

SANTA BARBARA NEWS-PRESS

Highway signs to honor fallen USP officer

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Federal Correctional Officer Scott Williams was killed in the line of duty in 1997 at the Lompoc Federal Penitentiary.

COURTESY PHOTO

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Almost 15 years ago, Correctional Officer Scott Williams, a 29-year-old Marine veteran and father of two young girls, was stabbed to death by an inmate at the Lompoc Federal Penitentiary.

His family, friends and legions of his coworkers have never forgotten the young man and his loss, and have labored through the years to offer fitting tributes to his life.

Now, a segment of State Route 1 between Vandenberg Air Force Base and the turnoff to the Lompoc penitentiary at Santa Lucia Canyon Road will soon bear the designation "Federal Correctional Officer Scott Williams Memorial Highway."

The designation comes by the way of a state Senate resolution carried by Sen. Tony Strickland, R-Thousand Oaks, and Assemblyman Katcho Achadjian, R-San Luis Obispo, and was heavily supported by a number of peace officer organizations.

"We can only hope that this small tribute to Officer Williams and his family serves as a reminder of his sacrifice and that the safety of all our law enforcement officers is a matter of statewide and national concern," the resolution states.

Officer Williams, who served in Operation Desert Storm and was once named "Marine of the Year," was married to his Lompoc High School sweetheart, Kristy, and was the father of 6-year-old Kaitlin and 11-month-old Kallee. The family lived in Los Alamos.

"Officer Williams was taken from his family far too soon and this bill is a way to honor and remember the contributions he made to our country and our community," Mr. Strickland said on the floor of the state Senate. "His passing is a tragic reminder that law enforcement officers serve the public and risk their lives for us on a daily basis and I can only hope this small tribute to Officer Williams serves as a reminder of his sacrifice to our community."

Barry Fredieu, president of Local 3048 of the American Federation of Government Employees at the penitentiary, worked with Officer Williams and has sought recognition for his colleague through the years, including helping build a memorial park to Officer Williams near the penitentiary staff housing.

On Tuesday, knowing Sen. Strickland's bill had just been passed into law, Mr. Fredieu retired after almost 25 years with the federal penitentiary system.

The knowledge that the highway designation was coming, he said, was the best retirement present he could imagine.

"For me, it's really a lasting tribute for Scott and his family, that's the way I look at it," said Mr. Fredieu. "We built the park (on penitentiary property) but people have to come in to see the park, as opposed to this highway, which is forever. The staff is going to see it, the local community is going to drive by it. Thousands of people are driving this highway each and every day. That's a more visible tribute."

The officer's widow, Mr. Fredieu said, would ideally like to see the sign dedication for the highway next April, on the 15th anniversary of Officer Williams' death. As required by law, the two highway signs were paid for with donations, including from the local union, the California Correctional Peace Officers Association and the national peace officers' council.

"It seemed like the right thing to do," said Ryan Sherman, spokesman for the CCPOA, who helped navigate the resolution through the legislature. "It was a way to honor Scott and his memory, instead of letting things disappear."

It was especially fitting, he said, because of the recent decision involving the inmate caught on surveillance tape killing Officer Williams. Inmate Roy C. Green, who had strapped two homemade knives to his arms, stabbed Officer

Williams in the neck, and seriously injured another officer by stabbing him in the chest. Three other officers, coming to the aid of the fallen men, were slightly injured.

Mr. Green, also known as Haneef Bilal, was charged with one count of murder within the jurisdiction of the United States, one count of murder of a correctional officer, three counts of assault with intent to murder and one count of assault with a dangerous weapon with intent to do bodily harm.

For most of the years since the officer's death, Mr. Green, who has pleaded innocent, has been confined at a federal medical referral center in North Carolina. Defense attorneys have said that Mr. Green has an IQ bordering on mental retardation.

Recently, Mr. Green was civilly committed and will remain in Bureau of Prisons custody for the remainder of his life.

"When they finally got the news that he (Green) was certified into the civil commitment program, and that there's not going to be a trial, he's not going to be convicted, this (the road) was a way to honor Scott and his memory, instead of letting things disappear," Mr. Sherman explained. "Now that there was finality to the legal portion of it, we're stepping up and doing a little bit to recognize his sacrifice."

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