

1999 Department Awards

Each year, the St. Charles Parish Sheriff's Office hosts a ceremony to honor those whose bravery and dedication to protecting others distinguish them as heroes. In 1999, Sheriff Greg Champagne presented four Awards for Valor, four Distinguished Service Awards, 40 Letters of Commendation, two Purple Hearts, and one Citizen Award.

Recipients were honored for a variety of courageous acts -- from pulling a man from a burning building to investigating a long-time sexual predator and a heinous murder to saving one of their own.

Also, in a turnabout, the department was awarded a plaque from St. Charles Parish resident Diana Hail for its work protecting citizens in the area.

- Citizen Award
- Unit Citation
- Letters of Commendation
- Distinguished Service Awards
- Award for Valor
- Special Recognition

Citizen Award

Brian LeBlanc

On April 9, 1999, Randy Ryan was involved in an unfortunate accident. As he turned the ignition key on his riding lawnmower, it backfired and exploded. Gas sprayed over his entire back and he was engulfed in flames. Shocked by the accident, he did not even realize he was on fire.

Luckily, a hero was nearby. Brian LeBlanc, of Covington, was hanging siding on a neighboring house. When he saw Ryan aflame, he jumped from the scaffolding where he was working and tackled the burning man to the ground, putting out the fire.

Ryan suffered second and third degree burns to his back, neck, and face. "I believe he would have burned to death had Brian not been there that afternoon," said Ryan's wife, Pamela. "I witnessed this terrible accident. I, along with six other people working on the house next door, were frozen in fright, but Brian did not even hesitate and rescued Randy in mere seconds. One of the witnesses was Brian's son who was working with his father that day. Although the boy was in shock and disbelief over the incident, he was also overwhelmingly proud of the way his father reacted in this emergency situation."

Unit Citation

Explorer Post #15 - Unit Citation, Achievement

Det. Carl Jonkers	Tanya Carter	Steven Ledet
Cpl. Burley McCarter	Destiny Dufrene	Adam Lejune
Cpl. Mickey Bergeron	Jack Gilboy	Jason Lynch
Cpl. Jimmy Robert Jr.	Chad Hotard	Kevin Ranatza
Deputy Danny Moran	Melissa Jonkers	Joey Rome
Deputy Wayne Joseph	Gerald LaBorde	Dustin Smith
Sandy Gilboy	Jeff LaBorde	Justin Smith
Brandon Adams	Tory Lazarus	Trae Williams
Chris Baird	Brandon Ledbetter	

In his nomination, Lt. Dwayne LaGrange wrote, "I consider it an honor to submit Explorer Post #15 and their advisors as a nominee for the Unit Citation in the area of Achievement. These young people have gone above and beyond in their service to the community and to the Sheriff's Office and I think they should be commended for their hard work.

"The Explorer Post has been in operation for three years. It consists of 14- to 21-year-old youths who have an interest in law enforcement. Our unit, Post #15, also has a Junior Division that allows students 12-14 years old, who also have a parent working for the department that is willing to assist the Post, to join at an earlier age.

"The Explorers have spent numerous hours helping the different programs in the department. They have spent many a hot and sweaty day painting house numbers for the elderly in the TRIAD Program. They also served several hundred senior citizens last year at the Council On Aging Mardi Gras Ball.

"The Explorers have attended countless activities involving children, in which they have volunteered to act as McGruff the Crime Dog. The members have smiled and interacted cheerfully while wearing this costume that can, at best, be described as uncomfortable.

"The Explorers have given limitless service hours by assisting with preparation and clean-up at the Reserve Graduations and other functions. They have assisted deputies in parking cars and related activities at the annual Bridge Run, football games, the Sacred Heart Fall Festival, the Fourth of July festivities, and other such events. They have been involved in community awareness activities throughout the year and they formed a team to join other department members in raising money for cancer research at the Relay for Life. The Explorers do this without compensation and only to prove their devotion to the department and law enforcement as a whole.

