

08-19-1984 – Rochester NY – Ronald Siver - LEO PSD Boat Accident –Law Suit - Updated**Ronald J. Silver**

American police diver, Rochester, New York. Attempting to find the body of a man who died in a boating accident, suffered unknown problems, drowned.

<http://www.thediversassociation.com/index.php/sheets>

**OFFICER DOWN MEMORIAL PAGE**

REMEMBERING ALL OF LAW ENFORCEMENT'S HEROES

<http://www.odmp.org/officer/12301-police-officer-ronald-j-siver>

**Police Officer****Ronald J. Siver**

Rochester Police Department, New York

End of Watch: Sunday, August 19, 1984

Officer Ronald Siver drowned during a water recovery operation.

It was determined that Officer Siver, a member of the police scuba team, gave his life to save his partner due to an equipment failure.

Off. Ronald J. Siver

Rochester Police Dept.

Rochester, NY

<http://www.wateroperations.com/wateroperations/lawfatalities.htm>

Off. Siver drowned on August 19, 1984 during a scuba dive. The victim officer and other members of the police department scuba squad were assisting local sheriff's officers in an attempt to locate the body of a man

who drowned as a result of a boating accident. The victim officer suffered unknown problems while at 75' and drowned.

<http://nyshistoricnewspapers.org/lccn/sn88074101/1984-08-23/ed-1/seq-7.pdf>

600 cops expected for funeral

ROCHESTER, N.Y. (UPI) — More than 600 police officers from across the state were expected to attend a ceremonial funeral Thursday for a police scuba diver who drowned in Irondequoit Bay this week.

Officer Ronald Siver, 30, and his diving partner were searching the murky bay bottom Sun-

day for the body of a boat accident victim when Siver signaled that he was having problems breathing.

Divers found the officer's unconscious body floating near the bottom of the bay. Siver, an eight-year police veteran and scuba squad member, was pronounced dead about one hour

later.

At least 600 officers from across New York state are expected to attend Thursday's ceremonial funeral service at St. Ann's Church, said Lt. Brian Page.

"It's a show of solidarity among 30 different police departments around the state," Page said.

Diver Dies While Helping Search For Missing Man

ROCHESTER, N.Y. (AP) — A police scuba diver has died while helping a search team in their effort to find a 25-year-old man missing since a boat crash on Irondequoit Bay last week.

Lt. Brian Page of the Rochester police department said Police Officer Ronald Siver, 29, was about 70 feet under water when he was stricken about noon Sunday.

"Evidently he had a problem while he was down there with his partner," Page said. "We don't know yet what the cause of death was."

Page said Siver was taken ashore and efforts were made to revive him, but he was pronounced dead at Rochester General Hospital.

Page and another Rochester policeman, Thomas Fantigrossi, were searching under water for John Carlson, of Irondequoit, who was a passenger in a boat that col-

lided with another boat at midnight Thursday.

Carlson was riding with David Battoglia, 24, who died Friday at Rochester General Hospital of head injuries suffered in the crash. Shortly after Battoglia died, his heart was removed and rushed to Buffalo where it was given to Robert Quandt, 35, of Silver Creek, in a heart transplant operation at Buffalo General Hospital.

Page said Siver had been on the Rochester police force about 3½ years and had been on the scuba-diving detail about 3 years. Before joining the police, he had been a Monroe County sheriff's deputy.

Page said that although the site of the boat crash was outside Rochester, city police were helping the sheriff's department with the search under a mutual assistance policy.

<http://nyshistoricnewspapers.org/>

**AUGUST, 1984
NEW YORK**

The police dive team was called to assist the local sheriff's office in the recovery mode search for two drowning victims. The dive plan was to utilize tow sleds in the large search area. The depth of the search area was 75 ft. with an estimated 3-4 foot visibility and bottom water temperature of approximately 40 degrees. Safety divers were stationed on a second boat. Team #1 searched for just under 20 minutes when one diver indicated that he was low on air and signaled to his buddy to surface. After sticking their sleds into the bottom the divers began their ascent.

During the ascent, the other diver, who was not utilizing a pressure gauge, signaled for his buddy to activate his J-valve. When the J-valve was pushed down, the diver found his air supply completely shut off and the two divers attempted to buddy breathe to the surface. The out-of-air diver took on water when he placed the shared regulator into his mouth upside down and made a rapid ascent. Upon surfacing he did not display any symptoms, but was taken to a local hospital for evaluation. It was later determined that the J-valve mechanism had been installed backwards, a condition that was not noticed during the filling of the tanks. After the first dive, the tow boat changed location which caused the two sleds to become tangled together.

When team #2 entered the water, their first task was to untangle the lines and give a line signal to start the search. Approximately two minutes after the signal to begin the search and approximately 13 minutes into the dive, one of the divers indicated that he was having air problems and indicated to his buddy to activate his J-valve. As the divers moved about the bottom, the visibility dropped to near zero. The buddy was not sure that he actually activated the J-valve and the divers began to buddy breathe. The buddy offered his regulator three times but was not sure if the diver was able to utilize it and obtain air. He believes his buddy may have tried to utilize his own regulator between passes.

