

# Winston Officer Is Killed In Wreck

■ Another injured as car runs off road, hits tree and catches fire

By Rich McKay  
JOURNAL REPORTER

A Winston-Salem police officer was killed and another was seriously injured when their patrol car hit a tree and burst into flames near Winston Lake Golf Course last night.

Officer Michael Ray Jennings was dead at the scene, his body burned beyond recognition, and Officer Timothy Rayvon Wilson was seriously injured, police said.

Jennings, 30, was driving down Winston Lake Road toward Waterworks Road about 6:45. The car had apparently just crested a hill



MICHAEL JENNINGS

when Jennings lost control. The car skidded 81 feet, went off the road and slid sideways into an oak tree. The car came to rest with the passenger side against the tree.

Jennings was unable to escape. Wilson,

**MICHAEL JENNINGS**



**TIMOTHY WILSON**

the tree. Jennings was unable to escape. Wilson, 27, may have been thrown from the car, an officer said. Officers said they found Wilson crawling on his knees up the road after the accident.

He was "very upset," officers said over the radio.

Assistant Chief H.R. Tuttle said that Wilson may have been trying to get Jennings out of the car when it burst into flames.

"Then, it was too late," he said.

Wilson, who joined the police department in October 1988, was in Forsyth Memorial Hospital last night with a fractured pelvis and a cut on his forehead. Tuttle said he didn't think that Wilson was burned.

Officers were sent to the 3500 block of Winston Lake Road on a call about a burning car. One radioed back quickly that he saw a police car "engulfed in flames down off the golf course."

Then an officer radioed: "Officer in the vehicle. Officer down."

People nearby heard a few rounds of ammunition go off, apparently ignited by the fire. Police said later that the ammunition was from Jennings' revolver.

"I could see the fire from my kitchen door," said Dorothy Pettigrew of Lakeview Boulevard. "It was blazing."

Police Chief George Sweat was at the hospital with Wilson last night. "We have no idea what happened

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and won't until we talk to Officer Wilson," he said.

Police did not know whether the officers were answering a call at the time of the accident. Tuttle said that officers will review dispatch tapes to find out.

Sgt. J.D. Pitman said: "All we have at this point is a confirmed fatality and an officer injured. What they were doing, we don't know yet. We are not aware of any crime prior to the accident."

Jennings, a former clerk in the sports department of the *Winston-Salem Journal*, was highly respected by his fellow officers and friends.

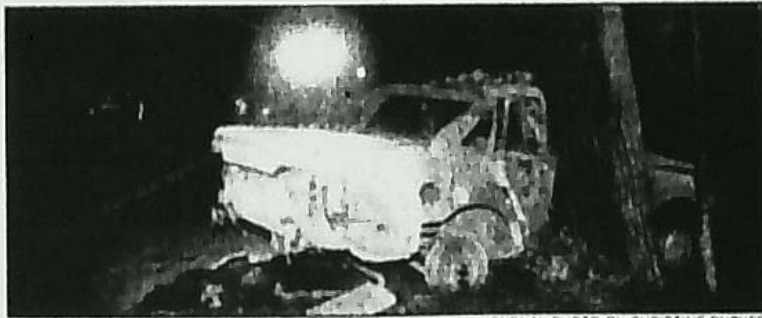
Lt. B.O. Howard, one of Jennings' supervisors, said that Jennings covered the south side of the city until he was transferred to the northeast sector two weeks ago.

Jennings was married to Sonja McCloud Jennings in 1988. Their daughter, Ti'a, was born last year. Jennings' mother died this month.

Jennings served under Lt. Byron Jones when he joined the force in September 1985. Jones said that Jennings was an easygoing, likeable man. "He's the type of guy who'd do anything for anyone," Jones said. "He was a very mild-mannered, happy fellow."

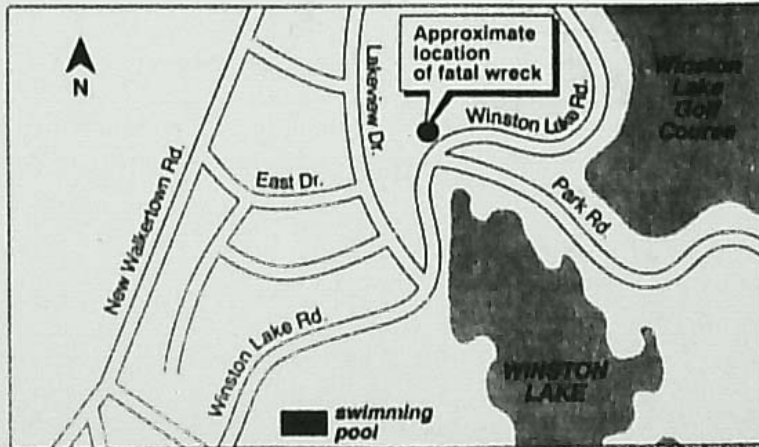
Jennings also was a volunteer at the William C. Sims Recreation Center in Happy Hill Gardens, volunteered for the United Way and served on the board of Youth Opportunity Homes.

Officers and court employees,



JOURNAL PHOTO BY CHRISTINE RUCKER

Flames from the car were 30 feet high when firefighters arrived, police said.



JOURNAL GRAPHIC BY CASSANDRA SHERRELL

some crying, gathered at the Hall of Justice last night.

Angie Sawyer, a warrants clerk, said: "He was a wonderful guy. He was a great officer. He treated people with respect, especially the people he was arresting. He was good at his job and just a very nice guy."

Jones said that officers at the midnight roll call last night were subdued. "Something like this, they take very hard," he said. "It's

something officers have to deal with in their own way."

The accident happened about a half-mile from where Lt. Aaron Tise was killed last summer.

"This is getting to be too frequent of a thing," Pitman said. "It's another death of an officer."

■ Journal reporters Karen Stinesford and John Blythe contributed to this report.