



As a Cleveland police officer, then a detective during the Roaring Twenties and Great Depression, Walter Zema (1905-1952) surely lived a life filled with adrenalin rushes.

He shot criminals dead, including teenagers. He witnessed a suicide. He likely saw more corpses than he cared to count.

After serving from 1924 to 1938, most of it as a detective, Walter remained on the Cleveland police force, having transferred to the "Hotels, Stores, Checks and Pawn Unit" as a store detective. He thought this might give him respite from the violence he had witness, and the bodily harm he had placed himself in during 14 years on the streets. But in 1948 he was forced to shoot to kill a criminal at Higbee's, a downtown Cleveland department store. It must have weighed heavily on him.

Four years later he was dead. Walter was just 47 years old.

Part 1. Walter's birth

Walter Stanley Zema was born on Thursday, May 4, 1905 in Cleveland, Ohio, the firstborn child to young Polish immigrant parents Sophia Knybel Zema and Stanislaw (Stanley) Zema. Sophia was a new mother at age 16, less than two years after she wed Stanley. Their wedding was on Aug. 19, 1903 in Cleveland. The couple's first child came two years later when father Stanley was 25. Walter was the first of the next generation, thus making his mother's parents first-time grandparents.



Where Stanley and Sophia lived when Walter was born is unclear, as is how Stanley earned a living. Perhaps they lived with Sophia's parents John (1865-1930) and Mary Kuczek Knybel (Knaybel) (1865-1947), who had eight daughters and no sons over a 29-year period (1883 -1912); Sophia was second-oldest of her siblings. In 1905 when Walter was born, Sophia's sister Katharine would have been 12, Caroline 10, Anna 7, and Margaret 5; Bertha and Josephine were not yet born. Or perhaps they had a place of their own, as Stanley was 25 years old at the time of Walter's birth, and had immigrated to the U.S. in Nov. 1899, four years before Sophia.

John Knybel (1865-1930) and wife Mary Kuczek Knybel (1865-1947) at their rented house on Harvard Ave. in Cleveland, circa 1920s. John and Mary were the maternal grandparents of Walter Zema, and both lived long enough to see their firstborn grandchild become a police officer.



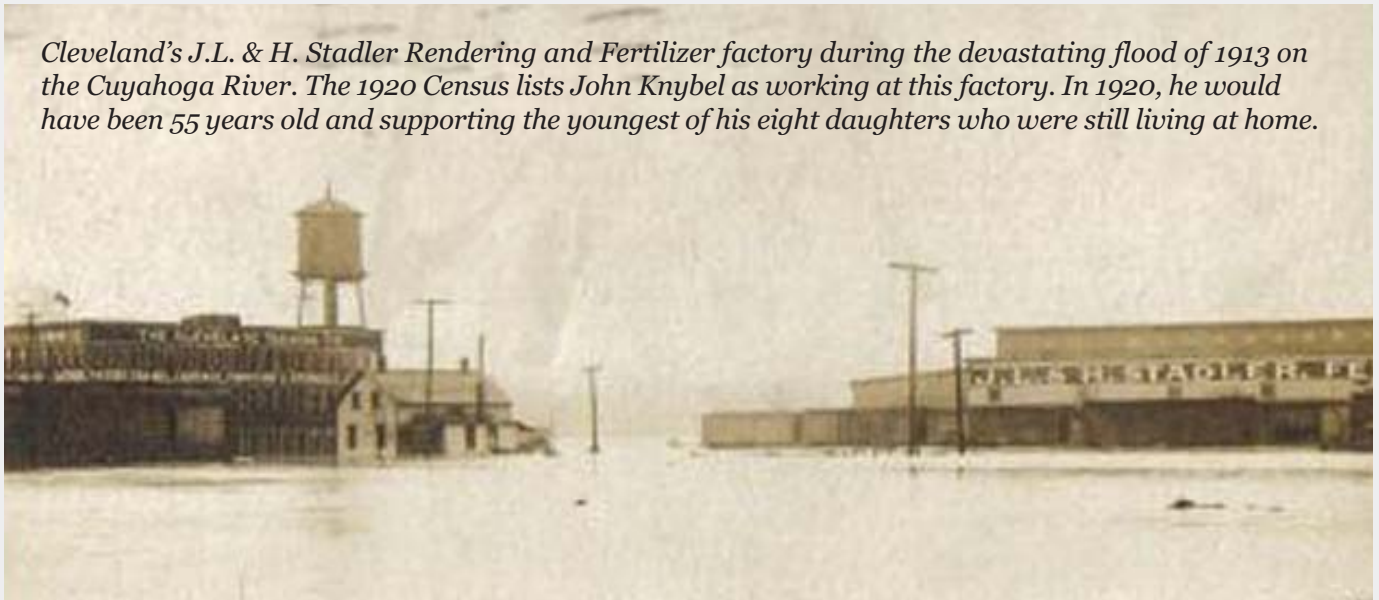
The 1920 Census lists John Knaybel as 56, emigrating in 1903, of “alien” status, able to speak English but unable to write it, and employed at the J.L. & H. Stadler Product Company.

This was a gas stage plant and rendering and fertilizer factory that manufactured grease, field manure, and high-grade fertilizer from waste material and dead animals collected from all around Cleveland, as well as from the Cleveland union stock yards.

This must have been a terrible job, the kind of labor that was often relegated to immigrants such as John.

John was living in a rented home at 613 Harvard Ave. This census also lists his wife Mary as immigrating in 1903, of “alien” status, able to speak English but unable to write it. In 1930, John Knaybel died of “organic heart disease” on June 5; he was 65 years old.

Where Great-Grandpa Knybel toiled for a living



Cleveland's J.L. & H. Stadler Rendering and Fertilizer factory during the devastating flood of 1913 on the Cuyahoga River. The 1920 Census lists John Knybel as working at this factory. In 1920, he would have been 55 years old and supporting the youngest of his eight daughters who were still living at home.

