

National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Service, 2004



This year the memorial was felt closer in the hearts of Vermont police officers because two of our own were killed in the line of duty. Sgt. Michael Johnson, of the Vermont State Police, and Deputy Ruby Rainault, of the Essex County Sheriff's Department both passed away this past year while attempting to stop a motor vehicle. Vermont hadn't seen anyone put on the memorial wall in 12 years, so this made the realization of how important this memorial is every year, that much more clear.

Michael Johnson was a sixteen-year veteran Sergeant with the Vermont State Police. He was killed when responding to a call for backup from two of his fellow officers. Sergeant Johnson laid spikes in the road to deter a suspect, and instead of slowing down or stopping, this par-

ticular individual hit Sgt. Johnson. Many showed up to honor him at his funeral, and the ceremony in Washington DC was just another way for his fellow officers to remember him. His fellow officers, some of the Vermont State Troopers, were chosen from nearly 240 applicants to participate in the National Police Week ceremonies. Five of these officers of the Vermont State Troopers Honor Guard were chosen as the color guard unit to lay the wreath of the roses of all the fallen officers of the year, at the police memorial, after the memorial service at the Capitol. These officers include Sgt. Todd Protzman, Sgt. Michael Macarilla, Sgt. Michael Heston, Tpr. Ray LeBlanc, and Tpr. Tyler Burgess. They were each able to personally be a part of National Police Week, and the troopers were more than

happy to honor their fallen friend, along with his family during this event.

Ruby Rainault was the other officer killed in the line of duty from Vermont this year. She was a deputy with the Essex County Sheriff's Department who was also killed by an individual trying to flee from the police. The Essex County Sheriff along with her family honored her in Washington DC. They were able to pay their respects at the memorial ceremony at the Capitol and be there as the Vermont contingency saluted her and Sgt. Johnson as their names were called from the long list of officers fallen in the past year.

The first day of the four day event, Senator Leahy and his wife offered a reception for all of the Vermont police who were visiting Washington DC. Sgt. Mike Johnson's family, his wife ▶

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New Jersey Officers saluting their fallen officers.



Kerrie Johnson, wife of Sgt. Johnson, VSP, with daughter Reilly, in Senator Leahy's office in Washington, DC.

Kerrie and three children, attended along with some officers from Burlington Police Department, Vermont State Police, and our group with officers from Rutland City Police Department and Hartford Police Department. He was more than willing to discuss anything and everything with the officers and was extremely happy that they could come visit while in DC. His staff was extremely helpful, doing anything they could to make sure the officers visit was



From left to right: VPA Vice President Sgt. Mark Donka, Hartford PD, Captain Scott Tucker, Rutland PD, Mrs. Leahy, Senator Leahy, VPA President Kevin Blongy and Sgt. Kevin Stevens from Rutland PD.

great, and Leahy thanked the officers for their fine work in the state of Vermont and told them to keep it up.

At nightfall the candlelight vigil was held. It was a solemn event while candles were lit, the thin blue line was shown across the buildings as in every year, and the overcast sky filtered in and out with what looked like rain. Police officers from all over the United States filled out the memorial grounds, along with officers from other countries. There were many more than last year, filling all the way to the back of the memorial and even across the street. They blocked off the roads so that there was more room for people to stand. The buses were brought in with the survivors and there were still people farther beyond that. I haven't seen that many people gathered around for the vigil in any of the three years that I have been to the memorial. This year was by far the biggest turn out, and each year it just seems to grow and grow. It's a wonderful thing, and I think all officers should go if they have not gone. You are able to see something really touching...and you learn a lot from the other departments around the nation. Seeing this every year really pushed me to study Criminal Justice and be able to have an opportunity to become part of such a great organization. It really makes you realize how much support there is and how much everyone really cares, even after death.

The day of the memorial was even warmer than it had been the past few days. The bagpipers from The National Law Enforcement Emerald Societies National Conference of Law Enforcement Society's Inc., started out the ceremonies and Lieutenant Kevin Pierce, from the Pennsylvania State Police, performed an "American Tribute". The Advancement of colors was done by the United States Capitol Police Host Agency, and the National Anthem sung by Deputy Sheriff Linda Blue from the Orange County Sheriff's Office in Florida. There was a nice invocation from Ken Ford, National Chaplain Grand Lodge Fraternal Order of Police, and Aliza Clark, National Pres-

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The Candlelight Vigil service.

ident Grand Lodge Fraternal Order of Police, made welcoming remarks. We then had the Lord's Prayer sung by Patti Labelle. I don't think I've ever heard the Lord's Prayer sang quite like that. For those of you who went, you know what I mean. The Keynote speaker was President Bush who spoke of the fallen officers of this year and previous years. He talked of the support he thought they deserved and thanked them again and again for the work that they do for us on a daily basis. "You are a Hero" was sung by A-Z and then they proceeded to

the Roll Call of Heroes. This was the first year we stayed for this part because we had two of our officers passed. It was very emotional to see all of the Vermont Contingency salute their own. They saluted as the family of Sgt. Michael Johnson and Deputy Ruby Rainault walked by. Afterwards we all headed to the memorial site where the wreath was laid by some of the Vermont State Troopers.

When it rolled around for time to leave I had gotten nearly 50 patches from different police departments around the United States, and a bobby had actually promised me a hat. Actually it was what we called a "Bobbette" because it was the woman bobby (I'm pretty sure that isn't what they are called, but that's what we nicknamed them). She told me that if I met her after the memorial that she ►



The busload of Survivors arrives at the candlelight service.



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would trade her hat for my father's Rutland City Police hat. It was a disappointment that I wasn't able to get the "Bobbette" hat this year, but maybe next year!

The police memorial was a great time this year, and I come upon the realization more and more every year of what wonderful people police officers really are. They are completely under appreciated and they never get enough respect for the things they do. The common public only likes to complain about what they aren't doing or what is believed to be a problem rather than all the great things they are able to achieve. They are there rain or shine, cold or hot, and they're always protecting us from drugs, murder, and many other crimes. They are the thin blue line that stands between the common public and the criminals. They are the ones that arrest and deal with the worst of citizens on a daily



Candlelight service!

basis so that we don't have to. They see things that we might never see in our whole lifetime and we never really realize that they're there or exactly

what they do. It's time to appreciate them the way they deserve and salute them for what they do. □



Cards and letters left at the Memorial service.



Bagpipes at the Memorial.



The Law Enforcement Memorial, Washington, DC.

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In memory of Sgt Michael Johnson, VSP.



In memory of Deputy Ruby A. Rainault, Essex County Sheriff's Department.



The "Untouchables" arrive at the Memorial.



Vermont law enforcement officers attend the Memorial service.



Captain Scott Tucker with his daughter, Karie.



Vermont law enforcement officers at the new World War II Memorial.

THE HEROISM OF OUR OWN TROOPS... WAS MATCHED BY THAT OF THE ARMED FORCES OF THE NATIONS THAT FOUGHT BY OUR SIDE... THEY ABSORBED THE BLOWS... AND THEY SHARED TO THE FULL IN THE ULTIMATE DESTRUCTION OF THE ENEMY.

PRESIDENT HARRY S TRUMAN