

1985

Lieutenant Daniel A. Dunlap
Sergeant Jeffrey Farrone

Lake County Sheriff Department

Detective Dennis J. Soke
Patrolman Michael G. Holly

Painesville Police Department

Detective Daniel W. Llewellyn
Detective James E. Foster

Mentor Police Department

It would never happen in Lake County, Ohio. No one would ever take our children's innocence. They would never suffer the indignity and cruelty of being raped, especially by a stranger, Not in Painesville. Not in Mentor. Not in Wickliffe. It just would never happen. But in late 1984 and early 1985, it did happen, not once, but twice. And there were possibly other attempts.

The first horrific crime occurred on November 16, 1984, a six year old girl was abducted as she walked to school on Madison avenue, near Madison Elementary School. She was forced into the trunk of a car, raped, and released about two hours later.

Lake County Law Enforcement officers immediately recognized that this was an extraordinary crime in Lake County, Ohio. Nearly 20 officers from Painesville and Mentor Police Departments, and the Lake County Sheriff's Department canvassed the area, door to door, seeking potential witnesses and passing out information.

Then, it happened again. On January 16th, 1985, a seven year old girl was abducted and forced into the trunk of a car as she walked through the parking lot of the Painesville Telegraph. She too was raped, and later released.

There were several other possible attempts to abduct area children which

investigators felt might be related to the rape / abductions. Included in those investigations was an incident on October 25th 1984, on Stevens Boulevard in Willoughby, in which a male tried to grab a 13 year old girl delivering papers. On January 7, 1985, a 7 year old Painesville Township girl was walking home from Clyde C. Hadden School on Mentor Avenue in Painesville Township, when she was forced into the back of the van. The girl was able to escape by kicking open the rear door of the van. Also there was an attempt on a 9 year old girl in Mentor on January 9, 1985. It became evident that the investigation into all of these incidents would be intensive and would require resources beyond the capabilities of any of these departments. A task force was formed utilizing detectives from three departments, Mentor, Painesville, and the Lake County Sheriff's Department. Other officers assisted and eventually it was determined that 118 officers had participated in some facet of the investigation.

Over the next 6 weeks or so, the task force conducted a thorough investigation, following up on hundreds of leads, and interviewing numerous persons in an attempt to develop new information.

A possible break in the case occurred on March 1, 1985, when Mentor Police responded to a call of a suspicious vehicle near Memorial Junior High School on Mentor Avenue. Patrol officers followed the vehicle and stopped it near S.R. 615. The driver, Orean T. West III, was interviewed by the officers, who then notified the task force of the stop and of items that they had observed in West's car. By the end of the evening, the task force had placed West under arrest in connection with all of the crimes. The evidence was so strong after the day's investigation that the News Herald reported that the task force was being disbanded.

Ultimately, Orean West pled guilty to his crimes, and was sentenced to two life terms. He remains incarcerated to this day.

In announcing the awards to members of the Mentor Police Department, Chief Richard Amriott stated that "although many officers from a number of agencies worked very hard to the successful conclusion of this case, the task force provided the leadership, wisdom, organizational strength, encouragement, and tenacity not to quit during this long investigation, which helped motivate other officers to apprehend this offender."

Chief Deputy Charles Caldwell expressed thanks to the Mentor Police Department in a letter stating "the cooperation between our departments, which has been experienced in the past, and is extremely evident in this case, denotes the type of offices we are very lucky to have.

Lieutenant Dunlap, who received his second Blue Coats award, stated that "I" does not belong in this." He credited all of the other officers throughout the county who had tracked down false leads.

On November 13, 1985, these officers were honored at the Mentor Harbor Yacht Club along with Madison Township Officer Robert Varner. The winners of the 1985 Bluecoats Award all continued successful careers in law enforcement. Dunlap, who was honored for the second time in his career, is retired from his long term position as the Sheriff of Lake County. Llewellyn became the Chief of Police in Mentor, and after retirement, was appointed as the Chief Ranger of the Lake County Metroparks. He has also retired. Farone retired from the Lake County Sheriff's Department as a Lieutenant. Soke and Holly are both retired from law enforcement, and Foster retired and worked for the Mentor Municipal Court as a bailiff. He passed away after a long illness, in January, 2002.