

Sheriff's Points
By Sheriff Byron Nogelmeier

I just returned to my office from attending the funeral of retired Sgt Keith Christensen of the South Dakota Highway Patrol. As I sit in my Office on the Friday before Memorial Day I am reflecting upon what Memorial Day means to me. I think of the young military men and women that gave their lives to protect our freedoms here in the United States. Growing up in Chancellor, every year the Legion Post had the Memorial Day Ceremony and us kids would hang wreaths on the markers. I remember helping my dad go to the local cemeteries and put flags on the veteran's graves. This taught me how important it was to honor those who gave their lives for us.

Then I wonder about all the law enforcement that gave their lives. They also have protected you from dangers. In May, the law enforcement community honored the fallen heroes that we consider our brothers. I remember seeing a picture hanging on a wall. The picture is a doorway and it is dark inside. You do not know what is in the building. There is a caption that says "I would not go in there for a million dollars, but a cop does it for a lot less."

I ran across a poem that I would like to share with you. The author is unknown.

When God made Peace Officers

~ author unknown~

When the Lord was creating peace officers, He was into His sixth day of overtime. An angel appeared and said, "You're doing a lot of fiddling around on this one."

And the Lord said, "Have you read the specs on this order? A peace officer has to be able to run five miles through alleys in the dark, scale walls, enter homes the health inspector wouldn't touch, and not wrinkle his uniform. He has to be able to sit in an undercover car all day on a stakeout, cover a homicide scene that night, canvas the neighborhood for witnesses and testify in court the next day. He has to be in top physical condition at all times, running on black coffee and half-eaten meals. And he has to have six pairs of hands."

The angel shook her head slowly and said, "Six pairs of hands...no way!"

"It's not the hands that are causing me problems", said the Lord, "It's the three pairs of eyes the officer has to have."

"That's on the standard model?" asked the angel.

The Lord nodded. "One pair that sees through a bulge in a pocket before he asks, 'May I see what's in there, sir?' (When he already knows and wishes he'd taken that accounting job.) Another pair here in the side of his head for his partner's safety. And another pair of eyes here in front that can look reassuringly at a bleeding victim and say 'You'll be all right, Ma'am', when he knows it isn't so."

"Lord," said the angel, touching his sleeve, "Rest and work on this tomorrow."

"I can't," said the Lord. "I already have a model that can talk a 250-pound drunk into a patrol car without incident and feed a family of five on a civil service paycheck."

The angel circled the model of the peace officer very slowly. "Can it think?" she asked.

"You bet," said the Lord. "It can tell you the elements of a hundred crimes; recite Miranda warnings in its sleep; detain, investigate, search, and arrest a gang member on the street in less time than it takes five learned judges to debate the legality of the stop..and it still keeps its sense of humor." "This officer also has phenomenal personal control. He can deal with crime scenes painted in hell, coax a confession from a child abuser, comfort a murder victim's family and then read in the daily paper how law enforcement isn't sensitive to the rights of criminal suspects."

Finally, the angel bent over and ran her finger across the cheek of the peace officer. "There's a leak," she pronounced. "I told you that you were trying to put too much into this model."

"That's not a leak," said the Lord. "It's a tear."

"What's the tear for?" asked the angel.

"It's for bottled-up emotions, for fallen comrades, for commitment to that funny piece of cloth called the American flag, for justice."

"You're a genius," said the angel.

The Lord looked somber. "I didn't put it there," He said.

Thanks to all of you who have served in the Military and thanks to my brother and sister law enforcement officers.