

**\*\*\*For Immediate Release\*\*\***

Captain Neil Weaver  
Government and Media Relations

**Chris Loftis, Communications Director**  
Office (360) 596-4013  
Cell (360) 485-3983  
[Chris.Loftis@wsp.wa.gov](mailto:Chris.Loftis@wsp.wa.gov)

**September 15, 2020**

## **Ernest Edward Eichhorn**

**Commissioned - November 8, 1948**

**End of Watch - September 16, 1958**



Trooper Ernest E. Eichhorn was struck by an impaired driver while conducting traffic control at the Puyallup Fairgrounds on Sept. 13, 1958 and died three days later on September 16. The beloved husband, father, and decorated WWII veteran was the 15<sup>th</sup> of 30 Washington State Patrol personnel to die in the line of duty during the agency's first century of operations. He left behind a grieving widow, four young children, a heartbroken extended family, a group of honored colleagues in law enforcement, and a grateful state of Washington. He was 33 years old.

## BIO

Washington State Patrol Trooper Ernest Edward Eichhorn lived a life centered on service and family.

Born Aug. 25, 1925 in Drake, North Dakota, to Frank P. Eichhorn and Bertha Maesner, he was raised alongside sisters Dorothy Ann, Geraldine, and Carolyn, in North Dakota before the family moved to Puyallup, Wash., in 1942. Eichhorn graduated from Puyallup High School in 1943 and began working for the Boeing Company.

He enlisted in the United States Army on Sept. 13, 1944, during World War II. His two-year tour included time in Japan and he received the Bronze Star for his service.

During his years of service, the young private met the love of his life, Marion Ruth Dorn, and the two wed on February 9, 1945. Eichhorn shipped off for duty the next day and his first-born son, Jimmy, would arrive later that same year.

With his military service concluded, Eichhorn sought ways to continue to serve his country and community, while also building his family. He joined the Washington State Patrol on Sept. 26, 1946, as a clerk based in Tacoma before joining the 14E Cadet Class.

Eichhorn received his commission on Nov. 8, 1948, under the leadership of Chief H. W. Algeo and was assigned to Yakima. He resigned his commission on April 18, 1949, only to return to the patrol the next year. He then transferred to Puyallup in September 1953.

As Trooper Eichhorn's experience as a trooper grew, so did his young family. The couple welcomed three daughters: Jannie in 1950, Jill in 1954, and Julie Ann in 1957.

## END OF WATCH

On Saturday evening, Sept. 13, 1958, Trooper Eichhorn was directing traffic in front of the Puyallup Fairgrounds during the Western Washington Fair when an impaired driver struck and threw him some 30 feet. The driver had reportedly been drinking throughout the afternoon and evening with a blood-alcohol level more than twice the legal limit at the time of the collision. He later told authorities he "just didn't see" Trooper Eichhorn though Eichhorn was holding a red traffic light. The driver, taken into custody, faced negligent homicide charges.

The gravely injured trooper was taken to Tacoma General Hospital but tragically, never regained consciousness. He succumbed to his injuries three days later on Tuesday, September 16, 1958. His widow, Marion, was at his bedside when he passed. "I've got four children to take care of now," she told the Seattle Times. "That's my job on this earth."

## Officer Hit By Car, Badly Hurt At Fair

A state patrolman, directing traffic two blocks from the Western Washington Fair Grounds in Puyallup, was struck and seriously injured by a motorist late Saturday night.

The officer is Ernest E. Eichhorn, 30, of Puyallup. Eichhorn was admitted to the Tacoma General Hospital with a skull fracture and compound fractures of the left leg.

EICHORN WAS directing traffic at the intersection of 7th St. and Meridian Ave. in Puyallup. He was facing north when the motorist, Charles E. Baker, 46, of Puyallup, headed south, failed to obey Eichhorn's signal to stop and ran into him, the State Patrol reported.

The officer was hurled 30 feet by the impact. Baker was given a Harger test, and his reading was .185 the Patrol said. A reading of .150 is usually considered evidence of intoxication. Baker was held on drunk and reckless driving charges in the Puyallup Jail.

"I just didn't see him," Baker said. "As soon as I realized I had hit something, I pulled over and stopped. It didn't take long to stop, so I don't think I was going very fast."

ANOTHER state patrolman said he had warned Eichhorn to be careful in the intersection because the motorist would have trouble seeing him.

The injured officer lives at 8224 Thomas Road, Puyallup, and has a wife and two children.

## Patrolman dies of injuries

WASHINGTON State Patrol Officer Ernest E. Eichhorn, 33, died in a Tacoma hospital Tuesday night of injuries suffered last Saturday night when he was struck down by a car while he directed traffic for the Fair at 7th and South Meridian.