The divers started to ascend and then settled back on the bottom and lost contact.

The buddy realized that he was low on air and surfaced.

Safety divers from the second boat entered the water to locate the missing diver. One safety team diver had problems equalizing and stopped at 40 feet. The remaining safety diver continued to the bottom and located the victim next to his sled. He attempted to bring him to the surface, but could not handle his weight and proceeded to tie the tow line to the diver's tank valve and then surfaced. The diver was pulled to the surface and rescue efforts failed. Equipment tests showed that his tank still had 500 psi remaining, but his regulator was performing poorly and below recommended specifications.

During the response of the safety divers to the site, the first safety diver experienced a regulator free-flow and had to change regulators, and the second safety diver broke a fin strap and had to borrow a fin.

Note: Since this tragedy, this team has become one of the better trained and equipped team in the country.

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<https://www.newspapers.com/newspage/137133269/>

Valor on his chest.

Outside, two mounted officers wearing gold neckerchiefs and gold braid on their sleeves helped officers on motorcycles direct traffic. Inside, family members filled the viewing room and police officers, many crying, lined the hallways.

"We know the chances you take. But it's moments like these, I guess, that snap you back to the reality that you really do a dangerous job," said Ronald Evangelista, president of the police union, the Locust Club. "On the other side of that coin, you realize that there are people in this community who wouldn't survive without our protecting them. And we'll keep doing it, on Ronnie's behalf. All we ask is support from the community."

At 2:30 p.m. yesterday, 75 sheriff's deputies and officers led by Sheriff Andrew Meloni filed into the funeral home in pairs. Asked to comment about Siver, a former deputy, Meloni broke down and said, "I can't Not now."

American flags throughout the city will fly at half-staff until Siver's funeral tomorrow. Police officers countywide are wearing black bands across their badges in his memory.

After his death, Siver was awarded the Medal of Valor, the police department's highest honor. The medal is for distinguished service or death in the line of duty.

Siver joined the police department in 1981 after four years with the sheriff's department. As a member of the police scuba squad, he was called Sunday to help search Irondequoit Bay for John Carlson, whose body was recovered Monday.

Siver apparently had problems breathing while searching in about 75 feet of water. His unconscious body was found floating near the bottom. Police Chief Leach has asked diving experts from Duke University in North Carolina to help determine what caused the fatal accident. "They are supposedly the foremost experts in diving and scuba diving equipment" said Lt Brian Page, police spokesman, Leach also may ask the experts at Duke to examine the diving equipment Siver was , using, Page said.

Officer Siver's funeral may be the largest in department history

By Laura Meade Democrat and Chronicle

Officer Ronald J. Siver wore the gold Medal of Valor yesterday as hundreds of police officers paid tearful tribute beside his casket Siver, 29, died Sunday after he was pulled unconscious from Irondequoit Bay. He was searching for the victim of a fatal boating accident when he drowned. "He was one of my scuba divers and that makes him one of the greatest guys going," said Lt. Warren Dyer, commander of

the police scuba diving team. "We all know what we face down there, but he wanted to do it anyway."

City settles suit over officer who died

<https://www.newspapers.com/newspage/137220882/>

March 22, 1986 By Andy Pollack and Todd Lighty Democrat and Chronicle

The city of Rochester yesterday agreed to pay more than \$1 million to the widow of a police officer who died in August 1984 while searching the murky waters of Irondequoit Bay for the victim of a boat crash. Elizabeth Ann Siver, the widow of Officer Ronald J. Siver

Mrs. Siver had sued the city for negligence, claiming improper training procedures for the police scuba diving squad and faulty equipment led to her husband's death. The city did not admit negligence in the settlement.

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<https://www.newspapers.com/newspage/137220618/>

DEMOCRAT AND CHRONICLE. ROCHESTER. N.Y.

SATURDAY. MARCH 22. 1986

City agrees to pay police diver's widow more than \$1 million for 1984 death

A Rochester Police Scuba Team diver, died Aug. 19, 1984. He was pulled unconscious from the bay.

"My only hope is that this will prevent another unnecessary tragedy. I will always be proud of him," she said Kash said the scuba squad has stepped up its training for emergency situations and improved equipment maintenance and repair. Last December, police bought \$17,500 worth of new equipment for the scuba squad.

Kash and Farr said the settlement was based on calculations about Siver's future earnings, his life expectancy and a possible jury verdict Farr said it was not important whether the city admitted wrongdoing in connection with Siver's death. "What is important is something like this doesn't happen again," he said. The city will invest in an annuity to pay for the settlement.

The overall cost of the settlement to the city will be \$300,000. The city's self-insurance program will pay the \$300,000 because the amount does not reach its liability insurance policy deductible, Kash said.

Siver, 29, a local law enforcement officer for eight years, died Aug. 19, 1984, after he was pulled unconscious from Irondequoit Bay. He and other members of the department's diving team had been searching for the victim of a fatal boat crash.

"One of the large factual issues was whether his reserve (air tank) valve got turned on down there," Kash said. "His partner says he thinks he did and that's one statement, but the officer in the boat also . . . stated that it was turned off."

