

DPS Chaparral



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June 2004

Trooper killed in traffic crash

Texas Highway Patrol Trooper **Kurt David Knapp**, 28, died in the early morning hours of May 8 after a two-vehicle wreck on I-10, near Comfort in Kendall County.

He is the 77th Texas Department of Public Safety officer to die in the line of duty.

Tr. Knapp was born in Prescott, Arizona and raised in Kerrville. He graduated from Tivy High School in Kerrville in May 1994 and received his



associate's degree from Hill College in Hillsboro in May 1996. In 1998, he received a bachelor of science degree in criminal justice from Southwest Texas State University in San Marcos.

Knapp joined the DPS in October 1998 and graduated from the Training Academy in April 1999. His first duty station as a trooper was Ozona. He was promoted to Trooper II in April 2003 and transferred to Fredericksburg in June 2003. He received several commendations during his career.

He is survived by his wife, a 3-year-old daughter and a 1-year-old son.

"As troopers, we all know our jobs are inherently dangerous, and we accept that danger," said Texas Highway Patrol Chief **Randall K. Elliston**. "However, knowing and accepting that danger does not in anyway lessen the pain we feel when one of our troopers is lost in the line of duty."

"Tr. Knapp made the ultimate sacrifice and gave his life serving the citizens of Texas," continued Elliston. "For that, we all owe him a debt we can never repay. Our focus now will be in caring for Tr. Knapp's wife and two young children, who are left without a husband and father."

Dear Fellow Employee,

Our annual Memorial Service at DPS Headquarters took on added meaning after Tr. **Kurt Knapp** died in a car crash just days before. Several people from HQ then traveled to Kerrville for his burial. He will be missed and, most of all, he will be remembered and honored. Our prayers are with his family.

I also want to take a moment to thank each and every one of our officers for their courage, and for the sacrifices that are made on a daily basis. You are making Texas a safer and better place. Thank you. Be careful out there.

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As I write this, we have 40 DPS employees who have been called to active duty to support homeland security or to serve in Iraq and Afghanistan.

We truly appreciate these employees and the sacrifices they and their families—and their co-workers—are making. Please keep these employees in your thoughts and prayers as well.

Thomas A. Davis Jr.

Awards

Tr. **Richard Nelson**, HP Lumberton, was awarded a Director's Citation when he and several other rescuers helped save a woman who had crashed her car in a creek in Tyler County. She was trapped in the upside-down vehicle with a small air pocket. Nelson entered the frigid January waters to assist. At one point, rescue efforts robbed the woman of her only air source. Nelson reacted quickly, orchestrating the towing of her vehicle, using several chains, tow straps and a bystander's vehicle. The woman regained consciousness when her rescuers got her to shore.

DL Sergeants **James Debrow** and **Toya Trevino** both received Director's Citations for putting themselves in danger while preventing an apparent suicide attempt in Houston. At one point, Debrow lunged toward the man to keep him from jumping from an elevated highway. The man was actually dangling from the U.S. 59 north entrance ramp on Sam Houston Tollway pounding on Debrow's arms. Trevino then joined the effort, and with the help of a Harris County deputy, they pulled the man to safety.

When an elderly woman stopped breathing, her friends drove her to the McAllen DPS parking lot. DL troopers **Juan Mancha** and **Cesar Torres** began performing CPR. They revived the woman twice by the time EMS personnel arrived. Eight days later, the woman died at the hospital. The woman's friends thanked the troopers for their efforts in the local paper. DPS honored

Troopers Mancha and Torres with Director's Citations.

Sgt. **Bobby Stephen Turner Jr.**, Narcotics Waco, was eating lunch with a Jackson County Sheriff's deputy, when a piece of food stuck in the deputy's throat, cutting off his air supply. Turner reacted quickly, twice performing the Heimlich maneuver to dislodge the food. His quick action may have saved the officer's life—and it earned him a Director's Citation.

Sgt. **Johnnie Jezierski**, Special Crimes Houston, received a Director's Citation for his part in a two-and-a-half-year investigation. Jezierski and other law enforcement officials put a major dent in the theft and resale of infant formula. The money gained from these activities is believed to fund a variety of criminal enterprises, including terrorism. At one point, infant formula theft losses in Texas declined from \$2.5 million to \$1.1 million. Detective Randy Merritt and other members of the Pasadena Police Department's Community Defense Unit received Director's Awards for their efforts in the investigation of the case.

