

BEHIND THE BADGE

End of Watch



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Officer Denise Holden End of Watch: August 4, 1995



Officer Denise Holden was born in Dunn, on January 4, 1971 to Walter and Polly Holden. She grew up with a love of athletics and excelled on the women's basketball team at Cape Fear High School in Fayetteville. After graduating from Cape Fear High School in 1989, Denise began her quest for higher education at North Greenville College in Tigerville, S.C., and later transferred to Saint Augustine's University in Raleigh.

As Denise began her college years at St. Augustine's, she rapidly became a basketball standout. One of her former coaches, Dorothy Neal, said "she was one of the best all-around players ever." Bearing the number 24 on her jersey, Denise was elected to the all-CIAA team both her junior and senior years, and she also made All-American her senior year.

Though she often led her team to victory from the position of power forward, Denise made her biggest impressions off the court. Known as a friendly and outgoing person, her teammates nicknamed her "Sunshine" because of her bright smile. She constantly encouraged others to stay on the right path and not succumb to society's influences. She was well-

liked by her peers, being crowned Miss Criminal Justice during the annual Coronation Ball. She was also a member of Alpha Kappa Alpha sorority.

On August 8, 1994, Denise began a new chapter in her life. Having recently graduated from St. Augustine's University with a bachelor degree in criminal justice, she began her career with the Raleigh Police Department. On January 13, 1995, she graduated from the 63rd Raleigh Police Academy and took her oath of office.

Denise's cheerful demeanor and positive outlook continued as she began her career as a police officer. She would often remind her co-workers, "Don't do anything I wouldn't do," and always made positive comments about others. She often spoke of her family to her fellow officers and was known for being active in her church. She also kept close ties to St. Augustine's, often visiting with students there and encouraging them to achieve their goals and not become one of the many statistics she saw on a daily basis in her career.

On August 4, 1995, tragedy struck the RPD. Denise, always wanting to help her beat partners, responded to an urgent request for assistance from another officer who was fighting a suspect. While en route to the scene, Denise's patrol car slid out of control on Morgan Street where it intersects Hillsborough Street, and struck a utility pole. Rescue personnel from Wake County EMS and even a surgeon from Wake Medical Hospital treated Officer Holden at the scene, but were unable to save her life.

Several memorial services celebrated Denise's life, including one at St. Augustine's University and another in Fayetteville. Many students at St. Augustine's University also made t-shirts to wear in her honor. Denise and one of her training officers once spoke about the possibility of death as a result of their chosen profession. During that conversation, Denise said she was okay with dying because she accepted God into her life and she had no regrets.

Original text was written by Sergeant S.P. Womack and former Detective K.B. Mercer.