J.L. & H. Stadler Rendering and Fertilizer manufactured grease, field manure, and high grade fertilizer from waste material and dead animals collected from all around Cleveland as well as from the Cleveland Union stock yards. In 1917, bones could cost around 1/2 cents per pound. Shop fats around 3 to 5 cents per pound. Many of the residents who lived on Jennings Avenue and the adjacent neighborhood now known as Barbarowa were employed here. In addition, the Stadlers also ran the Farmer's Supply Store on Pearl Road in South Brooklyn. Farmers could obtain virtually everything needed from major equipment such as buggies, wagons, sleighs, harnesses, and feed mills, to tools and appliances. The owners, John L. and Henry Stadler also had stables on West 14th Street on the south side of Denison Avenue, just behind the property that later housed Mike's Gulf Station.

By 1910, baby Walter would have two brothers —Andrew, born Sep. 15, 1907, and Stanislaw, born Feb. 13, 1910.

His mother Sophia would be pregnant at the same time as her own mother, “Grandma Knybel,” which was quite common in those days when women might have children over a 20- or 30-year timespan.

Case in point: Sophia’s first daughter Stephey Zema Holeski was born Nov. 23, 1912, and earlier that same year, Grandma Knybel’s youngest child “Aunt Josephine” was born March 9, 1912. Aunt Jo was a real “change of life” baby for Grandma Knybel, who was 46 at the time of her birth, having had her first child at age 17. Poor Grandma Knybel!



Sophia Knybel Zema with one of her seven children, circa 1916. Sophia had her first child, Walter, in 1905 when she was just 16 years old.

The baby here is likely Frank (b.1915). But it could also be Mary (b. 1921).



In 1910 the Americanization Movement was underway, a time when immigrants were expected to quickly assimilate into American society. The United States dealt with a flood of immigrants during the early 20th century, and the Americanization Movement offered a variety of programs and campaigns aimed at turning foreigners into Americans.

Yet Stanley and Sophia clung to their Polish roots, speaking Polish in their home almost exclusively. Stanley would have been forced to learn more English than Sophia, as he worked outside the home.

Records show that Stanley didn’t apply for U.S. citizenship until April 1926 when he was 48 years old. His petition for naturalization shows his birthplace as Grudna, Dolna, Poland, his occupation as molder, and his address as 3808 West 14th St., Cleveland. Stanley was naturalized on Sep. 14, 1928 at the U.S. District Court in Cleveland. His wife Sophia applied for citizenship on April 1, 1928, and her petition for naturalization shows her birthplace as Braustek, Poland, her occupation as housewife, and her address the same as her husband’s. So in 1928 Grandma and Grandpa Zema had yet to move to their large and stately bungalow home at 3743 West 15th Street.

By 1913, Walter Zema was 8 years old—big brother to two kid brothers and his first baby sister. Andy was 6, Stanley was 3, and baby Stephania was born Nov. 23, 1912.

But the first of many tragedies would strike Walter's life when his then-youngest brother Stanley died on March 27, 1913. His cause of death is unknown. How did his mother Sophia get through this awful death, especially just four months after giving birth to her first daughter?

In the years to come, the world would enter a Great War from July 1914 to November 1918. World War I was one of the deadliest conflicts in history, with an estimated 9 million combatant deaths and 13 million civilian deaths as a direct result of the war. While Poland did not exist as an independent state during World War I, its geographical position between the fighting powers meant that much fighting and terrific human and material losses occurred on the Polish lands.

Additionally, resulting genocides and the related 1918 Spanish flu pandemic caused another 17–100 million deaths worldwide, including an estimated 2.64 million Spanish flu deaths in Europe and as



many as 675,000 Spanish flu deaths in the United States.

It's likely that Walter and his family were closely following the news of the day in a Cleveland newspaper in the Polish language, as many relatives were still in Europe.

[Sophia's birth was on July 7, 188 in Brzostek, Podkarpacie, in what was to become the independent republic of Poland after World War I.]

After the war ended in

1918, the nation became gripped by the First Red Scare in the aftermath of the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia. The local branch of the Cleveland Socialists demanded better working conditions for the largely immigrant and migrant workers—which included Grandpa Knybel and his job at the J.L. & H. Stadler Rendering and Fertilizer Company.

Tensions eventually exploded in the violent Cleveland May Day Riots of 1919, in which socialist demonstrators clashed with anti-socialists. The home of Cleveland Mayor Davis was bombed by Italian anarchist followers of Luigi Galleani. In response, the mayor campaigned for expulsion of all "Bolsheviks" from America. Faced with the issue of the riots and his own ambitions to become governor of Ohio, he resigned in May 1920, but would later serve as a mayor again in 1933.

Part 2. Walter reaches adulthood

By 1924 Walter Zema was 19 years old and had completed four years of high school for his day. After graduation, Walter continued to live with his parents and siblings at 3808 West 14th Street, and worked as a steel inspector when he decided to seek a different job.

What drew him to police work? Perhaps it was the higher prestige and salary that law enforcement offered. After all, his maternal grandpa was working at a rendering/fertilizer factory in a job that was hard and repulsive, shunned by American citizens and relegated to the lowest of immigrants instead. And his father Stanley, according to the 1920 Census, was employed as a wagon driver for the city garbage works.

Plus the Cleveland Police Department was actively recruiting as the population of Cleveland grew from 381,768 in 1900 to 797,000 in 1920. Thirty percent of the city's population were foreign-born. Besides meeting the needs of more citizens the Cleveland Police Department was enforcing Prohibition, which took effect on May 27, 1919. It was not well-enforced and led to organized crime that included not only sale and distribution of illegal liquor, but gambling, prostitution, murder and public corruption.

