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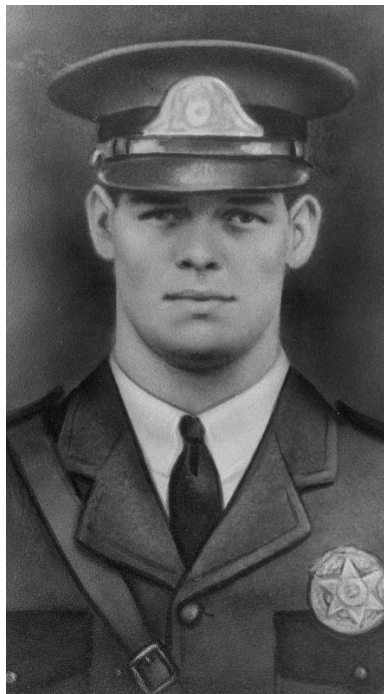
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## **Henry D. Cossmann**

**Commissioned – August 6, 1929**  
**End of Watch – October 9, 1929**



Washington Highway Patrol Officer Henry Douglas Cossmann died on October, 9 1929 after a motorcycle collision with an automobile two weeks earlier on September 23rd in Tacoma. He was 29 years old.

Patrolman Cossmann had been with the agency for only two months at the time of his passing and left behind a grieving widow and a then small, but statewide agency of colleagues who mourned the untimely passing of one of their newest members. He was the fourth of 30 WSP personnel to die in the line of duty in the agency's century of operations. From humble beginnings, he was able to attend college, serve in the Army Air Corps, and work as a teacher prior to his service in the Washington State Patrol (then named the Washington State Highway Patrol.)

Though his service was brief, his sacrifice is forever enduring and the State of Washington remembers him with all due respect, honor and appreciation.

## BIO

The Washington State Patrol lost its fourth highway patrol officer within two months of his commission date when Officer Henry D. Cossmann, a brother, son, and husband, was killed in a collision in October 1929.

Born on September 17, 1900, in Dewitt, Iowa, to John and Beoda Cossmann, he grew up with two brothers, Leo and James. The family moved to Lane County, OR in 1911. The three brothers enjoyed camping and hiking in the Oregon wilds and James would eventually serve as an Army officer during WWI before settling in the Los Angeles area. Henry's father, John worked as a blacksmith in Iowa before moving to Oregon where he worked for the railroad. He later worked as a janitor for the University of Oregon where Henry and his younger brother, Leo, attended beginning in 1920.

Henry would become a drum major in the university's cadet corps and leave college for a stint in the Army Aviation Corps stationed in Florida as an aviation field patrolman. He would return to school and marry fellow alum, Ruby Myrtle McWherter before the couple moved to Washington.

After their move, Cossmann worked as a driver and teacher in the Tacoma area before being commissioned with the Washington State Highway Patrol on August 6, 1929.

## END OF WATCH

Washington State Highway Patrolman Henry D. Cossmann was involved in a collision with an automobile while riding his motorcycle on September 23, 1929, at the intersection of 46th Street and Park Avenue in Tacoma.

Newspaper reports stated he'd been "run down" and witnesses reported that he was broadsided by an oncoming car while making a turn. He was transported to a Tacoma hospital with serious head injuries and never regained consciousness. He succumbed to his injuries two weeks later on October 9, 1929.

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After her husband's death, Ruby Cossmann would go on to teach in the Tacoma Public Schools before passing away in 1997. Patrolman Cossmann only served two months with the Washington State Highway Patrol before his death but is still honored for his courage and commitment. At his funeral, his body was escorted by 28 state patrolmen, more than half of the state's entire force at the time, as well as 14 members of the Tacoma Police Department. In each of the 91 years since his passing, the Washington State Patrol pauses to remember the blacksmith's son, the soldier's brother, the teacher's husband, the guardian's partner, and the traveler's friend.

## **Washington State Highway Patrolman Henry D. Cossmann**

**End of Watch – October 9, 1929**

***Gone But Never Forgotten***

PHOTOS OF THE ERA:



The Washington State Highway Patrol (known as the Washington State Patrol since 1933) began with 16 commissioned officers riding Indian Motorcycles in 1921. Here, one of the original patrolmen, George Potter is shown in the riding attire of the day. Early assignments could be months-long solo deployments covering multiple counties, thus the sidecars were often filled with camping gear and provisions. Uniforms would become a part of the agency in 1924 and motorcycles would dominate the agency's service approach for two decades.



By the late 20s and early 30s, the agency had moved to the more powerful and adaptable Harley Davidson models. In this 1929 photo, an unidentified Highway Patrolmen shows the uniform and equipment of the day. A fully restored 1928 Harley Davidson Patrol Unit is now on display at the WSP Academy in Shelton.



In an era of rapidly expanding road use, traffic laws that could vary greatly by locale, and resistance by many to the very idea of a 35 mph speed limit, safety pledges became a popular way to inform and guide the public. The Washington State Highway Patrol was originally primarily focused on traffic supervision but in 1933 would receive full police powers and begin additional statewide criminal investigative services. With those broader duties, the agency changed its name to the Washington State Patrol.

Actress Clara Bow poses beside her signed copy of the Silvertown Safety Pledge, used in marketing Goodrich Silvertown Tires. Many of the tenets of the safety pledges would go on to inform modern traffic law. Supporting uniformity in motor vehicle laws across the country, the state legislature repealed all existing local traffic laws and passed the Washington Uniform Motor Vehicle Code of 1937.

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