

# 1972

## Patrolman Gary Fink

### Eastlake Police Department

One of the most basic duties of a patrol officer is enforcement of motor vehicle laws. The goal of these enforcement efforts is to reduce the number of fatalities and injuries which occur as of the result of traffic crashes. However, there are occasions when those enforcement efforts don't go as planned, and due to the actions of a violator, actually contribute to the statistics. Luckily for the involved motorists on November 14<sup>th</sup> 1971, and the Eastlake Police Department, those statistics were tempered due to the actions of Patrolman Gary Fink.

On that date, an Eastlake officer would observe a vehicle operating recklessly on Lake Shore Boulevard. The eastbound vehicle was being operated at a high rate of speed and was passing cars over the double yellow line. An attempt was made to stop the 23 year old driver, but he continued on.

Within seconds, the violator came upon another eastbound vehicle which was turning left onto Pinehurst Drive. Just as that driver turned, the violator attempted to pass and a violent collision occurred. The 45 year old victim's car rolled on its side, hurtled 150 feet down the road, and caught fire. The victim was trapped and Patrolman Fink could see him clawing at the back window of the burning vehicle. Without regard for his own personal safety, Fink broke the rear window and was able to pull the victim free. According to his shift lieutenant, John Angus, Fink's actions saved the male from certain death within the vehicle.

Fink received his award on November 1, 1972, at the Kirtland Country Club. Guest Speaker, Dr. Morton Bard stated that Fink "represents an aspect of law enforcement which few of us know anything about. Everyday police work requires the kind of judgment that Mr. Fink exercised."

Gary Fink continued through the ranks of the Eastlake Police Department eventually serving and retiring as Chief of Police. Prior to fully retiring from law enforcement, he then served as the part time Police Chief of the Village of Timberlake.