More about Cleveland crime and policing in the early 20th Century

Cleveland's image in the late 19th Century was one of a hard-drinking city of working-class citizens. As a wave of immigrants added to the city's population, they crowded into neighborhoods where poverty, lack of public health, and despair conditions fostered crime. By 1905 Cleveland police officers were arresting 27,926 persons annually, the culmination of a steady climb from 9,369 arrests in 1882. Drunkenness, prostitution, and automobile offenses accounted for most of the 1905 arrests. Also 18 people were arrested for murder, and 47 bodies were found in the city. In 1911 the Cleveland Baptist Brotherhood identified liquor, lack of adequate policemen, and social vices such as dance halls and moving pictures as the reason for high crime in the city. By 1920 many Clevelanders felt insecure about their lives and property. That year, a study of the city's criminal justice system found the alarming crime rate was due to an unstable population, and breakdown in administration of criminal law from proliferation of laws "not representative of community standards or desires." The study mapped out an ambitious plan of social engineering to begin containing crime. Over 20 years later, facets of this plan were still debated. The introduction of Prohibition in 1919 ushered in a Cleveland era of bootlegging and the rackets. Mob violence, gang slayings, hijackings carried out by groups such as the Mayfield Road Mob characterized the city's most prominent criminal activities, and Cleveland became nationally known as giving rise to underworld alumni destined to assume important mob positions in other big cities. The advent of the mob also meant the beginning of organized gambling, and on Jan. 9, 1924 local police agencies opened their war on this activity by seizing slot machines. Even when Prohibition ended, the gambling rackets remained, as the city's wealthier citizens frequented city and county casinos, such as the Harvard Club, while the less affluent took advantage of numbers games and slot machines in neighborhood bars and tobacco stores. These avenues of recreation were controlled by the Mafia, and when police pressure in Cleveland became too intense, gambling moved into suburban and country areas. Cleveland's gambling clubs (Pettibone Club, Jungle Inn, Mounds Club, and Colony Club) achieved local and national notoriety until closed down by state and local efforts.



Walter was hired by the Cleveland Police Department as a motorcycle officer. He stated his age as 24, born in 1900—but he was actually 19 and born in 1905. This was so he could get the job.

Walter signed on to the Police Department on June 1, 1924, and was assigned badge number 1040. Over the course of his career, Walter would serve in the 1st and 3rd Precincts, 4th District, Motorcycle Unit, as Court Officer and in the Detective Bureau. His official End of Watch was Sep. 5, 1952, the day he died while still an active detective.



On June 30, 1924 Walter married Mary Margaret “Pat” Knopp. Mary was born Nov. 17, 1902 in Budapest, Hungary, and completed her schooling through 6th grade. She immigrated to the United States in April 1914. But her naturalization petition wasn’t filed until 1943, and it lists her last residence as Zsombek, Hungary and emigrating to the U.S. from Trieste, Italy, entering through New York on April 11, 1914. Their lavish wedding included six bridesmaids and six groomsmen plus two little flower girls. The only people recognized the above photo are Walter’s maternal aunt, Bertha Knybel (4th from right). Bertha was one year younger than Walter even though she was officially his aunt. One year later she would marry the man over her right shoulder, Walter Marszalek, in Aug. 1925.

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A bit more about Walter’s wife Mary, a.k.a. “Pat”

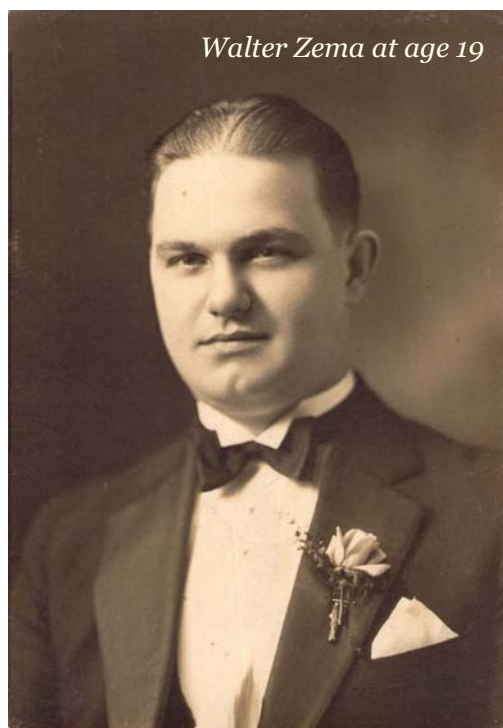


When Mary was 18 in 1920, she worked as an operator in a silk factory while retaining her naturalization status as “alien.” She lived on Bosworth Road with her father Steve and mother Anna, and her native tongue is listed as Magyar.

Steve, 47, had immigrated in 1913, was a stone cutter in the monuments industry, their home was owned but mortgaged. He was able to speak, read and write English. His wife Anna was 43, also listed as immigrating in 1913 (but may have been 1914 if they came with daughter Mary).

Within months of his joining the police force, in October 1924, Walter pursued an automobile, likely stolen with out-of-state license plates, which was believed to have struck three children. One 8-year-old girl died on the way to the hospital, and her 11-year-old brother had a fractured skull. Another little boy, 8, was struck and suffered a concussion of the brain and fractured skull; physicians do not expect him to live.

Then in November 1924, Walter was shot and wounded by a Thomas Richardson, who was stopped by Walter to question him after a fight in a yard near his home. Richardson had broken away and then shot Walter, yet Walter recaptured Richardson despite being shot. The perp was sentenced to five years in the penitentiary. At this time Walter’s wife was pregnant, due the following March. She must have been out of her mind with worry about her husband and the life-threatening peril he faced every day on the job.





Walter Zema, Jr., "JR" in 1926

Walter's wife Pat gave birth the following spring, on March 28, 1925. They named their son Walter Jr. The 1930 Census shows them living in a rented house at 3988 West 23rd Street in Cleveland.

JR had instant playmates, as his father's two youngest sisters Mary, b. 1921 and Leonia, b. 1924 were JR's aunts but kids in the mid-1920s, just like he was. Mary and Leonia are shown in the photo at right with their nephew JR, who was a pistol.



Just months after his son's birth, Walter pursued the perpetrator in a fatal altercation, The perp stabbed his neighbor ("a cripple") and his son because he believed the victims had caused a raid on his house by dry agents in search for liquor:

"Frank Novakovich, Jr., 11, offered his life for his father's last night, and is believed to be dying at Lakeside hospital.

He was at his home, 1387 E. 39th Street, when his father, a cripple, entered the yard. The father broke his leg last August, and sliver wires supported it.

The boy saw a man hurl himself upon his father, Frank, Sr., and saw a knife flash. He wedged his frail shoulders between the two. The knife flashed again. Frank collapsed, stabbed in teh abdomen.

Crowds gathered. The man, still holding his knife, dashed into the house. Patrolman Walter Zema kicked in a door. He was

confronted by the man with a knife in one hand, an ax in the other. Zema wrested away the weapons, and arrested the man. Then Zema went to aid the victims, Frank, nearly unconscious, his father stabbed twice over his right eye and once in the back. Both were taken to Lakeside Hospital.

Peyre, who lived in the same apartment house as the victims, was charged with stabbing wound and stabbing to kill. Peyre's home, police said, was searched for liquor a short time ago by dry agents, who found nothing.