"Explorer Post #15 has taken upon itself to learn the appropriate methods for doing their jobs. With the aid of other officers and Lt. Rocco Dominic, the Post members completed a mini-academy in which they learned the basic principles of being a police officer. They were instructed in ethics, legal aspects, self-defense, vehicle stops, CPR/First Aid, and the other pertinent areas of police work. They actively pursue continuing education in the field and try to hold monthly training classes.

"The Explorers wear their uniforms proudly and most hope to join us in the ranks as St. Charles Parish Sheriff's Office deputies. Two Explorers have gone on to advance their careers in the military and another one has returned to the post as an Adult Advisor. Two other explorers, Destiny Dufrene and Gerard LaBorde, won National awards from the Boy Scouts of America for their achievements. The Post's loyalty to the department and the program is undisputed, well proven, and much appreciated."

Safe Schools - Unit Citation, Achievement

Sgt. Warren LeBeauf	Cpl. Burley McCarter	Deputy Kevin Doyle
Sgt. Ardine Boyd	Cpl. Jimmy Robert Jr.	Deputy Harold Jackson
Cpl. Kenny Gagliano	Cpl. Clyde Taylor	Deputy Danny Moran
Cpl. James Hebert	Deputy Steve Amedee	Deputy Mark Smith

The Safe Schools Program was awarded the Unit Citation for Achievement for the accomplishments of School Resource Officers, ADAPT, Court School, and DARE Officers, a combination that has gained national recognition as a proactive approach to creating a safe learning environment. In doing so, it has become a pilot program which numerous other agencies have studied and duplicated within their own departments with equal success.

Efforts by the Safe School Program over the past five years have netted an overall 69.9% decrease in school fights. The program has expanded to include teaching law-related topics in regular classroom settings and play an active role in parent/teacher/student conferences. While the concept is a strong one, it is the dedication and pride of these officers that has elevated this effort to a level unparalleled.

In early 1999, members of the Special Investigations Division (SID) systematically analyzed arrests and CI information regarding this drug ring and in early March, formulated a plan to construct a Racketeer Influenced Crime Organization (RICO) case against this group. RICO cases are common in the Federal Criminal Justice System, but no State RICO case involving a group of individuals had ever been made in Louisiana.

Members of SID engaged in an intense covert investigation involving the use of video technology to record drug transactions, surveil/identify dealers and frequent customers, track drug proceeds and uncover assets.

Working with the District Attorney's Office, Attorneys for the State Drug Asset Forfeiture Team and the Louisiana State Police Investigations Bureau, the cases were brought before a State Judge for review.

Their efforts resulted in arrest warrants for the head of this organization, 9 key associates and 18 other members of this criminal enterprise.

Special Investigations Division (cont.)

On Feb. 10, over 80 law enforcement officers from five agencies simultaneously served four search warrants and 28 arrest warrants in what was dubbed "Operation Heartbreak." Drugs, vehicles, and cash were recovered, in fact, the head of this organization was found with drugs on his person and counting money when deputies surprised and arrested him.

This successful investigation, which took 14 months to complete, was a very arduous task. It required extreme dedication to duty and professionalism. What is more remarkable is that this unit of five investigators and one support person conducted day-to-day operations of the unit, which resulted in other successful drug round-ups during the year.

Criminal Investigations Division - Unit Citation, Meritorious
Lt. Chris Canaski Det. Robert Lynch Deputy Brad Walsh
Det. Sgt. Deborah Johnston Det. Joe Lawler Det. Rodney Madere
Det. Renee' Kinler

Letters of Commendation
Det. Mike Cunningham Det. Chad Jacquet Sgt. Brad Buckley

In the early morning hours of March 30th, 1999, investigators of the St. Charles Parish Sheriff's Office woke up to one of the most horrendous murders the parish had ever seen.

A young local woman had been found inside her home brutally stabbed 101 times. The residence had been ransacked and the victim's vehicle had been stolen.

Investigators' only lead was a cousin to the victim who had been the last one to see the victim alive. Working with information provided by the cousin, investigators pieced together the events leading up to the victim's death. Going back to the Friday night prior to the incident, investigators relived the last 72 hours of the victim's life, down to the minute.

