

# 1983

## Patrolman Ralph A. Zappola, Jr.

### Mentor Police Department

You join the police department because you want to make a difference. You are full of youthful exuberance and every day is a new adventure. To take that drive, determination, and initiative and make that difference within your first three years on the job is truly remarkable. Patrolman Ralph A. Zappola did the remarkable.

Zappola joined the Mentor Police Department late in 1980. As is the case with many new officers, Zappola was aggressive, and eager to get involved. In early 1983, he developed an informant who he thought would be able to supply information on illegal narcotic activity in the City of Mentor, and specifically, in the Headlands area.

Zappola approached Chief Joseph Koziol and asked permission to work these drug cases undercover, and through his informant. This was an unusual request for an officer with so little time on the department. Even more unusual was that after hearing his proposal, and information that he had already obtained, Chief Koziol granted his request.

Zappola was introduced and assigned to work with members of the Lake County Narcotics Agency under Director Warren Goodwin. He worked this undercover assignment from March 30<sup>th</sup> to May 13, 1983. He quickly made the transition from a uniformed patrol officer to undercover work.

Zappola was introduced to many people who were selling illegal narcotics in the Headlands area. He gained their trust, and even in such a small community, was not recognized. Chief Koziol commented that he was so successful, that he was able to sit down in a kitchen of a residence, and purchase narcotics from people that he had recently arrested. During his 6 week assignment, Zappola made 83 drug buys. His work culminated in the arrest of 43 drug dealers in the Lake County area, in a series of pre-dawn raids dubbed "Operation Clean Sweep." At least one third of those arrests were directly attributed to the work of Patrolman Zappola. Goodwin praised his work as a spectacular performance.

Zappola was honored by the Blue Coats at their banquet on November 30, 1983 at Villa de Borally.

Zappola went on to a successful career with the Mentor Police Department, retiring as Sergeant in 1995, due to an on-duty injury. In 2008, Zappola suddenly and unexpectedly died, leaving behind his family and many friends.