Peyre, police said, accused Novakovich of causing the raid."



Walter would drop by to visit his parents and younger siblings still living at home while he was on shift or after his shift ended. His kid sister Mary remembers her big brother cop putting his pistol on the kitchen table at Ma's house. "I'll break all your fingers if you touch that," he'd tell Mary and Leonia. They remembered being scared of him. Walter *was* an imposing figure, and it wasn't long before he earned a reputation as a tough cop and a crack shot.

The photo at left shows Walter's sister Stephy, age 14 (left at rear), with her maternal aunt, Bertha Knybel Marszalek, 20. In front of Stephy is sister Leonia, 2, and at right is Stephy's sister Mary, 5. This was during the Roaring 20s, a time of seismic social change, most visibly among the youth. Here Stephy and Bertha show off stylish "bobbed" haircuts and raised hemlines that revealed their legs or "gams."

There was so much optimism in America during the Roaring 20s. The Great War was over, and citizens assume (incorrectly) that there will never be another. Cleveland became a key producer of iron and steel, which fast-tracked its reputation as an industrial capital. Women danced the Charleston and there was an incredible rise of the Jazz Age as, as the same cultural renaissance that was happening in Harlem also happened in other places like Chicago and Cleveland. Youth were going out to celebrate at a swinging scene of clubs and speakeasies that emerged in Cleveland despite Prohibition, which was never really enforced that strongly. The Mayfield Road Gang and organized crime flourished in Cleveland in the Jazz Age, too, thanks to a steady business of bringing in booze from Canada.



Grandma Knybel at her rented house on Harvard Ave. with granddaughters Mary and Leonia Zema in the 1920s. Times were tough then, but the girls' mom indulged her two youngest children with fine clothes including white hose while other kids were forced to wear less expensive black stockings. Mary and Leonia were spoiled little girls.

Walter's world reality while on the job stood in stark contrast with the lives of his spoiled kid sisters and son.

For instance, on March 1, 1926, Cleveland painters and glaziers went on strike, included building-trades laborers, painters, paperhangers and glaziers. Building-trades unions were gouging customers with high costs of building, and non-union tradesmen were harassed by striking union members. The mutual animosity led to incidents of violence and lawlessness.

TUESDAY, AUGUST, 17, 1926

ARREST 5 MORE IN VANDAL WAR

Detectives in Automobiles Tour Streets to End Destruction.

Convinced that a second vandal gang still is at large, fifty detectives in automobiles cruised about town last night to put an end to the window breaking and property destruction that have accompanied the last month of the painters' and glaziers' strike.

The first fruit of the cruising was the arrest of five young men who had been driving back and forth past the Blystone hotel, 1345 Payne avenue N. E., where a number of nonunion glaziers and painters are staying.

The suspicious automobile was spotted by Detective Sergeant John Zitzman and Detective Gustav Reese. They notified Patrolman Walter Zema, who pursued the machine on his motorcycle in Payne avenue to E. 19th street, in front of the police station. The five are held for questioning.

Five alleged vandals and four "suspicious persons" previously arrested in the crusade against property destruction will be arraigned in police court today.

Charges of breaking three windows in a store at 3620 Woodland avenue S. E. were placed against the five. They gave their names to police as follows:

BLAGO DE PALMA, 31, of 1274 Scott
avenue S. E., alleged "pay-off man."
NICK SATULLO, 24, of 2575 E. 127th
street, alleged owner of an automobile said to
have been used in window breaking.
FRANK MUSSELL, 26, of 2491 E. 19th
street; JOSEPH DAILEY, 33, of 1426 De-

EX-PREMIER ARRESTED

Kafandaris, Army Officers and
Mayor Seized in Greece.

ATHENS, Aug. 16.—(AP)—A communique issued by the government announces the arrest of former Premier George Kafandaris and many army officers including Gen. Panayotopoulos, the mayor of Piraeus.

Premier Eutaxias informed the Associated Press that the government was obligated to arrest Kafandaris because of his persistent and continued anti-government activities. The premier added that the army remains loyal to the government.

troit avenue, Lakewood; MARTIN BINY, 24,
of 3321 Tullamore road, Cleveland Heights.

The last three are said to have admitted they threw bricks from Satullo's machine for \$25 a night. All but Dailey were released yesterday on \$5,000 bonds.

None of those held carry union cards. Detective Inspector C. W. Cody, however, blamed the attacks on labor trouble.

William Costello, union glazier, 6216 Wakefield avenue N. W., was sentenced to thirty days in the workhouse in police court yesterday as a suspicious person.

Police said Costello was found prowling with glazier tools near the Ohio Bucket Co. plant, where 2,000 windows recently were installed.

Police reported a barber shop window at 1716 E. 66th street was shattered by a slingshot yesterday. Fred Cultrona, manager, 11110 Woodland avenue S. E., said no work by painters or glaziers had been done in his shop since the strike began.

William Frew Long, American Plan Association manager, yesterday complimented police for good work in the vandal crusade.

"Such activity as this will bring to an end disturbances tending to retard the development of the community," he said.

On August 16th, 1926, fifty detectives in automobiles cruised the Cleveland streets at night to put an end to the window breaking and property destruction that accompanied the strike. Two detectives spotted a vehicle with five suspects outside of a hotel where non-union tradesmen were staying. The detectives notified Walter Zema, who pursued the vehicle on his motorcycle to East 15th Street in front of the police station. There the five suspects were held for questioning. The perpetrators admitted they were throwing bricks through windows from their cars for \$25 a night. None of them carried union cards.

A few days before this August 1926 "Vandal War," Walter took time to teach a 10-year-old boy when "finding" means theft. He even got the boy to promise not to take things that didn't belong to him. The Cleveland Plain Dealer reported the story on Aug. 13th, 1926: *A ten-year-old newsboy who stands in Central Police Station was questioned by Patrolman Walter Zema last night concerning a stolen bicycle. The boy said he had "found"*

it on the sidewalk. "Would you take a pocketbook out of an automobile?" Patrolman Zema asked. "No, that would be stealing," the boy answered. "Would you pick up a nickel off of the street?" "Yes, sir," the boy answered. "What did you do with the bicycle?" "I sold it for a dollar. The boy said he would pay me tomorrow." The newsboy promised to tell his father about it and the patrolman gave him back his newspapers. The boy left sobbing, saying he never would take anything that did not belong to him again."