After putting all of the pieces to the puzzle together, investigators identified and located the last two subjects, besides the cousin that saw the victim alive. Through this process, investigators learned that the two subjects had a known history of criminal violence and gang affiliation.

Working with this information, warrants were issued on the two subjects and arrests were made within 48 hours of the crime. Then by working backwards, investigators retraced every step of the suspects and victim for the 72 hours preceding the murder, ultimately building a very strong circumstantial case against

them. Combined with physical evidence left at the scene, investigators eventually built a solid case against the two suspects and they were indicted by a Grand Jury for First Degree Murder.

This case was the first time, in my memory, that every member of the Bureau worked together at 100% for a common good. The investigation covered two parishes and two states. Countless people were interviewed and many members of the Bureau worked day and night for 48 hours straight. It was a group effort and several members of other agencies worked unselfishly with St. Charles, namely Dets. Mike Cunningham and Chad Jacquet of the Kenner Police Department, along with Sgt. Brady Buckley from the Jefferson Parish Sheriff's Office.

As a supervisor, Capt. Theriot writes that he has never seen a group of individuals work so restlessly or selflessly for a common goal. It was through this tireless effort that two very sick and dangerous men were removed from the streets and put where they can no longer be of danger.

Letters of Commendation

Shelleigh Armstrong - Letter of Commendation

Shell Armstrong is assigned to the Special Services Dept. and has constantly promoted the St. Charles Parish Sheriff's Office as a progressive and professional organization throughout her work with many divisions and programs. Evidence of her accomplishments are: constructing law enforcement presentations for the Training Division, producing a DWI educational program for local access TV, a Domestic Violence Program used to train patrol personnel. She also maintains the departmental web site and produces the department newsletter, the Sheriff's "Update."

**Susie Breaux
Michelle Oncale**

**Judy Fielder
Tessa Somme'**

These four ladies have been nominated for the Letter of Commendation for their work in the Sheriff's TRIAD Program.

TRIAD is a partnership among the Sheriff's Office, the Council-on-Aging and Parish Service Providers to protect and assist the elderly of St. Charles Parish. An advisory panel called a SALT Council (Seniors and Lawmen Working Together) determine the needs and available resources to carry out its mission.

This popular program has attained very positive results in our service to the seniors of our community in the last three years. Some of the most successful initiatives are the: Adopt-A-Senior Program (where deputies meet one-on-one with seniors); Operation Quick Response (house numbering); and the File of Life (medical/prescription information on refrigerators).

This program would not be successful, if not for the unselfish efforts of these four ladies. Judy Fielder was our initial program coordinator. Tessa Somme' assumed the position in our second year and Judy returned after Tessa left us for a position with Rep. Gary Smith. Susie is assigned to Public Relations and Michelle is a secretary in the Special Services Dept.. Both have provided tremendous assistance to help make this program a success.

Sgt. Markell Jones - Letter of Commendation

Sgt. Markell Jones is assigned as a Shift Commander in the Correctional Center. One night, this past March, he noticed on a TV monitor that a disturbance was occurring in the parking lot of the Courthouse. He observed a vehicle strike an individual on the parking ramp and others attacked while trying to seek refuge inside the Courthouse.

Sgt. Jones sprang into action. He mobilized the correctional personnel, secured the jail, and summoned his shift to assist him downstairs. He immediately exited the jail without benefit of retrieving his weapon and ran down three flights of stairs to the parking ramp area and rescued a female who was being beaten. He coordinated efforts to guide patrol units to where the perpetrators and other victims could be located and interrupted what could have been a tragedy. In all, this incident involved 9 persons in four separate automobiles.

Sgt. Markell Jones is to be commended for his attentiveness, decisiveness, and courage in this situation.

Dyana Comeaux - Letter of Commendation

Successful police work often uses luck to make the case; but more often than not, it's the quick thinking of experienced personnel that make the difference.