Fingerprint Technician **Jill Kinkade**, Crime Lab Austin, assisted in helping solve the 34-year-old murder of a sister of a Texas Ranger, receiving a Director's Citation for her efforts. Texas Ranger **David Maxwell**, Co. A Bay City, talked a Houston detective into re-opening the 1969 case. Maxwell nominated Kinkade after she enhanced poor quality fingerprint evidence and searched several databases before coming up with a match. The suspect was confronted

and confessed. He is now serving a life sentence

Two DPS officers were honored in May with the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement Achievement Award for Valor. Tr. **Clinton Pirtle**, HP Canton, and Capt. **Jerome Powell**, DL Waco, were two of the 11 Texas officers honored for valor at the ceremony.

In June 1998, Pirtle shot and killed an armed suspect in the woods in Van Zandt County as the man attempted to fire his weapon. A deputy later credited Pirtle's quick reaction and shooting ability for saving his life.

In July 2002, Lt. Powell was on his way to work when he stopped at the scene of an accident in Fort Bend County. Powell and another citizen helped a stunned elderly woman who was unable to get out of a burning vehicle.

Short Shots

Dive Team members needed

The Dive Recovery Team is taking applications for divers. Applicants must be commissioned DPS officers and have a basic diving certificate. Applicants must contact Major **David Baker** at 512-424-2115, and they must send the applications through their chain of command to the THP Chief's office.

40 years and still going strong...

Congratulations to DL Examiner **James Doug Edins** of Sweetwater, who recently marked 40 years with DPS. He has also been a HP and DL trooper along the way.

HP Captain slots opening

The competitive examination for the position of Captain, Highway Patrol Service, will be conducted at the DPS CLE auditorium in Austin on Tuesday, June 22 beginning at 8 a.m. The top twelve candidates, plus any ties, will be called before the oral board the following day in the THP conference room. Three candidates will make the eligibility list.

Application form HR-106 should be submitted directly to HR no later than 5 p.m. Thursday, June 17. Applicants also must submit a copy of the HR-106 to their service commander through proper channels. Call 512-424-5900 for the mailing address and fax number.

There is an announcement and a HR-106 available in Outlook at Public Folders/All Public Folders/Law Enforcement Promotions.

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Mile Markers

Promotions

DL

Estella Diaz Valenzuela, Sgt., DL Odessa to Lt., DL Midland.

Director's Staff

Raymond Roussett, Sgt., Aircraft Houston to Lt., Aircraft Houston.

Texas Rangers

Earl Ray Pearson, Asst. Chief, Rangers Austin to Chief, Rangers Austin; **Ray Coffman**, Captain, Rangers San Antonio to Asst. Chief, Rangers Austin; **Clarence H. McDonald III**, Sgt., Narcotics Svc. Decatur to Sgt., Rangers

Plainview; **Adolphus Pressley**, Sgt., Spec. Crimes Houston to Sgt., Rangers Houston.

CLE

Donald Glen Fleming, Sgt., Narcotics Svc. Sherman to Lt., Narcotics Svc. Paris; **Curtis Dale Bitz**, Sgt., Narcotics Svc. Palestine to Lt., Narcotics Svc. Palestine.

THP

Rene Raul Ramirez, Jr., Oper. III, Comm. McAllen to Supv., Comm. Laredo; **Linda Carol Tubesing**, Oper. III, Comm. Garland to Supv., Comm. Corpus Christi.

Retirements

Charlie J. Havrda, Chief, Rangers Austin, 34 yrs., 6 mos., 8 days; **Joe Keith Mitchel**, Supv., Narcotics Svc. Austin, 29 yrs., 10 mos., 29 days; **Hilan Mark Priddy**, Sgt., Training Austin, 25 yrs., 11 mos., 6 days; **Christopher Joe Watson**, Sen. Tr., CVE Gainesville, 20 yrs., 3 mos., 19 days;

Marianne Galatas Nichols, Secr. HP Austin, 9 mos., 16 days; **James Donald Weaver**, Sgt., Narcotics Svc. Wichita Falls, 29 yrs., 2 mos., 18 days; **John Edward Cruddas**, Sen. Tr., CVE Temple, 25 yrs., 11 mos., 6 days; **Rafael Albert Hernandez**, Sen. Cpl., HP San Antonio, 24 yrs., 3 mos., 21 days;

Walter Kermit Robinson, Sen. Tr., HP Llano, 22 yrs., 3 mos., 17 days; **Larry Gene Brown**, Sen. Tr., CVE Abilene, 20 yrs., 3 mos., 19 days; **Larry Wayne Payne**, Sen. Tr., CVE Marshall, 20 yrs., 11 mos., 25 days;

Sharon M. Montgomery,

Rep., Cust. Svc. Austin, 5 mos., 25 days.

