers. Pugh resides in the area, while Ebert has relocated to Florida but spends time every summer in the area.