Then in August 1927 Walter was hunting two alleged "bill raisers," released from jail two hours after arrest. They had a \$1 bill that had been raised to a \$10 bill.

2 HELD IN MONEY FRAUD MYSTERIOUSLY FREED

Police Hunt Alleged Bill Raisers, Released From Jail Two Hours After Arrest

Police today were trying to recover two alleged bill-raisers who disappeared unaccountably from their cells at Central Police Station during the two hours following their arrest.

Patrolman Walter Zema is particularly eager to find them. He arrested them. He ordered them held for investigation. Two hours later, when he went to the prison to turn them over to federal authorities on a charge of tampering with currency, they weren't there.

Late yesterday Mrs. Margaret Azar, who runs a confectionery at 2917 Prospect avenue, waited on two strangers who bought a package of cigarets and a couple of candy bars. They gave her what appeared at first glance to be a \$10 bill.

Mrs. Azar scrutinized it closely. It didn't look right. The men said it was all a mistake, took back the bill and paid her in change.

When they left, Mrs. Azar called police. Patrolman Zema, who responded, caught the two men walking down E. 22d street.

He made the investigation and

talked things over with Lieut. Matt Farrell, who said he thought they should be turned over to federal authorities. Zema went back to his beat and then returned to question the prisoners.

Booking slips showed they had been released. At the addresses they gave no trace of them was found excepting release certificates from Jackson State Prison in Michigan showing that one had served eight years of a 15-year sentence and the other six and a half years of a 10-year sentence.

Each had been paroled on condition he leave Michigan.

Lieut. Robert Huge said the men were released probably as the result of confusion occurring when several gambler suspects were brought into the station at the same time as the two bill-raisers.

One of the two men, according to Zema, had a \$1 bill which had been raised to a \$10 bill.

Their names are recorded as William Diaz, 44, of 1204 Walnut avenue, and Frank La Mar, 44, of 10526 Fairmount avenue.

Aug 1927

Part 3. The 1930s and the Great Depression

The stock market crash on “Black Tuesday” October 29, 1929 gave rise to the Great Depression which would last almost a decade. Ohio was especially hard hit. By 1933, more than forty percent of factory workers and sixty-seven percent of construction workers were unemployed in Ohio. Approximately fifty percent of industrial workers in Cleveland were unemployed. These included Stanley Zema, Walter’s father.

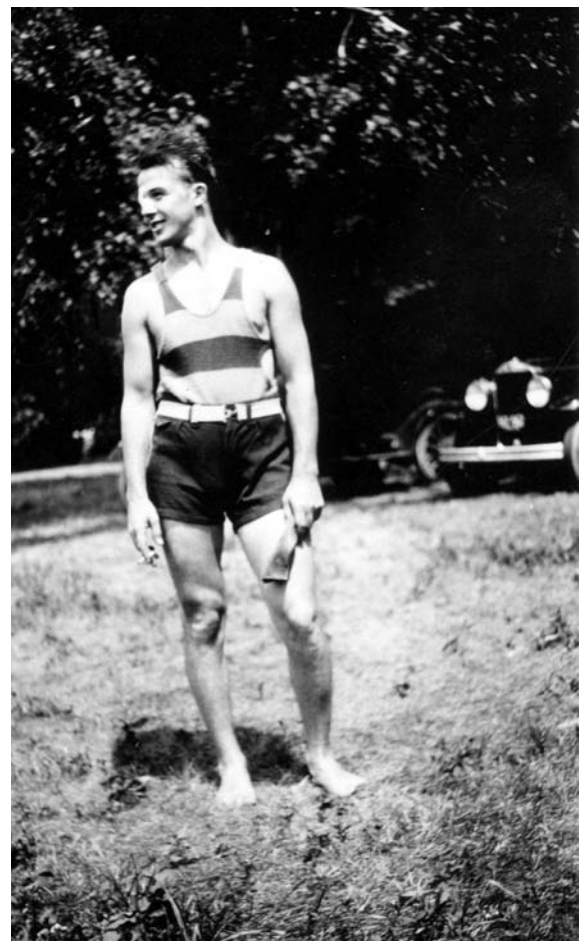
The 1930 Census shows Stanley as age 51 and an unemployed foundry molder. Maybe that’s why he and wife Sophia turned to bootlegging. Decades later, their son Frank talked about making whiskey with “Pappy” at a neighborhood building/garage years ago; Frank would have been 15 years old in 1930.

City liquor agents arrested Sophia, placing her in a paddywagon and taking her to the police station. According to family lore, her son Walter was angry about the arrest of his mother, and she was released in short time.

The 1930 Census shows that the Stanley Zema family didn’t even own a radio at that time. They were living at in a rented house at 3808 (3816 according to John Knaybel’s death certificate) West 14th Street. Money must have been awfully tight.

Of course, the younger children who were finished with school and not yet married could hold jobs to bring in some money. Walter’s sister Stephy was 18 and living with her parents in 1930 when she worked as an elevator operator at the Cleveland Plain Dealer newspaper offices.

The 1930 Census shows Walter’s brother Andy (1907-1961), then 23, was on his own, married to wife Helene Stanchitz (1909-1971) and living at 4206 West 24th Street in a rented house, where the Census noted he owned a radio set. It also showed his occupation as unemployed hardware packer. Andy had lost his eye in an industrial accident.



"Pappy" as Uncle Frank called his dad Stanley Zema, circa 1940. He is sitting in the backyard of his home at 3743 West 15th Street in Cleveland. His wife, Sophia Zema, had beautiful gardens and flowering trees including a sweet cherry tree. Us cousins would climb the tree to snag the cherries. Grandma would give me a glass jar of kerosene and tell me to go to her rose garden, and pick the Japanese beetles off her rose blooms and put them in the jar to kill them. I loved doing this! Remember the wooden duck weathervane? Its wings would go round and round in a stiff wind. No quacking, though!



Imagine Stephy's horror when she saw the front page headline in the newspaper she worked at about a horrific beating of her brother Walter by an ex-boxer. The date was June 2, 1930. Walter was almost killed.