Charles E. Baker, 46, well known Puyallup resident, was charged additionally Wednesday morning by Prosecutor John McCutcheon with negligent homicide. Baker, whose car hit the patrolman, was released on bail Monday after charges of drunken and reckless driving had been brought, and surrendered himself to court again Wednesday, with bail set at \$1,000 on the more serious charge.

Eichhorn was hit about 10:35 p. m. Saturday, as he stood in the intersection at 7th and South Meridian. The impact threw him into the air, landing about 30 feet away, in front of another car. Despite four hours in surgery, he did not fully recover consciousness before his death.

Eichhorn, who had been with the State Patrol for 10 years, resided at Rt. 3, Box 54, with his wife and four children. He was born in North Dakota and had lived here since 1942, and was graduated from Puyallup High School in 1942. He served in the Army during World War II in Japan.

He is survived by his wife, Marion, a son Jimmy, 13, three daughters, Jannie, 8, Jill, 4, and Julie, 20 months; his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Frank Eichhorn, three sisters, Mrs. Dorot Hopkins of Oregon, Mrs. Geraldine Blayden of Idaho and Carolyn of the home. Funeral services are being arranged by the Mountain View Funeral Home.

BAKER, whose home is a 119 12th NW, also is a long-time resident of Puyallup. He had been employed on a temporary job by the Fair, and had slept there during the night, overseeing distribution of the hay, and feed to the barns early in the morning. He had then worked a full day uptown, had gone home for dinner, and was going down to the Fair to pick up his wife when the accident happened.

(Continued on page 4)

SEP 18 1958

## Patrol Officer Critically Injured



State Highway Patrolman Ernest E. Eichhorn, 33, lies in Tacoma General hospital, still unconscious as of Tuesday afternoon, and considered to be in very serious condition from injuries sustained Saturday evening while on patrol duty at the fairgrounds. While directing traffic, Eichhorn was struck by a car driven by Charles E. Baker of Puyallup, later taken into custody on charges of drunken and reckless driving. Mr. and Mrs. Eichhorn and their four children make their home at Rt. 3, Box 54, Puyallup, in the Woodland area. Assigned to the Mountain patrol and Valley patrol, Eichhorn is well known in the area and has won a host of friends through his efficient and courteous service. (McKewen Studio Photo)

AUG 18 1958

## Patrolman

(Continued from page 1)

Baker said that he did not see the patrolman, who was carrying a red police light.

Possible penalties on the charge of negligent homicide range from a sentence of 20 years in the state penitentiary, to a sentence of one year in the county jail and a fine of \$1,000. The judge has the power to suspend this sentence. Baker probably will be arraigned next week, and if he enters a plea of guilty, it is possible that he will receive his sentence at that time. If the case goes to a jury trial, it will be held in January.

## Four Children Of Patrolman Learn 'Daddy Is Dead'

By DON DUNCAN  
Times Staff Reporter  
PUYALLUP, Sept. 18—

Mrs. Ernest E. Eichhorn gathered her four children around her in their Puyallup home yesterday. Then she made the shortest and most difficult speech of her life:



"Daddy is dead," Eichhorn, 33, had been a state patrolman for ten years. He died EICHORN last night in a Tacoma hospital of a skull fracture and other injuries suffered when he was struck by an automobile Saturday night while directing traffic near the Western Washington Fairgrounds.

The driver, Charles E. Baker, 46, of Puyallup, was charged with driving while under the influence of liquor and reckless driving.

(In Tacoma yesterday Prosecutor John G. McCutcheon filed a negligent-homicide charge against Baker. Bail was set at \$1,000.)

"I was at his bedside all the time," said Mrs. Eichhorn. "He never regained consciousness. It's better that it's all over—he never could have lived a normal life again."

Mrs. Eichhorn bit her lip and held back the tears. She said:

"I don't feel any bitter-

ness toward the driver. I imagine he's suffering like we are. What he has done, he must live with."

Mrs. Eichhorn said she long ago prepared herself for a possible tragic ending to her marriage. She recognized her husband's work as dangerous.

"I've got four children to take care of now," she said. "That's my job on this earth. I have no intention of going out to work and letting someone else raise them."

Mrs. Eichhorn's children — Jimmy, 13, Jane, 8, Jill, 4 and Julie Ann, 21 months—were in the kitchen when their mother spoke. Jimmy and Jane wept in the arms of their grandparents. Jill and Julie Ann were too young to understand fully.

Eichhorn was a graduate of Puyallup High School. He lived at 8224 Thomas Road, next door to his parents' home.

For his service and sacrifice, Trooper Eichhorn was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor by the Law Enforcement Medal of Honor Committee in May 1988.

The Washington State Patrol will always remember Trooper Ernest Eichhorn. In this, our 100<sup>th</sup> year of service to the state of Washington, we remember him as a good and decent man, a devoted father, a loving husband, a decorated soldier, and a fine servant of the public. With that memory, we will soon begin a second century of vigilance in the fight against impaired driving so that every father, mother, husband, wife, daughter and son can get home safely.

###