

Testimony of Sergeant Eric Bunday, Hillsboro Police Department/Vice President, Oregon Fallen  
Badge Foundation  
House Judiciary Committee, May 28, 2013

Chairman Barker and members of the committee, thank you for the time and opportunity to address you today. I come before this committee as the vice president for the Portland metropolitan area of the Oregon Fallen Badge Foundation, a non-profit organization whose mission it is to honor law enforcement officers killed in the line of duty and to support their surviving family members. For the past few years, I have devoted my life to honoring fallen police officers and tending to the needs of their surviving family members. I have witnessed firsthand the impact that line of duty deaths have upon departments, communities, and, most importantly, the families of these fallen heroes.

To truly tell you how I ended up on this journey that led me here today and fueled the passion that drives my service to the police survivor community, we have to go back to November 22, 1924. On this date, a young St. Helens city marshal, Dale Perry, attempted to stop a speeder in a fog bank when he lost control of his motorcycle, struck a power pole, and died of his injuries. Marshal Perry left behind a wife, a 5 year old son named George, and a 2 year old son named Robert.

Fast forward to 2005, when I was a young St. Helens police officer. My good friend, Sr. Trooper Randy Fargher, alerted me to a story he had recently heard of a St. Helens city marshal who had been killed in the line of duty, but no one knew the name of the marshal. Sr. Trooper Fargher and I started an investigation into the matter that ultimately led to us discovering the long forgotten line of duty death of Marshal Perry. He had never been honored on the state or the national memorials, and we ensured that this happened.

But the most poignant piece of this story came when we discovered that not only did Marshal Perry leave behind two sons, but that they were both still alive. Unlike the community he had served, they had never forgotten their father or his legacy. George and Robert Perry were raised by their widowed mother by herself in an era when that was an unheard of proposition. They both graduated from St. Helens High School as star athletes, following in the footsteps of their amazing father. As the tide of war swept across Europe in the late 1930s and early 1940s, George answered the call to serve first, leaving his studies at Oregon State University to enlist in the United States Army Air Corps prior to the attack on Pearl Harbor. Robert would follow suit a year later. They were both commissioned as officers and given command of B-17 bombers. Robert would serve in the Pacific, where he saved the lives of countless airmen as part of the Air-Sea Rescue Unit that airdropped lifeboats to pilots who had been shot down. This often meant flying into an active combat zone in an unarmed aircraft. George served in Europe, where he was shot down in late 1943 and spent the remainder of the war languishing in a German prisoner of war camp. They both returned stateside following the war, where they both became teachers and coaches, George at Wilson High School and Robert at Beaverton High School. Committing themselves to service and sport, just as their father did, they built the Perry Sports Camp out in Vernonia, which is still in operation today as Larry Steele's Cedar Ridge Sports Camp.

Why do I find it necessary to share all of these details with you about George and Robert? Because I met them. I knew them. They left their mark on me. They were incredible men who accomplished incredible feats. But bring up their father around them, and they were 5 and 2 again. I watched Robert tremble with tears streaming down his face as he was handed the folded flag for his father 81 years after it was due. The line of duty death of their father continued to affect these two men for the remainder of their lives. They accomplished amazing things before they passed away, George in 2006 and Robert in 2007, but along the way they were left with a longing and a constant ache for a father they so barely knew. They were the first police survivors I met, and they left the impact of the legacy of their father and themselves on my life. But I can tell you, without a shadow of a doubt, that I would go back in time to 1924 and trade places with Dale in a heartbeat if I could, because I saw firsthand the pain and trauma it caused George and Robert throughout the more than 80 years they lived on after their father was killed.

This is what brings me here today. I do not personally know Frank Ward's surviving spouse and twin sons, nor did I know his daughter, who passed away just three years after her father when she was 16. I do not personally know members of the John Day Police Department. But that does not matter to me. I have seen firsthand what they have gone through. I have seen that the pain, the anguish, the longing, and the yearning all never truly go away. Whether Frank Ward died 21 years ago, 89 years ago, or two weeks ago, it does not diminish at all the long term impacts that will be felt by his family and those who knew him well and worked alongside him.

The families of fallen police officers are innocent victims in the truest sense of the term. The families who love and support us are the true heroes of policing. They form the portion of the thin blue line that is not often seen by society; they form the support network that keeps that thin blue line standing. Those of us in policing have defensive equipment, firearms, bullet resistant vests, helmets, and countless hours of advanced training to help insure we return following each day's shift; our families have but faith and hope to rely upon that we will return each day from our tour of duty. As I said before, our families are the truest heroes in policing. When an officer is killed in the line of duty, their family takes the hardest hit. For a while following the officer's death, offers of assistance and support are plentiful, but then they start to taper off and the family is left to try to pick up the pieces and move forward as best they can. In the early 1990s, when Frank Ward was killed, the support networks in place today, like Concerns of Police Survivors and the Oregon Fallen Badge Foundation, were either in their infancy or did not exist altogether, which meant that the Ward family and other surviving families of that era went at this largely alone. With the granting of parole to Sidney Dean Porter, the Ward family has suddenly found Frank thrust back into the spotlight and, in many ways, they are being forced 21 years later to relive the horrific nature of his line of duty death on a very public scale. In other words, they are being victimized all over again. The wounds left by Frank's line of duty death on his family are still there. They will never heal fully, and the action of granting parole to his murderer does nothing more than reopen these wounds and bring the pain back front and center.

Every day, across the United States, men and women put on the uniforms of state troopers, deputy sheriffs, and police officers, and they head out on patrol to form the thin blue line that protects the way of life we enjoy so freely here in this great land. They have willingly stepped forward to stand watch on this line. None of us in uniform was drafted or ordered to join a police department. We all did so of our own free will because we answered a call to serve and

protect our communities. We willingly place ourselves in harm's way to protect the American standard of living. When one of us falls due to the criminal actions of another, it is an attack on the very fabric of America, because we are the ones called to be its protectors from enemies domestic. Frank Ward was one of those brave souls who answered the call to serve and paid the ultimate price protecting his community. His death was senseless, heartbreaking, and devastated his family, friends, and community alike.

A mere 21 years later, the individual who so brutally brought about his death is being granted parole. Allowed to return to the community where he killed a police officer who was performing his sworn duty to protect it. He is being given a second chance at freedom. As a police officer and a citizen, I am outraged and left to ask this question: where was Frank Ward's second chance at life? His second chance at life was taken from him by Sidney Dean Porter on April 8, 1992 in a private residence in John Day, where Frank Ward attempted to intervene in Porter's criminal assault on his wife and was beaten to death by Porter with a piece of firewood. Frank Ward's family was not given a second chance. They were forced to bury him. Being a police survivor is a life sentence. Look at Robert Perry. He lived with the anguish of losing his father in the line of duty for the next 83 years, which is just one year short of four times the amount of time Sidney Dean Porter stands to spend in prison for the intentional killing of a police officer.

My sworn duty as a police officer is to protect and defend the constitutions of the United States and the state of Oregon. I am sworn to protect life and uphold the law. I am sworn to do what is right, to hold accountable those who do wrong, and to protect the innocent against fear and oppression. I swore this oath nearly 12 years ago when I first became a police officer. I take this oath very seriously. It is the reverence I give this oath that finds me here today. I owe it to the memories of fallen police officers like Dale Perry and Frank Ward, and, more importantly, I owe it to their families as a reminder that the service and sacrifice of their loved ones has not and will not be forgotten. All of us in policing owe that to these families. Frank Ward has not been forgotten, nor will he ever be forgotten. Thank you.