

NEARLY 10,000 OFFICERS KILLED BY GUNFIRE

by Craig W. Floyd

Calvin W. Jenks told co-workers that he became a Tennessee State Trooper to follow in the footsteps of his step-grandfather, a retired lieutenant with the Tennessee Highway Patrol. By all accounts, he was an aggressive, hard-working trooper who loved his job and always had a smile on his face.

On the night of January 6, 2007, Trooper Jenks pulled over two teenagers, ages 17 and 19, along a highway near Memphis. During the traffic stop he smelled marijuana from inside the vehicle. After some questioning, the driver reluctantly admitted that there were drugs inside the car. When Trooper Jenks asked the passenger if he had any drugs, the teen pulled out a handgun and shot the 24-year-old officer twice, including a fatal shot to the head. The two assailants drove off, running over Trooper Jenks as he lay dying on the roadway. The entire episode, which lasted approximately two minutes, was captured on Trooper Jenks' patrol car video camera. The two teenage killers were arrested 13 hours later, some 200 miles away in Nashville.

"We know that it can happen to any of us on any stop," commented Tennessee Highway Patrol Captain Steve Harvey after the death of his colleague. "You try not to think about it that way because you have a job, and you have to do it."

Calvin Jenks was the first of 69 American law enforcement officers shot and killed during 2007, based on preliminary information received by the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund (NLEOMF). This represents a staggering 33 percent increase over the 52 officers killed by gunfire in 2006, and the second highest total over the last decade (there were 72 officers shot and killed in 2001).

Historically, though, the number of officers killed by gunfire has actually decreased rather dramatically over the past 30 years, according to records kept by the NLEOMF. In the 1970s, there were an average of 127 officers shot and killed each year (second only to the 145 officers killed each year in shootings during the 1920s). The 1980s saw a dip in the number of officers killed by firearms to 87 per year, followed by a further decrease in the 1990s to 68 officers killed by gunfire each year. So far in the 2000s, an average of 59 officers have died in shootings each year. A major reason for the declining number of officers killed by firearms has been the increasing use of bullet-resistant vests, which have been credited with saving the lives of more than 3,000 officers over the last 20 years, according to the IACP/DuPont Kevlar Survivors Club.

Dating back to the first law enforcement fatality recorded in 1792, when New York City Deputy Sheriff Isaac Smith was shot and killed while attempting an arrest, there have been a total of 9,929 federal, state and local law enforcement officers killed by gunfire (includes the preliminary figures for 2007). This is roughly 55 percent of the 18,107 line of duty deaths documented by the NLEOMF. To put this figure in some perspective, the next highest cause of death among law enforcement officers is automobile crashes, which have accounted for 2,659 officer fatalities throughout history.

Several areas of the country were hit particularly hard this year by firearms-related assaults on officers. In Philadelphia, four officers were shot and wounded during a three-week period of time, including 25-year veteran Charles "Chuck" Cassidy, who died on November 1 after walking into a robbery in progress at a Dunkin Donuts store.

South Florida lost three officers to shootings in 2007, including two from the Broward County Sheriff's Office. On August 10, Sergeant Christopher Reyka was shot and killed while investigating two suspicious vehicles in a convenience store parking lot. Three months later, on November 7, Deputy Paul Rein, 76, was fatally gunned down by a prisoner he was transporting to court. The third South Florida officer killed by gunfire in 2007 was Detective Jose Somohano of

the Miami-Dade Police Department. Detective Somohano was shot and killed by a man who fled a traffic stop. Three other officers were shot and critically wounded.

Texas suffered the highest officer death total of any state in 2007, with 22 law enforcement fatalities, including 10 of them by gunfire. In fact, two of the six multiple-death shootings of officers in 2007 occurred in Texas. Three Odessa (TX) police officers—Arlie Jones, Scott Gardner and Abel Marquez—were shot and killed in September during a domestic disturbance call. On May 17, two Henderson County (TX) deputies—Paul S. Habelt and Tony P. Ogburn—were both shot and killed on another domestic disturbance call.

The deadliest shootout in law enforcement history occurred on January 2, 1932, when six Missouri lawmen were gunned down while attempting to arrest two brothers, Jennings and Harry Young, who were wanted for the murder of another officer, Marshal Mark Noe. Killed in the shootout, which occurred in Greene County (MO), were Sheriff Marcell Hendrix, Deputy Ollie Crosswhite, Deputy Wiley Mashburn, Chief of Detectives Tony Oliver, Detective Sidney Meadows and Officer Charley Houser.

The first of 79 female officers to be shot and killed was Police Matron Marta Shanaman of the Detroit (MI) Police Department. On December 12, 1971, Police Matron Shanaman was shot by a visitor who was assisting in the escape of an inmate.

Throughout history, 396 federal law enforcement officers have been shot and killed. FBI Special Agent Barry Bush, 52, had the unwanted distinction of being the only federal officer killed by gunfire in 2007. His death occurred while attempting to arrest a gang of serial bank robbers in Readington, New Jersey.

At Special Agent Bush's memorial service, FBI Director Robert S. Mueller, III, described Barry as "the consummate professional. For almost 20 years he was on the street, right in the middle of the action. He was a model of everything the badge should represent.

"Barry's death reminds us that the men and women of law enforcement put their lives on the line every day. Each morning when they pick up their badges, they know there is a possibility they might not make it home that night. And that is where heroism lies: Recognizing the risk, and choosing to accept it so that others don't have to."

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Craig W. Floyd is Chairman of the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund. Visit www.nleomf.com for more information about law enforcement officers killed in the line of duty.

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