BEATS UP POLICEMAN IN FIGHT

MacDonald Beats Baldwin on Treaty

DEFY HOOVER VETO TO PASS PENSION BILL

Both Houses Overrule President by Huge Majorities on Spanish War Vets' Gratuities.

ONLY 32 LEGISLATORS RALLY ROUND EXECUTIVE

King Gives the Girl a Great Big Title



ROUTS FOES OF NAVY PACT IN COMMONS

Conservative Motion Calling for Investigating Group Is Turned Down, 282 to 201.

PRIME MINISTER SAYS ADMIRALTY IS SATISFIED

WORKMEN ON ESTATE STRIP FAKE RAIDERS, LEAVE THEM IN WOOD



How four wild men roved through "Strip 'em, all but their shoes and a wooden hillside in Robin Hood's tracks, and drive them into the woods" if they like about it will take their scanty garb of burly packs shoes and axes off, too, and herd everything but their shoes and axes into the woods.

100 HELD IN GANG WAR, EIGHT DEAD

Chicago Police, Fearing Long Feud, Seize Sicilians Engaged in Rackets; Nab 3 Big Shots.

Beaten Up When Prisoner Protests



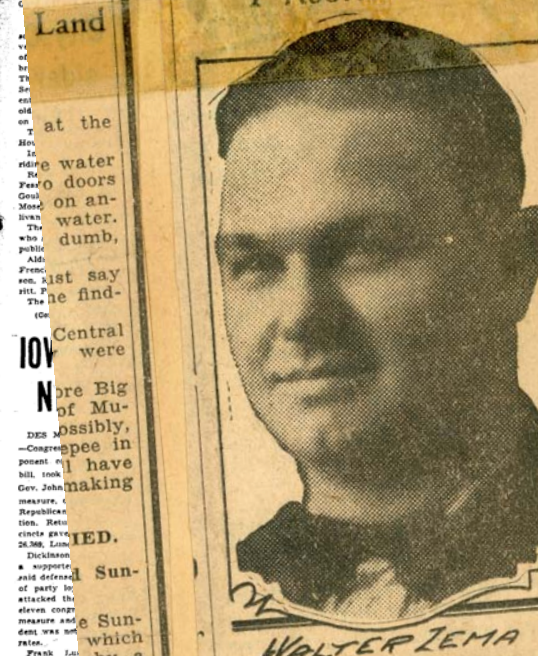
EX-BOXER PUTS VICTIM IN HOSPITAL

Starts Battle When Asked to Go Along for Questioning About Illegal Operation.

CROWD WATCHES AS PAIR STRUGGLES AT GARAGE

Nose, Cheek Broken, Patrolman Hangs on Till Comrades Arrive.

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Patrolman Walter Zema, 30, was attacked and seriously injured late yesterday in a furious struggle at the garage of the Chase Brass Co., 5005 Superior Avenue N. E., with an em-

OPEN GLENVILLE HOSPITAL DRIVE

400 Workers Told \$200,000 Is "Safe" Start Today for \$300,000 More.

Glenville Hospital, after struggling along for 21 years with a worn-out and inadequate building, last night reached out for a helping hand at the opening meeting of its \$300,000 building fund campaign. The campaign will continue for eight days.

SOUTHWELL HITS DIGEST POLL

YOUNGSTOWN, O., June 2.—The Literary Digest poll was "not counted on a fair basis of representation to determine the true sentiment of the nation."

R HOME, NEW YORK

4 Ohioans Aboard; Ship Line by Fall.

Patrolman Walter Zema, 30, was attacked and seriously injured late yesterday in a furious struggle at the garage of the Chase Brass Co., 5005 Superior Avenue N. E., with an em-

The struggle which followed, in which one shot was fired at Mikulski by Zema, came to a close when a member of the crowd, "a small, dark, wiry fellow," stepped forward and a squad from the "Young Men's Christian Association" (Y. M. C. A.) arrived to take him to the hospital.

At Charity Hospital, Mikulski's nose, cheek and chin were broken, and that he had a possible fracture of the skull.

DOYLE Sings UP SCHMELING

His first front line dispatch on Sharkey's impending clash with Herr Max comes from the Endicott camp.

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Patrolman Hurt in Battle

"Patrolman Walter Zema, 30 (25), was attacked and seriously injured late yesterday in a furious struggle at the garage of the Chase Brass Co., 5005 Superior Avenue N.E., with an employee of the concern he had asked to accompany him to police headquarters for questioning in connection with an alleged illegal operation, according to police.

Zema was under treatment at Charity Hospital last night while his alleged attacker, who gave his name as George Miskulin, 1541 E. 33rd Street, was being held at Central Police Station pending a final report on Zema's injuries.

The patrolman, whose home is at 3968 W. 23rd Street, was sent to the garage for Miskulin after Patrolman Peter Merylo had reported earlier in the day that the man, a truck driver, would not be in until later.

Badly Beaten

The struggle which followed, in which one shot was fired at Miskulin by Zema, came to a climax when a member of the crowd who arrived at the garage called police and a squad from the...precinct...dozen severe bruises, ...hung onto his man.

At Charity Hospital...reported that Zema's nose was broken, his cheek bone broken, and that he had a possible fracture of the skull.

Miskulin, in his cell at Central Police Station, had a black eye and several bumps on his head, police said. They added that Miskulin probably would be charged with assault to kill if Zema recovers.

Zema's story of the encounter was told from Charity Hospital:

"Are you George Miskulin?" Patrolman Zema asked as the man drove up to the garage on his truck shortly after 5 p.m. "Yes," the other replied. "I want you to come to police headquarters with me," Zema continued. "You're wanted for questioning down there."

Zema said that without warning Miskulin stepped from the truck as if to go along, and then kicked the patrolman in the pit of the stomach, flooring him. "Then things began to hit me all at once," Zema said later. He said he thought Miskulin had hit him with a heavy piece of brass.

Opening his eyes, Zema saw his assailant running across the garage floor, he said. He pulled out his revolver and fired one shot, then struggled to his feet and grabbed at Miskulin.