Deaths

Kurt David Knapp, Tr. II, HP Fredericksburg (Oct. 1998-May 2004) died May 8; **James Andrew Taylor, Jr.**, Cust. III, HP Odessa (June 1996-April 2004) died April 18, 2004; **Mary Ramirez Huitron**, ret. Admin. Tech. II, DL Ft. Worth (Sept. 1984-Nov. 2000) died April 20, 2004; **Thomas Franklin Carey, Jr.**, ret. Sgt., HP Winnie (April 1948-Aug. 1977) died April 8, 2004.

Donald Glenn Palmer, ret. Lt., Narcotics Svc. Liberty (July 1968-Aug. 1996) died April 18, 2004; **Carlene Childress Raines**, ret. Clerical Supv. IV, Crime Records Austin (Oct. 1952 - March 1979) died May 1, 2004; **Joseph Gary Hennigan**, ret. Tr. III, HP Woodville (Feb. 1967 - Dec. 1988) died May 3, 2004.

Jack W. Ingram, ret. Tr. II, HP La Grange (Feb. 1942-Aug. 1980) died May 9, 2004; **Dorothy L. Gebert**, ret. Admin. Asst., Accounting Austin (May 1963-Feb. 1990) died May 11, 2004.



*On the
mend...*

Best wishes for a speedy recovery from line-of-duty injuries go to:

Ranger Sgt. Ronald Duff, Co. A Livingston, fractured neck after a crash

Tr. Paul Sigman, HP Texarkana, surgical complications

New Ranger chief, assistant chief named

Earl Pearson, a 28-year veteran of the Texas Department of Public Safety, has been named chief of the Texas Ranger Division. **Ray Coffman**, also a 28-year veteran of DPS, has been named assistant chief.

“Earl Pearson has shown himself to be more than capable of leading the Texas Rangers,” said Col. **Thomas A. Davis Jr.**, director of the DPS. “I am confident that he will do an excellent job.”



Pearson

Pearson had served as assistant chief of the Rangers since 2001. He was captain of Houston-based Company A for five years.

Pearson, who was born and raised in Rotan northwest of Abilene, graduated from the DPS Academy in 1975 and started his DPS career as a Highway Patrol trooper in El Paso. He

also was a trooper in Snyder and Abilene, and was a Highway Patrol sergeant in Houston and Brenham.

Pearson joined the Texas Rangers in 1989 and was stationed in Brenham until he promoted to lieutenant and moved to Waco in 1992. He promoted to captain of Company A in 1996.

“Becoming Senior Ranger Captain is something that every Ranger supervisor aspires to,” Pearson said. “I feel honored that the director, the assistant director and the Public Safety Commission had enough confidence in me to place me in this position. I look forward to leading the Texas Rangers.”

Coffman, meanwhile, was captain of the San Antonio Company D of the Rangers since 2001.



Coffman

A Lubbock native, he graduated from the Academy in 1975 and started his career with DPS as a Highway Patrol trooper in Brownsville.

In 1979, he promoted to Narcotics and later promoted to lieutenant.

In 1986, Coffman took a pay cut to join the Texas Rangers, serving in McAllen and Brady. In 1996, he promoted to lieutenant and spent five years assigned to Company F, Waco.

“I am truly honored,” Coffman said of his promotion. “I feel very fortunate because the other five captains were just as qualified as I was. I look forward to working closely with Chief Pearson, a longtime friend.”

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Speir Scholarship deadline

Wilson E. Speir Scholarship applications will be accepted through August 15. Students must be classified as full-time criminal justice majors and enrolled in Texas universities. Two scholarships will be awarded for \$500 per semester for up to two semesters. Preference will be given to qualified students whose parents are involved in law enforcement. Applicants should submit resumes, transcripts of completed college work and photographs to: Director's Office, c/o DPS, P.O. Box 4087, Austin TX 78773-0110.

DLD wins award

The Driver License Division has won a regional Customer Service Excellence award from the American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators. The award recognizes excellence in improvement of customer service delivery initiatives among U.S. and Canadian motor vehicle and law enforcement agencies. The award will be presented this month during the Region II Conference in New Orleans.

Hurricane season

June 1 marks the beginning of the hurricane season for Texas. Preparedness tips can be found in the EMS section of the DPS Web site. Alex, Bonnie and Charley will be the first three named storms of the season. Many deaths during tropical storms are attributed to people trying to brave flooded roadways.