

Cst. Sedgwick R.J.



SEDGWICK, RICHARD JOHN - CST. Regimental No. 29833
August 10, 1980 - Airdrie Age: 28

Cst. Richard Sedgwick began his police career with the Winnipeg City Police. He served there for almost two years and then, at the age of 20, was accepted into the RCMP on May 23, 1972. After his training at Regina, he was posted to Kamloops, British Columbia, and then to the detachment at Penticton.

Cst. Sedgwick always loved animals and wanted badly to become a handler with the RCMP Dog Section. In the hope of being accepted into the Dog Section, he and his wife, Karen, took in a young German Shepherd pup named "Sabre" and raised it for the dog training school in Innisfail, Alberta. Rick was accepted into the Dog Section in 1977 and worked with his first dog, "Max", for over three years.

On Saturday, August 16, 1980, Sedgwick was on his way to Innisfail, Alberta to attend a training course with his new dog, "Chip". He was driving a RCMP station wagon north on Highway #2, on the inside lane of the four-lane divided highway. Twenty miles north of Calgary near Airdrie, a Dodge Comet, swerving erratically in the passing lane, overtook the policeman's vehicle. As the automobile was passing Cst. Sedgwick's car, it suddenly veered to its right and side-swiped the police cruiser. The collision between the two cars was sufficient to cause Cst. Sedgwick to lose control of his vehicle. In a split second, it fishtailed wildly and then shot down into the grass-covered median. As it went, it flipped upside down and came skidding out the other side twisted over on its roof. Grinding across the pavement with sparks flying, the police car cut a menacing swath into the on-coming traffic of the southbound lane. First it skimmed across the roof of one car in the outside lane, and then crashed head-on into a Chevrolet Caprice on the inside lane.

Somewhere along the cruiser's twisting path, Cst. Sedgwick was thrown violently from the car causing him a number of severe injuries. He was rushed to Calgary General Hospital, but was dead on arrival. Albert Ward, 21 one of the drivers in the cars he hit, was killed. Three other occupants in Ward's car were badly injured.

The driver of the Dodge Comet that side-swiped Cst. Sedgwick didn't stop, but was later arrested in the community of Three Hills, northeast of Airdrie. He was subsequently tried and convicted of criminal negligence causing death and failing to remain at the scene of an accident.

At the time of his death, Rick Sedgwick was one of only 28 RCMP Dog Masters across Canada. "He was one of the best dog trainers around and he had only been at it for a year," said one of his colleagues, Cpl. Mike McCague, of the Penticton RCMP Division.

Cst. Sedgwick was survived by his wife, Karen, and two sons, both of whom were under three years of age.

At his funeral, police units from across the country and the United States were represented in the lengthy cortege that proceeded from the Winnipeg funeral chapel to Elmwood Cemetery where he was interred. As the procession entered through the gates, two dog handlers in red serge stood guard with their police dogs.