Kash said Siver and his partner, Thomas Fantigrossi, clad in gloves and wetsuits with air tanks strapped to their backs, had worked for more than 10 minutes when they began to use up their

air supply in the dark, chilled waters 70 feet beneath the surface. "You get disoriented. You could be moving sideways when you think you're going up. God, what a difficult situation that must be. What an awful situation," Kash said. "All the experts we talked to emphasized to us time and again that diving is inherently dangerous, which means that no matter what you do there's always a risk of danger," he said.

Kash said no one knows exactly what happened to the two officers as they struggled along the bay bottom, but city lawyers and police investigators do not believe faulty equipment caused Siver's death.

Although questions remain, Kash said an investigation conducted by the police department, city lawyers and diving experts pieced together this account: Siver and Fantigrossi were riding sleds 4 feet long and 1 foot wide along the silt, mud and decaying plants of the bay's bottom. The sleds were mounted with powerful spotlights and were tied to the squad's powerboat, which slowly dragged them forward.

The officers rode side-by-side about four feet apart. After 11 or 12 minutes, Siver signaled that his air tank was nearly empty. "The problem was he ran out of air just at the point he was supposed to run out" Kash said. "That was the signal for them to go to the surface."

"He made a signal to his partner. He didn't appear to panic or anything. He tapped his tank to indicate he wanted his reserve tank turned on. That was when they left the sleds and left the light" Kash said the divers were plunged into darkness and groped for each other in the 38- to 44-degree water.

"So as they left the sleds they couldn't see each other, they couldn't see their own fingers on their face masks," Kash said. "It was that dark. His partner was unquestionably having a difficult time reaching Siver."

The day of the accident police said Siver sucked on the mouthpiece of Fantigrossi's air tank and both headed up. Fantigrossi broke through the water, but Siver never surfaced. Other divers, prepared as a safety team, dived to the bottom, found Siver unconscious and pulled him to the surface.

Kash said the valve of the reserve tank on a diver's back "can be in places that are a little awkward to reach." "Siver was certainly an experienced diver. He knew where his reserve tank was and so did his partner," Kash said.

The city has reviewed different models of reserve tanks, but "in every case you get a guy having to reach behind him for something he can't see," Kash said.

City Public Safety Commissioner Paul Bringewatt declined to comment and referred all questions to Kash. Police Chief Gordon Urlacher could not be reached. Top police officers and city lawyers had investigated the accident aided by diving experts affiliated with Duke University in North Carolina. Farr and city lawyers had been haggling in court over the release of reports compiled by the Duke diving experts.

The city in March 1985 released part of a report that showed Siver's mouthpiece regulator was corroded. The regulator allows air to pass from the tanks to the diver's mouthpiece.

Kash maintained yesterday that the regulator trouble did not cause Siver's death. "I don't think it was the regulator. I think, basically, he ran out of air." Kash said tests showed Siver's regulator was dirty, slightly corroded and improperly lubricated.

RPD NEWS

[file:///C:/Users/owner/Downloads/RPD%20News-June%202011%20\(Public\)%20new%20\(1\).pdf](file:///C:/Users/owner/Downloads/RPD%20News-June%202011%20(Public)%20new%20(1).pdf)

REMEMBERING OUR FALLEN HEROES

Thirteen officers have died in the line of duty over the 194-year-history of the Rochester Police Department. In upcoming issues of RPD News, we will honor their memory by sharing their stories with members of our department and the community.

Our thanks to Capt. Johnston for researching and providing the information.

OFFICER RONALD J. SIVER APPOINTED – JANUARY 12, 1981 10/24/ 1954 - 8/19/1984 BADGE #300



On Sunday, August 19, 1984, Officer Ronald J. Siver drowned during a water recovery in Irondequoit Bay.

The Rochester Police Department Scuba Squad had been called in to assist the Monroe County Sheriff's Department in its search for John Carlson of Irondequoit, who had been missing since a boating collision Thursday August 15, 1984 just before midnight.

Officer Siver had been in the murky waters of Irondequoit Bay only about 15 minutes when he began signaling his diving partner that he was having trouble. Divers had been using sleds equipped with lights to comb the bottom of the bay, about 70 feet below the surface.

Officer Siver and his partner were completing the hook-up of the sled to its ropes along the bottom when he began using hand signals that he was having breathing problems. Officer Siver's partner began to assist him in the ascent by attempting to "buddy breathe" by sharing his apparatus with him.

A safety team of Officers Johnathan Northrup and George Riess Jr. (Siver's brother-in-law), received a signal at the water's surface and entered the water.

Officer Siver was brought unconscious to the surface by the three divers and began receiving CPR from the moment he came up. Officer Siver was rushed to shore by relay boat and to Rochester General Hospital by Point Pleasant Ambulance. Officer Siver never regained consciousness.

Officer Siver was awarded the Rochester Police Department Medal of Valor and it was presented to his wife, Elizabeth.

He was buried at White Haven Memorial Park Cemetery, Pittsford, on August 23, 1984. Officer Siver's name appears on Panel 59-E-7 on the National Law Enforcement Memorial located in Washington, D.C.