

1984

Patrolman James S. Fox

Wickliffe Police Department

Persons who gravitate to careers in public safety are often described as adrenaline junkies. They live for those moments when their hearts are beating out of their chest, their breathing is labored, and they can sweat in sub-zero weather. Often the jobs are described as hours of boredom surrounding a few minutes of sheer terror.

Patrolman James Fox experienced all of the above on January 20, 1984, when he heard a radio broadcast about an armed robbery in the City of Euclid at an auto parts store. Three men, all armed had accosted the owner of the store threatening him as they made his wife and an employee lie on the floor. Taking the store receipts from a strongbox, the suspects got into a Cadillac, later found to be stolen. An alert citizen realized what had happened and followed the vehicle to Interstate 90.

Fox spotted the suspects once they entered Wickliffe, and gave chase. The Cadillac slid off the freeway in Willoughby Hills and two of the men took off on foot. Fox chased after them, crashing down a ridge in a foot of snow, despite leaving his hat, boots, and gloves in his patrol car. The day was one of the coldest of the year with highs of about 8 degrees and a wind chill reported to be about -25 degrees. Fox however was able to catch one suspect and handcuff him. He then helped with the capture of the second.

Wickliffe Police Chief Robert Dion nominated Fox for the award. He said "this was a foot chase and these guys were armed. I really don't think they would have been arrested without Fox. I think that demonstrates the qualities we all look for in a good police officer."

Fox would state that "this opportunity to have my own family proud of me means as much as having the community proud of me".

By being honored with the Blue Coats award, Fox joined an elite fraternity of members of our safety forces who had been honored previously. The award was given on November 7, 1984 at the annual meeting and awards banquet at Hellriegel's Inn.

Fox eventually served as the Wickliffe Police Chief. He is now enjoying his life in retirement.