Last September, 911 Operator Dyana Comeaux was stationed at the N.C.I.C. console when an armed robbery call was dispatched at the Winn Dixie food store in Destrehan. Arriving police units gave a license plate of the suspect's vehicle that began with the letter O. Operator Comeaux ran the plate which came back with no information on file. Comeaux realized that the Department of Motor Vehicles had not issued plates with the letter O yet and substituted the letter D.

Within seconds, the suspect's vehicle information was retrieved and dispatched to deputies who were able to catch the suspect at home.

911 Operator Dyana Comeaux is to be commended for her quick thinking and resourcefulness that exemplifies the great work of all of our dispatchers.

Michael Jackson - Letter of Commendation

Last March, a horrible murder took place in Boutte. A young woman was brutally stabbed in her home over 100 times. The entire residence, both inside and out, was a major crime scene with multiple pieces and types of evidence.

Technician Mike Jackson spent countless hours photographing, processing and retrieving evidence for this case. After working at the scene, many more hours were spent cataloging and examining the evidence. It was during this examination that Technician Jackson noticed a bloody fingerprint on a cigarette butt found on the scene. Ultimately, this piece of evidence positively identified one of the killers and placed him at the scene of the crime.

Technician Jackson's meticulous organization and reconstruction of the crime scene directly led to the indictment of both murderers by the Grand Jury.

As part of the investigation team, the Crime Scene Division complements the other enforcement functions to successfully complete criminal cases.

In this tragedy, Technician Jackson excelled at his craft and helped cement this case together.

Letter of Commendation

Lt. Dwayne LaGrange
Cpl. Laura Forman

Cpl. Johnny Champagne
Deputy Boyd Frickey

The spirit of teamwork between members of each of the divisions, as you will see, is a normal function of everyday operations of the Sheriff's Office; however, it is during emergencies that members from all over the department rush to the aid of one another.

In January of last year, a call came out of a burning residence in Luling. Lt. Dwayne LaGrange, a member of the Special Services Dept., heard the broadcast and was nearby. He immediately responded and was the first to arrive at the house.

Cpl. Johnny Champagne, a member of the Traffic Division, likewise heard the call and got to the house just after Lt. LaGrange. Deputies Boyd Frickey and Laura Foman, members of the Patrol Division, arrived shortly after. As a team, these deputies assessed the grim situation. A man was standing in the doorway with a water hose attempting to douse a major house fire and stated that an elderly man may still be in the house. These deputies attempted to breach the door to the house, but were pushed back by the incredible heat and smoke. They tried to make entry again to another part of the residence, but again were denied.

They radioed the situation to the dispatchers so that the responding fire units would be apprised of the situation so that critical time would not be lost. They called for medical assistance in case someone was located inside the house. They set up a perimeter for the responding fire and EMS equipment to set up and gathered all information necessary to attempt a rescue.

Another deputy did also respond and take action during this deadly incident. He will be recognized for his actions later in this program.

But it was the dedication to duty, the immediate response of these deputies from many different divisions and the teamwork displayed that made it possible for Fire and EMS Services to do their work.

Letter of Commendation

Sgt. Mark Candies	Cpl. Barton Barrios	Deputy Claude Adams
Deputy Jason Guidry	Deputy Leroy Doucette	Deputy Robert Villere
Reserve Dy. Bobby Gorman	Reserve Dy. Joseph Ogle	

In January of this year, the Patrol Division was dispatched to a sexual assault at an apartment complex in Luling. Upon arrival, the deputies learned that a man still holding a mentally impaired woman inside the apartment had sexually attacked two little girls - aged 10 and 11.

These deputies immediately assessed the situation, formulated a plan and began to implement it. Many obstacles had to be overcome to safely rescue the remaining victim and arrest the individual responsible. Deputies attended to the two little girls until EMS arrived to treat them for their injuries. They received important information about their attacker, the lay-out of the apartment and pertinent information regarding the woman left inside. They set up a perimeter, implemented crowd control and set up surveillance to locate both the victim and the attacker inside the apartment.

