

## **17th Annual Peace Officers' Memorial Service**

**May 15, 1998**

### **National President Gil Gallegos' Memorial Speech**

Mr. Vice President, distinguished members of Congress, Secretaries of the Cabinet, Ms. Loveless, special guests, law enforcement officers and all survivors, on behalf of the 272,000 members of the Fraternal Order of Police and our Auxiliary and Associates, I welcome you to our annual memorial service.

The FOP memorial event honors all law enforcement officers who have made the ultimate sacrifice for their beloved country--a country which mourns the loss of crime fighters from agencies large and small, urban and rural. It really doesn't matter where these officers served, but it does matter that they served us all with distinction, honor and integrity.

I especially want to welcome the survivors with whom we share the loss of a loved one as we also share the badge of honor. We are known as police officers, deputies, special agents, troopers, and by differing titles and/or assignments, but we are bound as one in the profession known as law enforcement. We are bound together as a special type of family, the law enforcement family, the family which never forgets its own.

I have friends whose names are etched on the wall at the National Law Enforcement Officers' Memorial. While some I knew better than others, they were all friends who will remain forever in my memory.

Each friend that I lost has their separate story which sets them apart, but there is one which haunts me to this day. I remember that cold, fateful night in February of 1987 when I received that duty call about one such friend, a late night call that none of us ever wants to get. That night, my friend John Carrillo was killed during a seemingly routine domestic violence call, but as we know a call for service is not always routine.

I still remember the next morning during our debriefing listening to the investigating detective's detail the status of their investigation. The emotional moment I will never forget was when we listened to the tape which chronicled John's last call. You see, he always carried a tape recorder on his belt. We listened intently as we heard the footsteps of John and his partner John Messimer as they walked up the sidewalk, rang the door bell and spoke with a man. Minutes later, without provocation, this man made a hero of Officer Messimer and ended my friend's life with one bullet.

We listened as the seemingly routine call turned deadly as the fire fight began and ended when the coward, who took this young officer's life, surrendered. But most horrifically, we listened as Carrillo screamed in agony as he gasped his last breath and his life slipped away. The eerie silence was deafening.

As you can imagine, listening to this entire incident as it unfolded remains forever etched in the minds of all of us who heard this graphic recording. That is why I can say to each of you, our survivors, we will never forget.

The facts involving each officer we commemorate today are different, but they evoke the same emotion and such a deep sense of loss. A loss which will never leave you even as you go on with your lives. As each new day dawns you will always hold a remembrance of the officer you loved and lost.

Throughout their careers, these officers faced many difficult situations with integrity and honor and a sincere devotion to duty. Despite the many obstacles, they served to protect each of us from harm and kept our communities safe. They didn't let the justice system overwhelm their commitment to protect and serve.

The hundreds of thousands of police officers, deputies and law enforcement officials across this great nation remain committed to making our streets and highways safe. Like those we commemorate today, the officers who remain on the front line continue our never-ending struggle to make what is wrong right and what is evil good. A daunting task.

Today, as always, officers are making a difference in each community. Crime has declined substantially, but the fight is not over. Together in partnership, communities have joined police officers in fighting crime. New York City is a good example. Enlightened leadership, innovation and dedicated police officers have lead to a changed city where its citizens are no longer afraid to walk the streets, where block beat officers know the neighborhood and its people, where hostile stares have changed to smiles and understanding.

I am confident that in each community, citizens and police officers together, can take the streets back from the thugs who prey upon the disadvantaged, the young and the elderly. We must take the streets back from those whose disrespect for human life is such that it causes them to take the life of a police officer, an act which must be met with swift justice and effective punishment. I firmly believe that someone who takes an officer's life must forfeit their own. It isn't about vengeance. It's about justice.

Often, it is the rights of the criminal which become paramount. What about the rights of the victims of crime? I call upon Congress to pass the Victims' Bill of Rights, a bill which does not develop extraordinary privileges or considerations, but grants a sense of justice for those who fall prey to criminals and will ensure that the courts respect the rights of victims.

Police officers also face a similar dilemma. We sometimes feel like the accused rather than the accuser. When our investigative behavior is put on trial as a means to diffuse the guilt of a criminal, we become an easy target. Police officers also need a Bill of Rights. I implore Congress to pass this important legislation before the end of the term. We

deserve it to ensure that there is professional fairness and justice in the due process treatment of officers.

Fair and equal treatment for officers must also include the ability to have a say in their salary and working conditions through the collective bargaining process. This must happen in every state, in every city, from the White House to every federal law enforcement agency in the land. Officers not only deserve it, they have earned it!

Mr. Vice President, I can assure you that police officers will always remain dedicated to protect and serve, but we need your help. We need more funding to continue fighting the scourge of drugs and the violence that it breeds. We need to continue finding community policing partnerships throughout the country to ensure that neighborhoods, such as those in New York City, remain safe and secure, that all our citizens from differing ethnic, racial and economic backgrounds can live harmoniously and free from strife created by crime and criminals. That is the real challenge which faces us today. The officers we honor today expect us to carry out their life's work into the future.

There is a famous line from President Kennedy's 1961 inaugural speech, "Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country." Mr. Vice President, I think you will agree with me, the officers we honor here today answered the challenge and gave everything for their country. I assure each and every one of you, our survivors, your loss will never be forgotten by your law enforcement family.