

Last updated: January 20, 2005 11:25PM

Remembering a fallen officer

Family, friends, colleagues bid farewell to Prince, killed in the line of duty

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SUPPLY | First came a lone bagpiper, then police officers on horses and a horse-drawn wagon carrying the casket. The widow, flanked by her teenage daughter and son, followed a riderless horse, empty boots backward in the stirrups, symbolizing a fallen officer.



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Moments later, the final call for Boiling Spring Lakes Police Officer Mitchell Prince, radio number 1180, shattered the silence at the Georgetown-Holden Cemetery.

N.C. Highway Patrol Trooper Jesse Dowe salutes the flag-draped casket of Boiling Spring Lakes Police Officer James Mitchell Prince during funeral services for the officer Thursday. Officer Prince was killed in the line of duty Tuesday.
Staff photo | Jeffrey S. Otto

"C-comm calling 1180, c-comm calling 1180, last call for 1180," a Brunswick County dispatcher transmitted through the radio.

There would be no response.

By 3 p.m. Thursday, the path to Officer Prince's gravesite was lined with close to 1,000 mourners, civilian and law enforcement officers "standing at attention" from the Southeast.

Officer Prince, 36, died early Tuesday, when he was shot three times with his own gun during a routine traffic stop on N.C. 87 just north of Sunny Point. He had pulled over Darrell Wayne Maness, 19, of Burlington, who was indicted earlier this week on first-degree murder charges and 10 other felonies.

Teary-eyed police chiefs, sheriff's deputies, troopers and other law enforcement officers from more than 32 jurisdictions, including Charleston, S.C., and Prince William County, Va., had come to bid a colleague farewell.

Some had never met Officer Prince in person.

Sgt. Al Morris of the state Highway Patrol, who had met Officer Prince one time a few years ago, said he had come to show his condolences to the family.

"It's not a lot you can do to comfort the family," he said. "But hopefully your presence here can ease some of the pain.

"We all put on a uniform, it may not be all the same color or the same badge, but we all represent the same thing," Sgt. Morris said. "It's a sad time for law enforcement right now; it's a sad day for all."

All those who wear a uniform know they could end up in harms way, just like Officer Prince did early Tuesday morning.

"It's something that you try to put in the back of your mind every time you go to work," Sgt. Morris said. "You know that either you or someone you know can come into contact with a fatal situation and that you might not make it back home."

Proceeding the graveside service, reverends spoke of Officer Prince as a father, husband, friend, law enforcement officer and hero at a funeral at Highest Praise Worship Center in Shallotte. They also told the crowd, which filled up the worship center's 800 seats and an additional 300 in the overflow building, how much Officer Prince loved to fish and cook.

He served as the head of the usher ministry and had been an active member of the Highest Praise Worship Center since 1999.

In addition to his part-time duty as a police officer and involvement in the Worship Center, Officer Prince also worked at Jerome's Steak & Seafood.

Danielle Munsey, who was a co-worker at Jerome's, stood under an old oak tree, next to Officer Prince's grave, hiding her tears behind sunglasses.

"He was always smiling, always on top of things," she said. "We all loved working with him. He would never let any of the older ladies carry anything, and he was just a great cook."

Ms. Munsey said nobody could cook top sirloin with onions and mushrooms, her favorite, like Officer Prince.

"This loss is just very hard on us," said Linda Harold, Ms. Munsey's mother who is a regular at Jerome's. "The whole community is traumatized."

"We'll miss him so much," Ms. Munsey added. "It makes you stop and look at these people who risk their lives every day. We are so grateful for what they do."

Ms. Munsey turned silent, fighting her tears and made a sweeping gesture toward the law enforcement officers in the cemetery dressed in varying colors, but all with shining brass and boots.

"The worst part of the day was watching Mitch's widow and children walk from the

casket and watching the family leave a son, husband and father that was dearly loved," said Brunswick County Sheriff Ronald Hewett.

Sheriff Hewett, Boiling Spring Lakes Police Chief Richard White and six officers accompanied the family during the graveside ceremony, where the widow received Officer Prince's badge and the American flag that draped his coffin.

"The best part of the day was seeing all the law enforcement officers from across the Southeast that came to honor one of our own, who served and died in the line of duty," Sheriff Hewett said.

"I served with Mitch for many years. I don't think Mitch realized just how many friends he had, and looking from heaven today I know he must be proud."

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