With precision, they effected entry into the house and safely removed the woman from the residence. The offender was located and arrested without any injury to the officers and offender. It was later learned that this person had prior arrests for attempted murder, armed robbery, and aggravated escape.

Our deputies receive over 80 hours a year of in-service training. No other law enforcement agency - local, state, or federal provides more training than this agency.

But training alone can't guarantee results. It's the commitment, professionalism, and courage of the men and women who wear our badge that bring success stories like this to light.

Letter of Commendation

Det. Chester "Skip" Kowalski	Deputy Jay Landry
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Police pursuits are dramatic, intense, and dangerous. They usually involve more than one cop car in a long procession of "follow the leader" after a usually desperate criminal. One that would have been featured on Wildest Police Chases happened last November.

In a period of only a few days, a lone gunman had robbed several convenience stores and gas stations at gunpoint. Patrol deputies had been briefed on the MO the robber was using and were watching for his next episode.

Sure enough, the robber struck again, but this time, deputies were close by with a good description and direction of flight. Det. Chester "Skip" Kowalski caught sight of the vehicle on I-10 and the chase was on. Deputy Jay Landry became part of the procession as it traveled at high speed into Kenner. The robber got on and off of I-10 at Loyola and Williams Boulevards. As the pursuit continued, it was getting increasingly more volatile with the robber attempting to go against traffic.

Det. Kowalski kept contact with the vehicle and was directing other officers to converge. Deputy Landry decided to hang back in anticipation that the robber would again try to double back. His hunch proved correct as the robber headed onto I-10 at Loyola going against traffic. Det. Kowalski and Deputy Landry forced the car to a stop and made the arrest without injury.

Det. Kowalski's and Deputy Landry's quick thinking teamwork combined to end a dangerous chase and capture a man who had committed 9 previous armed robberies.

Letter of Commendation

Lt. Chris Canaski
Det. Sgt. Deborah Johnston
Det. Rodney Madere
Det. Chad Robichaux
Det. Carl Jonkers

Lt. Robert Dale
Det. Sgt. Patricia Baudoin
Det. Renee' Kinler
Det. Joe Lawler

In September of 1999, a very disturbed individual robbed the Hibernia Bank on Paul Maillard Road. This daring robber then ran on foot from the bank to his own residence less than a block away.

Within minutes, this team of detectives located witnesses, cornered and set a plan in motion to apprehend him. This team helped man the perimeter, obtain intelligence information, attempt negotiation, formed an entry team and searched and gathered evidence. The robber was located under a bed inside the residence after a controlled entry into the house.

Bank security and the FBI marveled at the speed and precision that this entire team of law enforcement officers was able to investigate, locate, and capture this individual.

Letter of Commendation

Det. Rodney Madere

Det. Robert Lynch

Last June, an attempted robbery took place at the Burger King Restaurant in Destrehan. Two men shot the manager twice. In this instance, there was little information or evidence to point the detectives to the gunman.

Detective work is not like it is portrayed on television, although many believe that Andy Sipowicz is patterned after Al Theriot.

Witnesses don't usually have photographic memories. Informants don't act out of civic duty and "skills don't give it up" after a visit to the "poker room."

What really happens is hours of reviewing reports, talking to initial responding deputies, a lot of shoe leather and mostly dead ends.

These two detectives stuck to this case and, through sheer determination and expertise, were able to identify the gunmen and two accomplices.

Det. Sgt. Deborah Johnston - Letter of Commendation

One of the most intense types of criminal investigations to conduct is one concerning an officer-involved shooting. The integrity of the investigation itself and the department as a whole requires a fair and impartial effort by the investigator.

Det. Sgt. Deborah Johnston undertook such an investigation when two deputies used deadly force on an individual that tried to kill them with a rifle at a domestic disturbance in St. Rose.

Debbie took control of the scene upon her arrival and from that time until its conclusion, immersed herself in that investigation. Knowing that the product of her investigation would be examined in detail by a grand jury and, in a large part, determine the future of the two deputies, she exhausted all investigative sources and produced an accurate and in-depth account of the incident from its inception to the attack on the deputies.

