

JULIE Y. CROSS

United States Secret Service

First female federal officer to die in the line of duty

The 26-year-old was shot and killed on June 4, 1980, during a suspected counterfeit operation stakeout near Los Angeles International Airport

Article by Julie Gallant, San Diego Union-Tribune Pomerado News October 31, 2023

Special Agent Julie Cross, the first female member of the U.S. Secret Service to die in the line of duty, is being honored for her time in the Secret Service and as a trailblazer in the San Diego Police Department, which at the time had few female officers.



The 26-year-old was shot and killed on June 4, 1980, during a suspected counterfeit operation stakeout near Los Angeles International Airport.

Shortly after 9 p.m. that evening, two armed individuals approached the agents' vehicle from the rear in an apparent robbery attempt, according to Secret Service officials. After Special Agent Cross left the vehicle to confront her attackers, a struggle ensued between the agents and assailants in which gunfire erupted. Cross was shot twice and died as a result of her wounds.

Cross was on duty with partner Lloyd Bulman when the two gunmen opened fire during what police believe was an attempted robbery, according to an obituary notice in the *Los Angeles Herald Examiner*. The robbers were not part of the counterfeit scheme, the obituary stated.

Former U.S. Secret Service Special Agent Julie Cross was killed in the line of duty on June 4, 1980. (Photo Courtesy U.S. Secret Service)

The U.S. Secret Service, which is overseen by the Department of Homeland Security,

gave Cross a posthumous Valor Award.

“Special Agent Cross’s voluntary risk of personal safety in confronting the armed suspects was an extreme act of heroism,” the Valor Award certificate states. “Her ultimate sacrifice is reflective of the highest standards of valor in the United States Secret Service.”

Cross, a member of the class of 1972 at Poway High School, is an inductee of the

Poway Titan Hall of Fame. The Poway High Alumni Association that selected Cross and two others for the distinction will celebrate them at a Nov. 4 formal dinner at Poway High.

On March 5, 1996, Andre Alexander was found guilty of killing Cross, according to information provided by the Secret Service.

“The U.S Secret Service is indebted to the Los Angeles Police Department’s Robbery Homicide Division and the Los Angeles County District Attorney’s Office for their diligence over the past 16 years in bringing this case to closure,” an article states. More than 750 people, including about 150 Secret Service agents, attended Cross’s funeral at St. James by-the-Sea Episcopal Church in La Jolla, according to an obituary notice. Then-San Diego Police Chief Bill Kolender, Assistant Director of the Secret Service Robert Powis, and Cross’s brother, Peter Cross, eulogized the slain agent.



Services for Julie Cross were held at St. James by-the-Sea Church in La Jolla and her burial was at El Camino Memorial Park in San Diego. (Courtesy Jim Kelley)

Cross was born on Feb. 17, 1954, in Radford, England. Both of her parents had died by the time she was 10 years old, leaving her and her older brother, Peter Cross, orphaned. Once Peter graduated from college and obtained a job, he took his sister into his care.

Cross began developing an interest in law enforcement as she grew into adulthood, following in the footsteps of her brother who was a San Diego Police Department reserve officer. She graduated from San Diego State University, and in 1977 began working as an officer with the department.

Fred Moeller, who retired as a captain from the department 20 years ago, was Cross's Police Academy adviser. Moeller said Cross stood out from other recruits in her class as she made efforts to improve herself and do her best, he said.

"She was very physically fit and also very competitive," Moeller wrote in an email. "She challenged herself each day trying to better herself. Julie would challenge other recruits in some of the required physical fitness events necessary to become a police officer. She cared about others succeeding in the class while improving herself. She not only excelled in the physical fitness arena but also in the academic portion."

Cross had a positive attitude and was able to defuse situations that could become violent during role-play activities, he said. Feedback from field training officers showed she was able to interact with the public in a variety of situations, and she wasn't afraid to jump in and take control when it was required, said Moeller, who lives in Arizona.

This was a time when very few women were among the ranks of police officers, so she was a trailblazer in a historically male-dominated field, he added.



Mourners remembered Julie Cross for her determination and support for her colleagues. (Courtesy Cheryl Meyers)

"Upon graduating from the academy, Julie was one of the top recruits in the class," Moeller said. "She was humble, very caring, and very dedicated to becoming a good police officer."