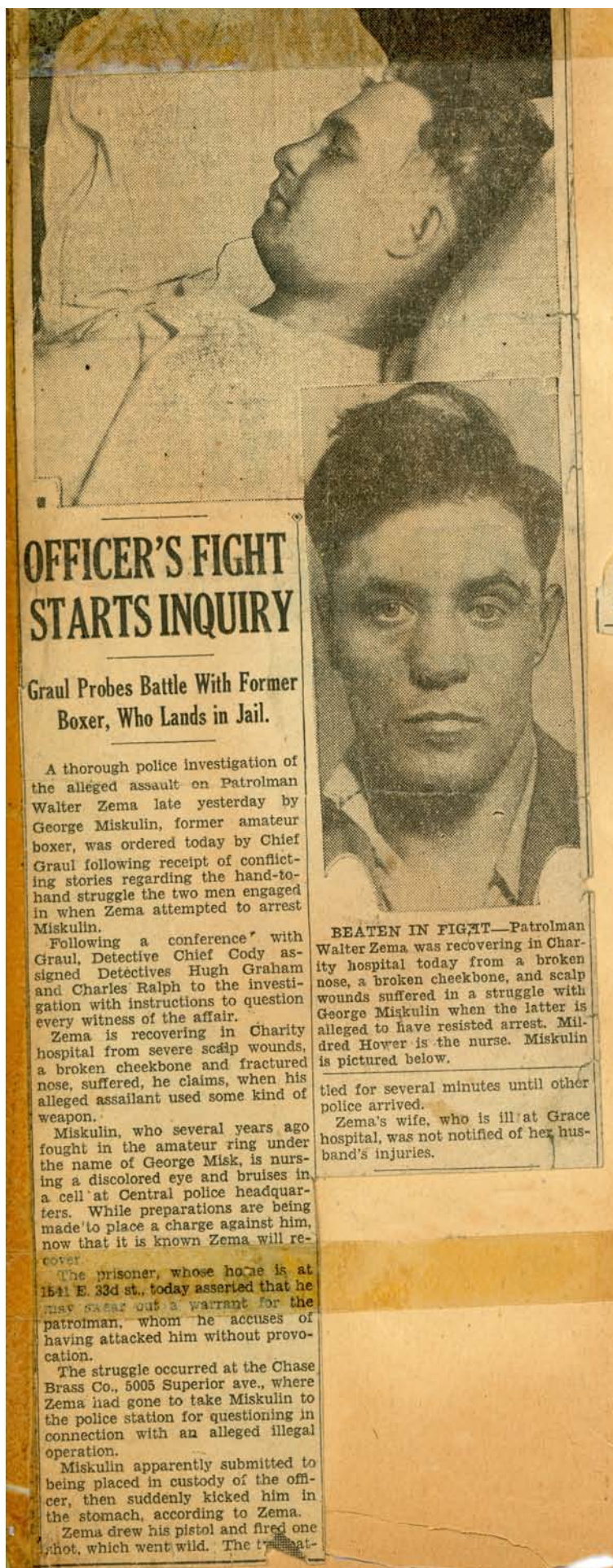
In the crowd that appeared, no one came to the assistance of Zema, who was in full uniform. But someone did call for other police.

When the police arrived the two men were still weaving back and forth, Zema on the verge of collapse, but still hanging desperately to his man.

Miskulin is said to have been formerly an amateur boxer. He is more than six feet tall and of brawny build.

Police said they had wanted to talk to Miskulin in connection with an operation on a girl seriously ill in St. Alexis' Hospital. They intend now also to talk to him about the alleged assault on Zema, they said.

Zema's wife, Mary, who has been ill at Grace Hospital for several days, was not notified of the attack on her husband, for fear that it might make her condition worse.



A followup story about an inquiry into Walter's beating ran in the newspaper a few days later. In it, the accused George Miskulin threatens swearing out a warrant for Walter, claiming that Walter attacked him without provocation.

The trial date for George Miskulin, 31, noted as an "ex-pugilist" in local papers, was set on June 18th, 1930. It followed his "not guilty" plea on June 17th to an indictment charging assault to kill. A judgment issued in the case exonerated Walter, saying he was justified in the shooting.

"The patrolman was 'socked plenty,' according to his statement, when he tried to take Miskulin to Central Station for investigation," reported the Cleveland Plain Dealer.

Walter faced many dangers on the job, and over the course of his 27-year career endured being shot, beaten, stabbed and pursued by some of Cleveland's worst elements.

Yet another risk he faced was threat of being sued. George Miskulin wasn't to be the last to threaten legal action against Walter.

In 1932 Walter, who was now a detective, was one of six officers named in a suit filed in Common Pleas Court on behalf of Max Glick. Judgment was asked for \$700 for illegal confiscation of 50 gallons of wine and 50 gallons of whiskey from his house at 727 Woodland Ave., S.E. Walter and other officers had raided Glick's home on December 3rd, 1932.

Then in 1936 Walter was exonerated in the shooting of a 17-year-old youth who was fleeing after an attempted burglary at a local meat market.

And in 1938 Walter was sued for \$25,000 for PENDING.

Just two days after Walter was beaten by the ex-boxer, his maternal grandfather John Knybel died. The date was June 4th and his cause of death was listed as "organic heart disease". He was 65 years old and without doubt had lived a tough life. How hard it must have been for Sophia Zema to see her firstborn child Walter beaten and nearly killed while on the job, then to lose her father only two days later.

When John Knybel's passing left Grandma Knybel a widow, her youngest child Josephine was still 18 and still living at home. The rest of Grandma Knybel's daughters were all married with families. Josephine would go on to wed in 1936, so it appears she stayed at home to care for her mother until her marriage.

Grandpa Knybel had been born on May 20, 1865 in Galicia, a heavily Jewish portion of the Austrian-Hungarian Empire. While we do not know his DNA makeup, Grandpa Knybel may well be our ancestor who is the source of Askenazi Jewish ancestry in our family.

should state CAUSE OF DEATH in plain terms, so that it may be properly classified. Exact statement of OCCUPATION is very important. See instructions on back of certificate.

