

A MATTER OF HONOR



THE National Law Enforcement Museum

TESTIMONIAL - Shirley Gibson, National President of COPS

Mr. Chairman, I would like to thank you for allowing me to speak today. I would also like to thank Senator Campbell, the sponsor of S. 1438, and also Mr. Craig Floyd, Chairman of the National Law Enforcement Memorial Fund.

Victor Frankel said, to live is to suffer. To survive is to find meaning in the suffering. I am here today to speak for 15,000 men and women who can no longer speak for themselves. I am here today representing thousands of mothers, fathers, wives, husbands, sons, daughters, sisters, and brothers. I ask that as you listen to my voice today, you hear the echoes of the voices that speak from the walls of the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial.

These are the voices of the men and women who not only chose but embraced a profession they knew involved danger to their lives each time they donned their uniforms and pinned on their badges. They left their loved ones each day knowing that there was always the possibility that they might not return, yet they and their families felt an immense sense of pride.

Like so many other men and women across this great country, my only son chose the right side of the law, and he proudly joined the Metropolitan Police Department in our Nation's Capital. Brian's love for the job and the results he achieved are evidence in the many awards presented him. He was a role model on and off duty.

I remember hearing neighborhood children ask him if they could sit in his patrol car one day. After telling them they could, he watched the scramble to climb into the back of the cruiser. He stopped them with a gentle hand, saying, you never want to sit in the back of a police car. Always be either the driver, or his partner sitting next to him.

Brian was ambushed and brutally murdered at 3:00 a.m. in the morning on February 5, 1997, as he sat in that marked police cruiser on duty in full uniform, waiting for a traffic light to change, simply because he was a police officer.

A year after his death, my family and I watched as Brian's name was added to panel 50E of the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial. Through the pain, memories flooded my mind, and I saw my son. as a small boy we had to physically remove from the fully-equipped police car on display at an automobile show at the D.C. He knew that from day until the day he died that law enforcement would be his life's work.

As I looked at name after name before his, I realized that these names also had faces and stories to tell of bravery, honor, and determination to keep the citizens of our Nation protected at all costs, which ultimately included laying down their lives. What greater sacrifice is there?

In the 3 years sine Brian's death, I have worked to establish a Washington, D.C. chapter of Concerns of Police Survivors. As president of this chapter, first as a parent, I have met survivors from all over the country. In talking with them, I have learned that the National Law Enforcement Memorial, Officer's Memorial is vividly remembered as a beautiful, peaceful place, a meaningful place. It is a place of remembrance of the men and women whose lives were dedicated to peacekeeping.

As I have sat by Brian's name at the memorial, I have heard countless visitors muse, I wonder what happened to them? The public, the visitors want to know what happened to our fallen officers. They want to know the stories behind the names etched in granite. The survivors want the public to never forget the sacrifice.

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As I think of having a law enforcement museum, I think again of the impression that police cruiser at the armory made on Brian. I think how important it is for young people to see law enforcement's history, as well as the police technology of the future. I think of how important it is to have a place to see not just the heroes who gave their lives, but the heroes who are there for us each and every day, performing outstanding jobs. I think the greatest tribute to our fallen, to tell their stories.

I also think of the pride and appreciation survivors would feel in having a museum in close proximity to the memorial in a city that has many museums to pay tribute to the arts, the sciences, technology, but not our thin blue line. At a place called Judiciary Square, a name which evokes a spirit of justice, a law enforcement museum will do justice to the memories of our fallen law enforcement officers as well as honor the thousands out there working 24 hours each day.

I ask that you support the police officers and police survivors by supporting S. 1438, as through your support you will be providing meaning to the suffering of the tens of thousands of law enforcement survivors in our country.

Thank you.