

Tualatin Police Travel to Honor Slain NYC Officer

BY **WES GIRARDI**, TUALATIN POLICE OFFICER

Officer Jack Rose and I recently had the honor to represent the City of Tualatin and the State of Oregon in paying respect at the funeral services for Officer Rafael Ramos of the New York City Police Department. Officer Ramos and Officer Wenjian Liu were executed while sitting in their patrol car at an intersection in Brooklyn on December 20th. Officer Ramos' service was held the weekend of December 28 and 29 while Officer Liu's were postponed until the following weekend to allow family to arrive from China.

While no line-of-duty death is ever taken lightly, these are significant to the law enforcement community as they follow what is perceived as a growing anti-police sentiment across the nation. Police ambushes are not a new trend, 13 other officers were killed under somewhat similar circumstances this year alone. The timing is what makes

The next morning we were joined by Honor Guard members from Lake Oswego, Portland, Gresham, Salem Police, and the Clackamas County Sheriff's Office. The New York City Corrections Department bussed us to the Queens neighborhood near the church. We were able to enjoy a cup of coffee and a bagel in the engine bay of the Fire Department before continuing our walk, about 3 more blocks, toward the church. All the while, the sea of blue uniforms continued to grow around us.

The church only held 850 people which was reserved for family, friends, and members of Officer Ramos' Precinct. The streets around and near the church were reserved for other NYPD Officers. We moved with thousands of other outside agencies along the recessional route to find someplace to stand. My best guess is that we were about midway to the end of the

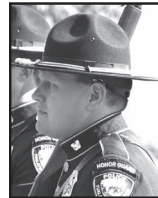
crowd. There were a couple giant screens along the route that video and audio from the church was broadcast to. From where we stood, we could hear well, but could only see the back of a screen.

As the service began, what had been a blob of people transformed spontaneously into rows. The buzz of tens of thousands grew silent. We listened as Officer Ramos

was memorialized. Lines of blue uniforms reached as far as I could see to both my left and my right. At the conclusion of the service, as the flag draping his casket was folded, and Officer Ramos was loaded into the hearse, a formation of police helicopters flew overhead. A fleet of motorcycles and the Pipes and Drums of the NYPD Emerald Society then led the recession up the road through the sea of blue to the cemetery. Officers rendered a rolling salute as Officer Ramos and his family passed by.

This was one of the most profound experiences of my law enforcement career. The National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial in Washington D.C. bears the inscription, "It's not how these officers died that made them heroes, it's how they lived". It was an incredible honor to represent Tualatin Oregon in paying tribute to the life of this hero, and show support to his family and the NYPD.

At the writing of this article, arrangements were being made for Officer Eric Hermann to attend the funeral of Officer Liu.



Officer Girardi is a 20 year veteran of the Tualatin Police Department and a founding member of the Tualatin Police Honor Guard.



The Tualatin Police Honor Guard is a ceremonial unit that not only represents the City at funerals, but also other events. Pictured near to far: Officers Wes Girardi, Jack Rose, Eric Hermann, and Matt Messina.



Officers Girardi and Rose pictured in New York with Honor Guard Members from Gresham Police, Clackamas County Sheriff's Office, Portland Police Bureau, and Lake Oswego Police.

this one different. Fueled by recent protests, riots, and media rhetoric, the killer targeted Officers Ramos and Liu not for their involvement in high profile incidents, or even because of their race, but simply because they were cops.

Our trip was made possible, in part, by a generous donation of the airfare by JetBlue. A New York City based airline, JetBlue flew in excess of 500 officers to attend the services for Officer Ramos alone. Honor Guard members regularly attend police funerals regionally. However, when air travel is required, it is generally not financially feasible, except for the largest of agencies or those with benevolent association or corporate backing. We learned of JetBlue's offer through social media late on December 23rd and submitted a request. They notified us of our selection and issued our tickets at about 2:30 in the afternoon the next day.

After working a patrol shift on Christmas Day, Officer Rose and I flew out of PDX on a redeye flight, arriving at JFK early Friday morning. We were able to visit the 9/11 World Trade Center Memorial that morning before going to Officer Ramos' wake in the evening. We met and traveled to the wake with officers from Chicago and Boston who were staying at the same hotel. The line to enter the church stretched for blocks and blocks. We waited for hours in what became bitter cold before it came our turn to pay our respects.



There was a single NYPD Helicopter patrolling during the service, but this formation of Law Enforcement Aviation making fly-over marked the recessional leaving the church.



This large park like area was set with port-a-potties and food trucks.



The World Trade Center Memorial was a scheduled stop for most officers traveling from out of State.



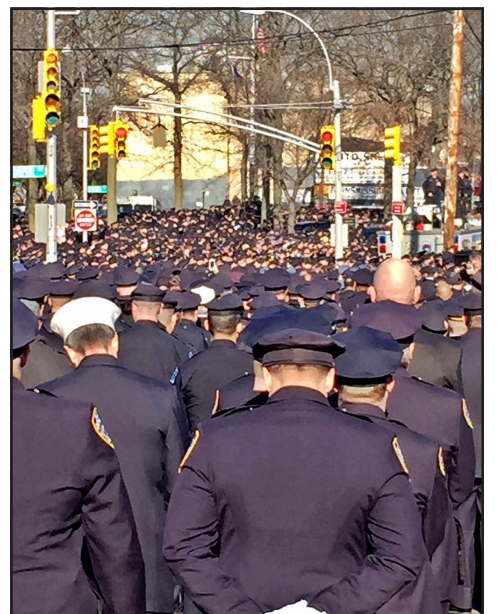
Officers Rose and Girardi in front of a New York City Department of Corrections bus that transported officers to and from the memorial service.



As we attempted to make our way through the crowd to a position on the recessional route.



Officers lining the recessional route.



Streets filled with officers watched/listened to the service as it was broadcast to large screens set up on sidewalks.



Many members of the Fire Service were also in attendance.



The neighborhood FDNY Station was open, it's engine bays lined with tables of coffee, bottled water, and snacks.