



Sheriff Ralph Froehlich of Union, 83, entered into eternal rest on Sunday, July 20, 2014, after a brief illness.

Sheriff Froehlich was born and raised in Elizabeth, New Jersey. He attended local schools and graduated from St. Mary's High School in 1949. He enlisted in the United States Marine Corps in 1951 and served as an infantryman, member of an amphibious tractor crew and drill instructor until his release from active duty. He continued in the active reserves until his release in 1959 when he was honorably discharged with the rank of Sergeant.

A career law enforcement officer, he was a member of the Elizabeth Police Department for almost twenty years attaining the rank of Lieutenant. He held the positions of Commander of the Community Relations Unit, the Tactical Squad Unit, the Training Unit and Field Supervisor of the Patrol Division. He received numerous commendations, including the New Jersey PBA Valor Award, Policeman of the Year, and the Elizabeth Police Merit Awards.

A 1975 graduate of Kean College, he attended the Northwestern University Traffic Institute in 1968 and was a member of Pi Sigma Alpha, the National Political Honor Society. He was a former member of Adjunct Faculty at Kean University and Union College. He was a member of the Governor's Commission on Terrorism and trained at the New Mexico Tech for Response to Terrorist Bombings. In 1990 he was invited to China as part of an Ambassador Program to evaluate and compare the judicial systems of Union County and China.

He was first elected Sheriff of Union County in 1977, having previously won a seat on the City Council in Elizabeth in 1976. He was in his thirteenth term as Union County Sheriff when he passed away. He held the distinction of being the longest-serving County Sheriff in New Jersey history. During his tenure as Sheriff, he instituted a nationally recognized fingerprinting program for children, an automated photography laboratory, established the Missing Persons Unit and Domestic Violence Unit, and launched a K-9 Search and Rescue Unit. Sheriff Froehlich developed and published the "Play It Safe" booklet for children, as well as the "You Are Not Alone" booklet for victims of domestic violence. He implemented several gun safety programs for children and teens including three educational videos available in schools throughout Union County. The Sheriff also assisted with a state-sponsored gun buyback program for Union County residents. Each summer, Sheriff Froehlich hosted the Union County Sheriff's Youth Academy for students to acquire firsthand knowledge about law enforcement. He was the first New Jersey Sheriff to broadcast a monthly "Union County's Most Wanted" Suburban Crime Watch cable television show which was instrumental in the apprehension of over eighty wanted murderers and other felons from Union County.

Sheriff Froehlich launched the Sheriff's Labor Assistance Program (S.L.A.P.), an alternative to incarceration for non-violent offenders saving millions of dollars through labor hours and the costs of incarceration. He also implemented the Municipal Transportation Program, assisting local police departments in the transport of prisoners to and from jail, allowing local officers to remain in their communities.

The Sheriff was past President of the National Jail Managers Association and served four terms as President of the New Jersey Sheriffs' Association. He served as President of the New Jersey Constitutional Officers Association and was a member of the Sheriff/Judicial Liaison Court Security Committee. He was a Board member of the Salvation Army and Urban League. He received six national awards for administrative leadership and was the recipient of numerous humanitarian and law enforcement awards.

Sheriff Froehlich was an avid gardener for most of his life which was reflected by his flourishing vegetable garden and vast varieties of plants and flowers. He so loved his gardening, he was referred to as "Farmer Froehlich" by his wife, Marlene.

A loving and dedicated husband, father and grandfather, the Sheriff is survived by his beloved wife of twenty years, Marlene; two children, Debra Kurzawski, her husband Mike, and son Michael Costa of Clark, and Lora Froehlich and daughter Renee Garcia of Roselle Park. He is also survived by Marlene's children, Darla Rogers, her husband Ken, and children Trent and Reese Levitt of Ringoes; Robert Coon, his wife Pam, and children Ryan, Kasey and Aiden; Frank Coon and Christopher Coon. He also was the father of the late Renee Hagen. He will be missed by extended family and his many friends.

Sheriff Froehlich's life-long passion and commitment was that of service to others. His upbeat and magnetic personality and enthusiasm will be missed by all who had the pleasure and honor of meeting him.