It was her attention to detail, experience, and professionalism that allowed those in review to conclude that the deputies acted properly and professionally.

Distinguished Service Award

Det. Sgt. Patricia Baudoin

Letter of Commendation

Lt. Ricky Oubre

Det. Renee' Kinler

Sylvia Chauvin

High profile criminal cases are those that usually both grab the attention and shock a community. No other criminal case has taken a higher profile than the case of pedophile Brian Matherne.

We all have listened to television accounts and news articles about these horrible crimes. We all now know that over a period of, at least 15 years, this predator victimized 17 young men.

We also know that Matherne was convicted of 33 counts and has been sentenced to nearly 30 years in jail.

Recently, some news accounts have been published commending the prosecutor's office for its work in securing this conviction. We, likewise echo our congratulations.

But something was overlooked. And like Paul Harvey says, "This is the rest of the story."

This case began with a phone call from a third party with concerns that a young man was struggling with painful memories of sexual molestation that were several years old. From that initial contact and for over a period of several months, an intense investigation commenced.

Det. Sgt. Pat Baudoin was tasked with the nearly impossible duty of contacting a host of young men and asking them to replay the most hideous and repressed memories of their young lives. We, seasoned law enforcement officers, can imagine the resistance these victims must have felt, but it is unlikely that the general public can appreciate it.

Pat uncovered 13 victims and developed over 400 counts of sexual abuse before any presentation was made to our prosecutor's office. She spent all of her time at work and most of her personal time developing the trust needed to bring these young men's cases forward.

Pat was detailed, at the prosecutor's request, to the DA's Office for over a week to prepare the attorneys and give insight to the complexity of this case.

The emotional toll exacted by this type of investigation is extreme. Pat didn't work alone in this case. Many deputies assisted her. This case touched not only this community, but this department as well.

Lt. Ricky Oubre of the K-9 Division, Det. Renee' Kinler and Clerk Sylvia Chauvin have been recognized by Det. Sgt. Baudoin for their assistance in this case.

From a simple nondescript phone call, a case that grabbed the attention of this entire parish and much of the nation was conducted by this agency, through the hard work of Det. Sgt. Pat Baudoin and the help of these other officers.

Capt. Alfred Theriot - Letter of Commendation

Have you all noticed a trend here? Several members of the Criminal Investigations Division, Juvenile Investigation Division, Special Investigations Division, and Crime Scene Division have received recognition here tonight.

It's not only because detectives write good reports that they received a lot of nominations. It's not that they loaded the awards committee this year, either.

It is because in each instance that they are deserving of the recognition. All of these divisions comprise the Criminal Investigations Bureau.

These divisions receive direction and guidance from their commander. Captain Al Theriot, Chief of Detectives, has over 40 years of police experience. Al tells "war" stories about his experiences involving significant incidents that occurred in the past. He often talks about working the Big Flood. Sometime we're not sure if he's talking about Hurricane Betsy or the one with Noah.

It is safe to say; however, that those who work in CID have benefited from the knowledge and experience of Al Theriot. In recognition of his oversight and management of CID, Al Theriot is awarded this Letter of Commendation.

Deputy Shellie McCloud

Deputy Jason Guidry

Earlier this year, Deputy Shellie McCloud was dispatched to a medical emergency call in Ama. A man was unconscious and had stopped breathing.

Deputy Jason Guidry was leaving his residence, preparing to come to roll call for the on-coming patrol shift, when he heard the call come out. He decided to roll also, to see if he could help until the ambulance got there.

When these two deputies arrived, they found the man unresponsive and turning blue. Both officers immediately began CPR and basic life support. They continued their life-saving actions until the EMT's arrived. They initially were reluctant to allow the EMT's to take over, not wanting to cease their efforts, which had helped the man to begin to breathe.

At first blush, this seems uncharacteristic for deputies not to turn the patient over to medical personnel; however, it was not uncharacteristic in this situation.

