

BEHIND THE BADGE



END OF WATCH

Officers James Wade Allen and James Gale Lee End of Watch: December 5, 1968

Officer James Wade Allen



Officer James Wade Allen, known as “Jimmy” to family and friends, was the younger of two brothers and was born on September 11, 1944. His father was employed by the State of North Carolina Wildlife Commission as a wildlife protector, and his older brother Ray would eventually retire from the Division of Motor Vehicles. Jimmy, unlike James Lee, grew up influenced by family, friends and associates working in law enforcement. Yet for most of his time growing up, it appeared that his interests would lead to other endeavors.

Jimmy attended Bartlett Yancey High School in Caswell County and was the class valedictorian. He and his future wife, Jackie, were recognized as “Best All-Around” in their senior class, and were on the yearbook staff together. After graduating from high school, Jimmy

enrolled at N.C. State University, where he studied engineering, participated in ROTC, and played on the university golf team. On August 7, 1965, while Jimmy and Jackie were still in school, they got married and moved into an apartment near Cameron Village.

Jimmy’s brother Ray described him as a very smart man who was easygoing and never had a minute of trouble with anyone. According to Ray, Jimmy was an “all-around good Christian guy.” Ray said that his brother could secure an arrest and still make the bad guy feel good about himself--Jimmy just had that type of personality.

Jimmy also loved playing baseball and golf. “Almost every day off he had during the week while I was working, he and his brother Ray or (friend) John Kinney would head out for golf,” said Jackie. “On the weekends, I walked the courses with him.” Among Jimmy’s other interests were maintaining a 1940 Ford two-door that his father purchased in 1957 and loaned to Jimmy and Jackie as a second vehicle for the couple. He also enjoyed the music of Dean Martin and idolized Arnold Palmer.

Jimmy started working for RPD on June 20, 1966. Like James Lee, Jimmy served his country in a time of war, as he was a member of the N.C. National Guard stationed at the Raleigh-Durham airport. Because of his love for automobiles, Jimmy immediately volunteered for the Traffic Division and trained to be a motorcycle patrolman. At his first apartment near Cameron Village, Jimmy stored his police motorcycle in a shed owned by a neighbor across the street.

Officers J.W. Allen and J.G. Lee arrived for work on the evening of December 4, 1968 as they normally did to begin their shift. They attended roll call with their fellow officers, and at 2300 hours began their patrol duties in Car 13. While on “routine patrol” Allen and Lee were dispatched to check in with another officer on a call for service. As the officers approached the intersection of Yadkin Drive and Currituck Road in the North Hills area, their vehicle became involved in a motor vehicle accident. The investigation revealed that Lee attempted to veer to the right to miss the oncoming vehicle, but the police car was struck and then slammed into a telephone pole. Shortly after midnight on December 5, 1968, their watch came to an end.

Jackie was at home, trying to get back to sleep after being awakened by the sound of police sirens screaming up Six Forks Road. She was soon visited by Captain Conway Haswell and RPD officer and friend John Kinney, who told her what had happened to Jimmy.

Ray Allen was living in the Cameron Village area in December 1968. He recalls that on numerous occasions his brother would stop by to visit during any hour of any shift. They were very close. In the early morning hours of December 5, 1968, Ray heard a knock on his door and assumed it was his brother paying a late-night visit. Instead, Ray was met by another RPD officer, who broke the news about what happened to his brother.

Later, Ray retrieved some of his brother’s personal effects and his car from the RPD station. Ray kept the 1940 Ford that Allen drove to work for his final shift. Ray completely restored the vehicle, which is now more than 75 years old.

Officer James Gale Lee

James Gale Lee was 23 years old, and had been an employee of the Raleigh Police Department for four years. When he was hired by RPD at age 19, he supplemented desk personnel until he reached age 21 and could begin patrol duties with full law enforcement powers. Lee and Allen both graduated from the Basic Officer Training School on November 23, 1966 and received their state certifications; they were the equivalent of academy classmates.



James Lee, the son of a mill worker and farmer, was born July 25, 1945. The eldest of four children, James worked on his family's farm in Dunn and attended Fayetteville Technical Community College, taking business classes until he was 19 years old. At that time, he moved to Raleigh and unbeknownst to the family, decided to work for the police department. James was also a member of the N.C. National Guard. He appeared mature beyond his years and carried a strong sense of responsibility in regards to taking care of his family and siblings. For example, during the escalation of the Vietnam War, James was able to convince his younger brother Eddie Earl to join the N.C. National Guard instead of taking his chances with the draft. Positions with the Guard were tough to obtain during that era, but James provided some assistance to his brother, who went reluctantly but now realizes the difference this opportunity made in his life. Eddie later realized that his older brother was not telling him what to do; rather, he was doing his best to protect him.

James' sister, Kathy Jackson, stated that her brother was very protective of the family, and recalls that he was especially protective of her when it came to dating boys. Kathy indicated that James would give every young man who came to call on her a hard time and usually a stern warning. James also looked after his youngest sister, Marsha Wrench, at the end of the school day. Marsha was only seven years old when James died.

James' siblings described their brother as a very polite and organized man. He was a very reserved and humble individual, but was still steadfast in completing his responsibilities to his family, the police department and his country. This sense of responsibility is evident from James' brief record with RPD; he completed his assignments and always earned the equivalent of an outstanding evaluation. James even earned a letter of recognition on May 3, 1968, concerning a larceny investigation he completed that resulted in the recovery of the stolen property and the arrest of the suspect.

On the evening of December 4, 1968, around 2200 hours, James stopped in to visit his sister Kathy, who was living in the Five Points area at the time. He wanted to drop off a check for Christmas gifts for the family and have Kathy stitch up his long johns prior to the start of his shift. It was a cold night, and James never wished to wear disheveled clothing, not even undergarments. Kathy recalls that James was in a good mood because of the approaching Christmas season. This would be the last time Kathy would see her brother; around 0200 on December 5, 1968, Kathy Jackson was visited by another RPD officer. The rest of James' family was notified of his death by then-Chief Davis. James' brother Eddie was attending boot camp at Fort Knox, Kentucky at the time.

Both the Allen and Lee families maintain their own memories of loved ones lost, as all families do. However, Jimmy and James were special. They were police officers, and both served their country through military service. Though their backgrounds were quite different they shared many of the same attributes concerning their attention to duty. Jimmy and James are part of a very special fraternity - one that is determined to remind all police officers that there is no such thing as "routine patrol" in their daily activities.

Original text written by retired Captain N.D. Grodi and Dawn Myers.