

**Remarks for  
Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments  
20<sup>th</sup> Annual Corrections Officer Wreath Laying Ceremony  
and Honor Guard Competition  
Craig W. Floyd, Chairman  
National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund  
May 7, 2011**

His name was William Truesdale—a husband, father and Deputy Sheriff for the Alexandria Sheriff’s Office. He loved fishing, watching movies and dancing. He was a beloved figure. Thirty years ago, on January 27, 1981, Deputy Truesdale was returning three inmates to jail when one of the inmates wrestled away his service revolver and shot him in the chest. Deputy Truesdale died later that night—the only member of the Alexandria Sheriff’s Officer ever to have been killed in the performance of duty.

That is the tragic part of the story, but it is not the end of the story. This past Thursday, I had the pleasure and the honor of attending a magnificent tribute ceremony to this fallen hero who has never been forgotten by his department, his community nor his nation. It reminded me more of a joyful family reunion than a memorial service. His family was all there—his wife, Zita, and his four children: Bill Jr., Laurie, Thomas and Kevin. As was befitting of the sacrifice he had made for his community, the Mayor was there, along with the City Manager, Members of the City Council and a host of local business leaders and citizen supporters. Many of Deputy Truesdale’s colleagues were there, too.

I sat next to one of them, an old friend named Rich Estes. He told me the chilling story of how he had to perform the gunpowder residue test on the murderer moments after he was recaptured. The two of them were alone in a room and the killer stared at him and said, “I’ll kill you too if I get the chance.”

One by one, those who knew Deputy Truesdale the best, stepped to the podium to share their reflections. One of his colleagues, retired Sergeant Robert McCray-Brown, recalled what his mentor had taught him about not letting the inmates get to him: “Stay focused . . . be bigger than them,” he had said. “Don’t let other people control your behavior.”

Deputy Truesdale’s daughter, Laurie, shared the lessons she had learned from her father. “Always tell the truth and after you tell the truth never back down,” he had counseled. “Whatever you do, be the best at it,” he had told his kids. And, Laurie said his guiding principle was summed up in these words, “Let the life I’ve lived speak for me.”

Alexandria Sheriff Dana Lawhorne praised his fallen colleague, saying, “Deputy Truesdale knew what he faced. He knew the men he transported could harm him. Yet, knowing this, he chose to serve: he chose to take the risk.” He said that corrections professionals like Deputy Truesdale were “Guardians by choice, heroes by chance.”

The ceremony climaxed by naming the Alexandria Detention Center the William G. Truesdale Adult Detention Center. “Our actions today will ensure that future generations may know of Deputy Truesdale’s actions,” Sheriff Lawhorne declared. “For as long as this building stands, Deputy Truesdale will be a visible part of our history, a reminder to all of us that he did a great thing, a reminder that freedom is not free.”

A beautiful monument inside the detention center was also dedicated in honor of Deputy Truesdale. It said, in part, “We will never forget. In valor there is hope.” Chief Deputy Lenny George explained that all of the costs were borne by 88 individuals and organizations—a gift of appreciation and remembrance from a grateful community.

The words and stories were poignant. The naming of the building and the beautiful monument made for a wonderful salute to this fallen corrections hero. But, the greatest tribute of all last Thursday came when Deputy Truesdale’s son, Kevin—only six months old when his father was killed—was sworn in as an Alexandria deputy sheriff. Kevin was so moved by the plans to honor his father that he decided to follow in his father’s footsteps as a corrections professional.

Kevin is entering a corrections profession that has been serving and sacrificing for hundreds of years. The names of 571 correctional officers grace these Memorial walls. Another 500,000 go to work every day, never knowing when that life-threatening moment may come, but knowing that it could come at any time. Like William Truesdale, they know the risks but, thankfully, they choose to serve and protect.

Too often, though, their service and sacrifice is taken for granted. But, I am pleased to announce here today that on October 14 of last year, we began the process of changing America’s attitude toward law enforcement and our nation’s correctional officers. That is the day we formally broke ground on the first-ever National Law Enforcement Museum.

Authorized by Congress and scheduled to open in late 2013, the Museum is being built right across the street from this Memorial. Utility relocation work commenced in January of 2011. Through high-tech, interactive exhibitions, historical artifacts, and extensive educational and public programming, the story of corrections, and all other aspects of law enforcement’s proud history, will be told to millions of visitors.

And just as corrections professionals have been part of this Memorial from the beginning, the corrections profession will be represented in the Museum from the day it opens. Thanks to a generous one million dollar donation from the California Correctional Peace Officers Association, the Museum will feature an extensive and exciting exhibition area on the corrections profession. There, visitors will learn the history of corrections, experience the sights and sounds of a correctional facility, become inspired by the stories of men and women who made the supreme sacrifice for others, and hear firsthand accounts from the outstanding

professionals who assume the risks and accept the challenges of working in correctional institutions across our nation.

I am confident that visitors will leave the National Law Enforcement Museum with a deeper understanding of the difficult and dangerous work of correctional officers, and a much better appreciation of the contributions these professionals make each and every day to our criminal justice system and to our society.

In the meantime, we will continue to honor America's corrections professionals here at the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial. So, thanks to the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments Corrections Chiefs Committee, we pause once again today for the 20<sup>th</sup> consecutive year, to remember all of the corrections officers from the District of Columbia, Maryland, Virginia and around the nation who have made the ultimate sacrifice. And, of course, we remember and honor the families and loved ones they left behind.

A French historian once said, "When the past no longer illuminates the future, the spirit walks in darkness." These courageous heroes honored on these walls are forever remembered, and their light continues to shine brightly to help guide and inspire us all . . . or, as Alexandria Deputy Sheriff William Truesdale said, "Let the life I've lived speak for me."

May God bless all of our nation's corrections professionals for answering the call to duty—the call to serve and protect. We owe all of you a huge debt of gratitude.