It was not until the deputies saw the unconscious man that they realized that the victim was a fellow deputy. Their instinct, training, and teamwork allowed them to get and keep Deputy Lonnie Hamilton breathing until he could get to the hospital. Deputy Hamilton's doctors stated that if not for their immediate action, Deputy Hamilton would not have survived.

Deputy Lonnie Hamilton is assigned to the Traffic Division and is in the process of a full recovery.

Deputy Francis X. Landry - Distinguished Service Award

Francis Landry entered the Louisiana National Guard in 1939 at the age of 17. He joined the Marine Corps in 1942 and served in the Pacific and participated in the occupation of Japan after WWII. He returned home and began a successful career in business.

In 1973, he joined the St. Charles Parish Sheriff's Office under Sheriff Julius Sellers. He has worked continuously under 6 sheriffs.

He began in the Canine Division, worked in the Marine Division and throughout his career established the Eastbank Search & Rescue Division and the Sheriff's Posse.

Francis is quite a horseman and has participated in the Law Enforcement Equestrian trials for the past four years representing the Sheriff's Office. One of these events entails riding through an obstacle course and picking up a life-sized dummy. He has placed 1st, 2nd (twice) and 3rd in these trials.

Francis has continued in the Canine Division where he works with K-9 Racky. The dog is a dual trained K-9 who works general patrol and drug work. Francis and Racky are now being trained to locate bodies and they will be the first cadaver team in this parish's history.

To amass such a career is quite an accomplishment in itself; but Francis Landry has done so with a vigor that men half his age haven't. He maintains all departmental certifications and eagerly participates in the rigorous training mandated for Canine officers.

In 1995, while enroute to help another deputy, his patrol unit was hit broadside and completely demolished. Responding deputies thought Francis was dead. Subsequent attending medical personnel thought he might not walk again. He surprised everyone, but himself.

At 78 years young, Deputy Francis Landry proudly wears his uniform and patrols the streets of St. Charles Parish today, just as he has for 27 years.

Purple Heart

James Alan Arterbury

Nelson Coleman

The Purple Heart will be presented to any officer of the Sheriff's Office who is wounded as a result of a hostile act of another while performing an official duty. A wound for which this award is given must have required medical treatment and the incident must have been made a matter of official record.

These awards are presented in recognition of injuries suffered in the line of duty that did not occur during the last calendar year. In fact, the first incident occurred over 25 years ago the second nearly 18.

On July 4th, 1973, Deputy James Alan Arterbury responded to a disturbance at a barroom in Killona. While at this disturbance, Deputy Arterbury was attacked and fatally wounded.

Unfortunately, the official police report on this incident is gone and no clear record of the events of that terrible day remain. A parish building next to the sub-office on the Eastbank was named in Alan's honor.

On Nov. 5, 1982, a 30-year veteran of the St. Charles Parish Sheriff's Office, Nelson Coleman, gave his life as he attempted to subdue a suspect wanted on a felony warrant. Nelson was 70 years of age at the time.

He was assigned to the Civil Process Unit and did not have to attempt to arrest the man when he saw him. But Deputy Coleman had worked the streets of St. Charles Parish for many years and made countless apprehensions. During the scuffle that ensued, Nelson experienced severe chest pains and passed away of a heart attack.

Both names appear on the police officer's memorial in Washington, D.C., and their pictures reside in a place of honor on the third floor vestibule at the Courthouse. No Sheriff's Office honor was ever bestowed to their families.

Award for Valor

Det. Steve Cantelli

Det. Chad Robichaux

Domestic violence has captured the public's eye with several high profile cases in the recent past. However, police officers have known for many years that these types of calls for help are the most dangerous.

Today's fast-paced lifestyle, both partners working and rising expenses, etc. all lend to the stress of the relationship. Add alcohol, drugs, and guns to the situation and you have an explosive situation.

Deputy Steve Cantelli responded to one of these situations in St. Rose. The wife stated that her husband was intoxicated, abusive, and had thrown some of her possessions out of the house. She wanted him arrested and taken to jail. She directed Deputy Cantelli into the house-trailer and said he was in a back bedroom.

