

History of Police Week

In October 1, 1962, President John F. Kennedy signed a proclamation which designated May 15th as Peace Officers Memorial Day and the week in which that date falls as "Police Week". Every year since, tens of thousands of law enforcement officers from around the world converge on Washington, DC to participate in a number of planned events which honor those that have paid the ultimate sacrifice.

The first official memorial service took place on May 15, 1982. On that date, approximately 125 people gathered in Senate Park to honor 91 law enforcement officers. Over the past 34 years we have honored over 20,789 law enforcement officers from around our nation.

Today, the National Peace Officers' Memorial Service has become one in a series of events which includes the Candlelight Vigil, which is sponsored by the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund (NLEOMF) and seminars sponsored by Concerns of Police Survivors (COPS). The Grand Lodge of the Fraternal Order of Police and the Grand Lodge Auxiliary of the Fraternal Order of Police are very proud to be the official sponsor of the Memorial Service.

**87th Congress of the United States of America
H.J. Res. 730 October 1, 1962 Public Law 87-726**

Joint Resolution

76 STAT. 676.

To authorize the President to proclaim May 15 of each year as Peace Officers Memorial Day and the calendar week of each year during which such May 15 occurs as Police Week.

Whereas the police officers of America have worked devotedly and selflessly in behalf of the people of this Nation, regardless of the peril or hazard to themselves; and
Whereas these officers have safeguarded the lives and property of their fellow Americans; and

Whereas by the enforcement of our laws, these same officers have given our country internal freedom from fear of the violence and civil disorder that is presently affecting other nations;

Whereas these men and women by their patriotic service and their dedicated efforts have earned the gratitude of the Republic:

Now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Senate and the House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That the President is authorized and requested to issue proclamations (1) designating May 15 of each year as Peace Officers Memorial Day in honor of the Federal, State, and municipal officers who have been killed or disabled in the line of duty, (2) designating in each year the calendar week during which such May 15 occurs as Police Week, in recognition of the service given by the men and women who, night and day, stand guard in our midst to protect us through enforcement of our laws, and (3) inviting the governments of the States and communities and the people of the United States to observe such day and week with appropriate ceremonies and activities.

**Approved October 1, 1962.
John F. Kennedy
President of the United States**

Traditions

Black Badge Ribbon or Mourning Bar

The black ribbon placed over the badge is worn to symbolize the law enforcement community in mourning.

Bagpipes and Amazing Grace

The history of the bagpipes in the United States originates from the massive Irish immigration to our East Coast. The tradition of the bagpipes really began in the fire service. In the 1800's, Irish immigrants faced massive discrimination. The only jobs they could get were the ones no one else wanted - jobs that were dirty, dangerous, or both - firefighters and police officers. It was not an uncommon event to have several firefighters killed at a working fire. The Irish firefighters' funerals were typical of all Irish funerals - the pipes were played. It was allowed for a hardened firefighter to cry at the sound of bagpipes when his dignity would not let him weep for a fallen comrade.

Those who have attended a funeral where bagpipes were played know how haunting and mournful the sound of the pipes can be. The most famous song played at fire and police funerals is Amazing Grace. It wasn't too long before families and friends of non-Irish police officers and firefighters began asking for the bagpipes to be played for fallen heroes. The bagpipes and this hymn add a special air and dignity and is carried on by the Police and/or Emerald Societies of today.

Riderless Horse

Symbolizes that the rider not returning. It originates from the time when horses were the primary means of transportation. The boots are reversed in the stirrups symbolizing the missing rider.

Twenty-One Gun Salute

The firing of three volleys, according to ancient belief, will scare away evil spirits. This ceremony was modernized to a twenty-one-gun salute in the United States.

Taps

Played to honor a fallen officer or a paramilitary occupation member who has fallen.

Taps was sounded that night in July 1862; words were put with the music. The first were, "Go To Sleep, Go to Sleep." As the years went on many more versions were created.

Folding of the American Flag

The casket is covered with the American Flag. The flag symbolizes the service of the deceased in the community and the United States. After folding the flag it is presented to the next of kin.

This is in honor of Sgt. Habersham W. Harvey of the Savannah (GA) Police Department.

End of Watch: 10/20/1881 (Panel 46, E -12)