



FALLEN HEROES *"We will remember them always"*
By Alaska State Trooper Vic Aye

After the law enforcement community lost four of its own to a senseless act on Nov. 29, Alaska State Troopers Sgt. Chad Goeden and Trooper Vic Aye were among approximately 22,000 officers who traveled from all over the nation and Canada to attend the Memorial service in Tacoma, Wash. on Dec. 8 to remember the fallen heroes. This was a day to remember the four Lakewood Police officers who were ambushed and gunned down at a Parkland coffee shop last month by an individual who had a long criminal history and disregard for human life. That individual was later shot to death by a Seattle police officer investigating an apparent stolen car. That individual was found to be in the possession of one of the fallen officers' guns.

The four fallen officers were Sgt. Mark Renninger, 39; and Officers Ronald Owens, 37; Tina Griswold, 40; and Greg Richards, 42, all of the Lakewood Police Department.

Goeden, a Fairbanks patrol sergeant, and Aye, a member of the Anchorage Service Unit, attended the solemn event that began at 10 a.m. with a procession of more than 3,000 police and EMS vehicles. About half of the officers who attended the memorial, including Aye and Goeden, were among the four-hour vehicle procession from McChord Air Force Base to the Tacoma Dome where the memorial was held. People lined the streets, waving flags, offering prayers and saying "Thank You" to the officers along the way. The sea of blue and red flashing lights in the frigid morning air was a sight the pair from Alaska will never forget. Goeden and Aye were honored to be hosted by members of the Washington State Patrol who graciously ensured that their accommodations and transportation needs were met.



The troopers also rode with their Washington counterparts in the procession. Other emergency vehicles bore the names of departments from Canada, California, the Midwest, and Washington State representing over 370 agencies. Some travelled from as far away as the East Coast to participate, including seven officers from Nassau County on New York's Long Island.

The view from the police vehicles was of a sea of people of all ages, some with hands over their hearts, other waving flags and while others saluted as the long procession drove towards the Tacoma Dome. Military personnel from McChord Air Force base saluted the entire time as the procession made its way to the Memorial. One airman stood out as he saluted unflinching for four hours while the entire procession drove by. The weather was cold as many stood by braving the unusually cold, but sunny and clear skies. Majestic Mount Rainier stood off in the

distance as if it too was saluting the fallen officers. It was quite moving to see so many people show support for these heroes, especially the schoolchildren along the way with tears in their eyes. One large sign read “In honor of our every day heroes.”

The procession and sheer number of Officers from over 370 organizations who came and showed their respect caused a delay to the start of the memorial. The inside of the Tacoma Dome was filled with blue, tan, black, green and red uniforms. The Royal Canadian Mounted Police sent 700 of their Mounties. Boston and New York City police departments chartered planes to bring in over 800 of their officers. There were officers



from all corners of the United States – Miami, San Diego, Chicago, Houston and Pittsburg. Some officers knew each other, but many introduced themselves. Goeden and Aye met with many who thanked them for coming from the great state of Alaska. The pair was honored to represent Alaska’s finest. Officers from Anchorage Police Department and some other agencies from Alaska were spotted here as well.

A bagpipe band from the Spokane Valley Fire Department escorted the hearses carrying the bodies of the fallen officers. The music that played this day as they marched into the stadium left many speechless and filled hearts with sadness.

Speaking later at the memorial, Lakewood Police Chief Bret Farrar said the show of support from the community in the aftermath of the shooting left him awed. The memorial, which began with the beating of a single drum by the Washington State Patrol honor guard, ended around 5 p.m. Images of the fallen officers were displayed on huge screens situated above the massive stage. Wreaths, flowers, mementos and even shoulder patches from all over the country adorned the

stage. The four flag draped coffins stood there for all in a reflection of sadness.

“Today’s ceremony is about honoring those lives and about honoring those sacrifices, to an officer (the fallen officers) would tell you, ‘On Nov. 29th, I was doing my duty.’” Lakewood Mayor Douglas Richardson said. “There is no higher calling than to do one’s duty and they served well.”

A few of the numerous moving moments during the memorial were – to see and hear the surviving children of the fallen officers speak about their fathers, to hear a fellow Lakewood officer sing a beautiful country and western themed song about his comrades and to see the 22,000 officers stand and sit silently for four hours to show their respect.



At the end of the memorial, Lake Wood police Chief Farrar spoke once more. “I want everyone to all say at once at the count of three, ‘Show me your hands’,” he said.

The chorus of 22,000 officers shouting those four words reinforced our commitment that we must keep ever vigilant as police officers whenever you meet someone out on the streets.



Alaska State Troopers Sgt. Chad Goeden & Tpr. Vic Aye