Rancho Penasquitos resident Cheryl Meyers went through the police academy with Cross. Meyers was 22 and Cross was 23.

“She was just getting started,” said Meyers, a retired assistant police chief with the San Diego Police Department. “I believe if Julie had survived, I would have seen her in a very high rank and very possibly as chief of police. That’s the quality of her character and her abilities. I say that because you could see the motivation she had for the job. ... Unfortunately, it didn’t happen for her.”

In Chief Kolender’s eulogy, he spoke of Cross’s two commendations — one for saving a man’s life and the other for solving a burglary series, Meyers recalled. With help from another officer, Cross spent nearly an hour performing CPR on a man — who turned out to be her police captain’s friend — who was having a heart attack in Mission Valley. Kolender described her other commendation as exceptional investigative and interrogative abilities combined with outstanding report writing and sound police sense that resulted in the arrest of a burglar, Meyer said.

Off-duty, Meyers and Cross would walk their dogs together, dance to disco music and listen to live folk music and share lunches in downtown San Diego where they worked in separate offices.

“She really had a very long, promising career in front of her and her whole life in general,” Meyers said. “All of the three people getting recognized (in the Titan Hall of Fame) just seem so worthy and deserving of it.”

Jim Kelley, a former motorcycle sergeant for the San Diego Police Department who was Cross’s partner from about 1977 to 1979, remembers she had very good people skills. “She was energetic and a very good report writer,” said Kelley, a Fallbrook resident. “She had the ability to interview suspects and get them to cooperate much more than I could. She had a knack for getting people to cooperate.”

One incident that highlighted Cross’s bravery, Kelley said, was when they were transporting victims to the hospital in a police ambulance. An armed robbery had occurred in San Ysidro and an all-units bulletin was announced on the radio.



Jim Kelley, left, and Julie Cross worked as partners for the San Diego Police Department from 1977 to 1979. (Courtesy Jim Kelley)

“We were working a police ambulance in the Serra Mesa area and a car was reported stolen,” he said. “We immediately went over to Interstate 805. As we pulled up on the ramp, the suspect vehicle drove by. Julie was driving and we followed the vehicle northbound on state Route 163 to state Route 52.

“While we were following it we saw them throw a weapon out of the window of the car onto the freeway. We continued following the suspect to SR-52 where we initiated a stop. Several units converged on the location, and we took the three suspects into custody.” Cross received a citation commending her for her job performance, he said.

“From when I first met her, she expressed the desire to be a federal officer someday soon,” Kelley said. “She was working her way toward that goal. I think she just figured it was a career step from being a police officer to being a Secret Service agent. Cross’s U.S. Secret Service career began Oct. 1, 1979, when she was appointed as a special agent in the San Diego field office and was later transferred to the Los Angeles

office. The duties of the Secret Service involve protecting the nation's leaders, including the president, first lady, and family; the vice president and family; visiting foreign heads of state while in the U.S.; and major presidential/vice presidential candidates. A secondary mission of the Secret Service is to protect the financial infrastructure of the United States.

Former Secret Service agent Kevin Foley, who retired as deputy director in 2001, went through two Secret Service training programs with Cross starting in October 1979.

Foley said Cross stood out from her classmates, most of whom were four or five years older than her and had significant law enforcement experience. She distinguished herself by coaching and encouraging classmates who needed an extra boost, either academically or physically, said Foley, who lives in North Carolina.

"She had a certain grace about her and composure and quiet confidence," he said. "She was somebody who you could see had great promise. I think about how much she could have contributed and achieved if she had a full life. She would have absolutely been a leader in my organization and in law enforcement."

Two scholarships have been set up in Cross's name. The U.S. Secret Service Association awards a competitive scholarship every year to one young woman who plans to enter law enforcement in the U.S. The amount of the scholarship depends on donations but this year the association awarded a \$6,000 scholarship. **The Women in Federal Law Enforcement also awards an annual scholarship in her name.**

The Titan Hall of Fame Recognition Dinner is being hosted by the Poway High Alumni Association. The Nov. 4, 2023, event at Poway High School starts at 5 p.m. with a social, reception, and tours of the Titan Museum and Hall of Fame. At 6 p.m., the event will start in Room K-1.