Deputy Cantelli called to the man so that he could speak to him and calm the situation. He was; however, met by the angry man holding a rifle. Deputy Cantelli called on his radio for help and attempted to get the man to put the weapon down.

Deputy Robichaux arrived and entered the house and joined Cantelli. They removed the wife from the house and tried to calm the man down. He would not let the deputies approach him and moved in and out of two different bedrooms, while always holding the rifle. It was later learned that he was, in fact, loading the weapon as he moved in one of the bedrooms.

The man then approached the deputies and pointed the rifle directly at them. As the man tried to disarm one of the deputies and raised his rifle to fire, both deputies had no choice but to shoot him.

Both deputies displayed extreme courage in the face of imminent danger, not only to themselves, but also to the wife and other residents in the area.

Both Steve Cantelli and Chad Robichaux are now detectives with the Sheriff's Office.

Sgt. Michael Folse - Award for Valor

On Jan. 27, 1999, deputies were called to a house fire on Megan Street in Luling. It was just after 1 p.m. when the call went out. Lt. Dwayne LaGrange of the Special Services Dept. was nearby and was the first to reach the scene. Cpl. Johnny Champagne of the Traffic Division shortly joined him at the house with Patrol Division Deputy Laura Foman, Sgt. Boyd Frickey, and others responding also. Firefighters and EMS units were dispatched due to reports that an elderly man was trapped inside.

Deputies arrived to see a man standing in the front doorway spraying a water hose on a heavily involved fire inside the house. Deputies tried to enter the front door, but were pushed back by the incredible

amount of smoke pouring out of the house. They ran around to the rear of the house to try and locate the elderly man and make entry.

They yelled inside the house, but received no reply. They were trying to climb through the window when (then Corporal) Michael Folsie advised them it was too dangerous to make entry at that location.

Cpl. Folsie ran to the front of the house and entered the house with two firefighters through the billowing black smoke. He made his way, blinded by the heat and smoke, through the house until he located the man, William Halfrich - 76 years old - laying unconscious on the bathroom floor. Cpl. Folsie yelled to the firefighters that he had found the man and made his way, carrying Mr. Halfrich towards the front door. He couldn't get out due to a burning sofa that was being removed by the firemen. He was running out of air and time. He lowered Mr. Halfrich, climbed over the sofa to the doorway, grabbed a deep breath of fresh air and went back inside the house. He grabbed Mr. Halfrich and carried him outside. He then began to assist the other deputies in providing CPR on Mr. Halfrich.

Mr. Halfrich had suffered severe burns to his head, face, eyes, and hands and was placed in a hospital Critical Care Unit on a respirator. He later died from his injuries, after a few days.

EMT's arrived and relieved Cpl. Folsie. He then began to help firefighters who were giving oxygen to Mr. Halfrich's dog who had been overcome by smoke in the house. Folsie picked up the dog, put it in his police car and took it to Destrehan Animal Hospital for treatment.

It was only after being ordered by supervisors that Cpl. Folsie went to the hospital for treatment for smoke inhalation.

All the deputies involved nominated Cpl. Folsie for this award. His sergeant wrote, "Courage is the quality or state of mind and spirit enabling one to face danger or hardship with confidence and resolution." Undoubtedly, all involved, firefighters, EMT's and other deputies acted with distinction, but one went "beyond the call of duty."

Sgt. Michael J. Folsie is the St. Charles Parish Sheriff's Office's Deputy of the Year for 1999 and the recipient of the department's Medal for Valor.

St. Charles Parish Sheriff's Office Recognition

Resident Diana Hail presented the St. Charles Parish Sheriff's Office with an award also.

Her plaque reads: "On behalf of the citizens of St. Charles Parish, I would like to thank the entire staff for making our parish a safe and peaceable place to live.

"My family and I have only lived in St. Charles Parish for three years and I continually hear good remarks on how fast the response time is for helping a citizen in crisis.

"My family and I have just recently had to call on you for help about three times and your deputies and dispatchers quickly responded professionally and personally.

"Thank you all and may God bless you and keep you safe."