STATE OF OHIO
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
DIVISION OF VITAL STATISTICS
CERTIFICATE OF DEATH

1 PLACE OF DEATH
County Cuyahoga Registration District No. 287 File No. 13
Township Cuyahoga Heights Primary Registration District No. 2299 Registered No. 3712
or Village Cuyahoga Heights No. St. Ward
(If death occurred in a hospital or institution, give its NAME instead of street and number)
or City of

2 FULL NAME John Knybel
Did Deceased Serve in U. S. Navy or Army
(a) Residence No. 613 Harvard Ave. Ward
(Usual place of abode) (If nonresident give city or town and State)
Length of residence in city or town where death occurred 35 yrs. mos. ds. How long in U. S., if of foreign birth? yrs. mos. ds.

| PERSONAL AND STATISTICAL PARTICULARS | | | | | MEDICAL CERTIFICATE OF DEATH | |
|---|---------------------------------|---|-------------------|---|--|--------------------|
| 3 SEX <u>Male</u> | 4 COLOR OR RACE <u>White</u> | 5 Single, Married, Widowed or Divorced (write the word) <u>Married</u> | | | 16 DATE OF DEATH (month, day and year) | <u>June 4 1930</u> |
| 3a If married, widowed or divorced HUSBAND of <u>Mary</u> (or) WIFE of <u> </u> | | | | 17 I HEREBY CERTIFY, That I attended deceased from <u>5/24</u> , 19 <u>30</u> , to <u>4/3</u> , 19 <u>30</u> that I last saw him alive on <u>4/3</u> , 19 <u>30</u> and that death occurred, on the date stated above, at <u>3:00</u> a. m. | | |
| 6 DATE OF BIRTH (month, day, and year) <u>5-20-1865</u> | | | | The CAUSE OF DEATH* was as follows: <u>Organic Heart Disease</u> | | |
| 7 AGE <u>65</u> | Years <u> </u> | Months <u> </u> | Days <u>14</u> | If LESS than 1 day, hrs. <u> </u> or min. <u> </u> | | |
| 8 OCCUPATION OF DECEASED (a) Trade, profession, or particular kind of work <u>Letter 92</u> (b) General nature of Industry, business, or establishment in which employed (or employer) <u>Stellar Products Co</u> (c) Name of employer <u> </u> | | | | (duration) <u> </u> yrs. <u>5</u> mos. <u> </u> ds. | | |
| 9 BIRTHPLACE (city or town) <u>Poland</u> (State or country) <u> </u> | | | | CONTRIBUTORY (SECONDARY) (duration) <u> </u> yrs. <u> </u> mos. <u> </u> ds. | | |
| 10 NAME OF FATHER <u>Peter Knybel</u> | | | | 18 Where was disease contracted if not at place of death? <u> </u> | | |
| 11 BIRTHPLACE OF FATHER (city or town) <u>Poland</u> (State or country) <u> </u> | | | | Did an operation precede death? <u> </u> Date of <u> </u> | | |
| 12 MAIDEN NAME OF MOTHER <u>Knorr</u> | | | | Was there an autopsy? <u> </u> | | |
| 13 BIRTHPLACE OF MOTHER (city or town) <u>Poland</u> (State or country) <u> </u> | | | | What test confirmed diagnosis? <u> </u> | | |
| 14 Informant <u>Sophie Zema</u> (Address) <u>3816 W 4th St.</u> | | | | (Signed) <u>J. Edw. Gasinski</u> M. D. <u>4/4</u> , 19 <u>30</u> (Address) <u>7909 Superior</u> | | |
| 15 Filed <u>4/5</u> , 19 <u>30</u> <u>Wm. J. Jones</u> REGISTRAR | | | | *State the DISEASE CAUSING DEATH, or in deaths from VIOLENT CAUSES, state (1) MEANS AND NATURE OF INJURY, and (2) whether ACCIDENTAL, SUICIDAL or HOMICIDAL. (See reverse side for additional space.) | | |
| 19 PLACE OF Burial, Cremation, or Removal <u>Colvary Cem</u> | | | | DATE OF BURIAL <u>June 6-1930</u> | | |
| 20 UNDERTAKER <u>B. J. J. J. J.</u> | | | | ADDRESS <u> </u> | | |
| 20a WAS THE BODY EMBALMED? <u>yes</u> | | | | EMBALMER'S LICENSE NO. <u>3701A</u> | | |

The 1930 Census shows Stepby was 18, living at 3808 (3816 according to John Knaybel's death certificate) West 14th St. (rented home) with her parents, and working as an elevator operator at a local newspaper. Her father, listed on the same census, was shown as age 51, an unemployed foundry molder—he must have lost his job during the Great Depression, which began in 1929.

The government programs started by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's first "New Deal" in 1933 may have assisted the Zema family, as by 1935 on the wedding certificate for Stepby Zema to Ed Holeski, her residence was listed as 3743 West 15th Street. That means that sometime between 1930 and 1935 Stanley and Sophia were able to leave their rented house on West 14th and purchase a bungalow home on West 15th.



Some of Stanley's horse collection is visible in this photo, circa 1949, of Jack Leisz, Stanley's son-in-law and husband of his daughter Mary.

The home was valued at \$5,000 on the 1940 Census, and Stanley was earning \$1,200 a year as a "hostler," a man employed to look after horses. I believe he worked for the Cleveland Police Dept. horse stables, so maybe his son Walter got him the job there. Grandpa had a lifelong love of horses and collected many metal (and wood?) models of all sizes and breeds. They graced his living room on his mantle, and in leaded-glass built-in cabinets on each side of the fireplace. It's uncertain what became of Grandpa's horse collection after his wife Grandma Zema died in 1970.

Walter Zema recovered from his 1930 beating by the ex-boxer, and on Feb. 27th, 1932 he was promoted from motorcycle messenger to regular precinct detective. Later that year he was s a codefendant in a \$25,000 lawsuit for an illegal liquor seizure.

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Then by March 1933 Walter was involved in helping to solve Cleveland's "Maniac Murders."

SUES FOR SEIZED WHISKY

Owner of Ruled Home Asks \$700 From Cadek and Aids.

Illegal confiscation of 50 gallons of wine and the same quantity of whisky from his home Dec. 3, 1932, was charged against Police Captain Louis J. Cadek and six assisting policemen in a suit filed yesterday in Common Pleas Court on behalf of Max Glick, 727 Woodland Avenue, S. E.

Judgment was asked for \$700, the value placed on the liquor. It was said that the officers "did unlawfully and without warrant or any process of any court enter upon the premises of the plaintiff's home" and that the seizure was "wrongfully and unlawfully" done.

Co-defendants with Cadek are Sergeants Edward Sadler and William F. Hammerlin, Patrolman John F. Lally, John J. Lasker and Elmer C. Cook, and Detective Walter S. Zema.