

MidWeek

Honoring Glen And Fallen Heroes

May 25, 2011
By Ron Mizutani



Breaking ground for the fallen officers memorial last Monday.
Ron Mizutani photo

Standing outside the Kalanimoku Building (Beretania and Punchbowl) for the ground breaking of the Hawaii Law Enforcement Memorial last Monday, my mind drifted back to March 4, 2003.

I was in Ewa covering a real estate story when I received a call from a friend on the police force. Multiple shots were fired at Baskin and Robins at Kapolei Shopping Center. An officer was down. Within minutes we arrived at the busy shopping center and paramedics were working frantically to save the policeman's life.

"It's Glen," my buddy whispered. "Gaspar."

My stomach instantly knotted up and a sick feeling overwhelmed me. The 40-year-old Gaspar was a 12-year veteran of the force, a respected cop on HPD's elite career criminal unit, a fellow Kamehameha graduate and a loving dad.

We watched as the ambulance raced him to nearby St. Francis West, where he later died. Gaspar was shot by wanted fugitive Shane Mark while attempting to make an arrest. He was the 37th Honolulu police officer killed in the line of duty this century. That number is now at 42.

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I snapped out of my brief trance and looked down at the program handed to all guests. The names of 61 law enforcement officers who made the ultimate sacrifice were listed by department, jurisdiction and island, including our friend Glen Gaspar.

I slipped back in time and recalled a conversation I had with several of Glen's closest friends a few days after the shooting, each rocked by his death. Veteran officer Malcolm Lutu, who attended Kamehameha with Gaspar, called him "the best plainclothes intelligence officer among the rest of us." Big Michael Cusumano added, "He served, he protected and he knew what he was doing.

We're not in denial - anyone of us could've been there."

The fact is too many of our law enforcement officers have "been there." The memorial is long overdue and when completed, it will be a wonderful tribute to the men and women who have died in the line of duty and a warm place for surviving family members and friends to visit.

Gaspar often participated in the annual Law Enforcement Canoe Regatta. The event features dozens of races, pitting different departments and agencies against each other. It's a fun day, but make no mistake about it, the officers who compete do so at a high level.

Glen was one of them. I've been asked to compete with HPD's team at the regatta over the years and I've enjoyed the brotherhood and sisterhood under their tent. There was always a special bond with this group, that bond strengthened after Gaspar's death.

Team members proudly wear a jersey that pays tribute to the fallen officer.

It's nothing fancy. It simply reads "Team Glen" on the back of the jersey.

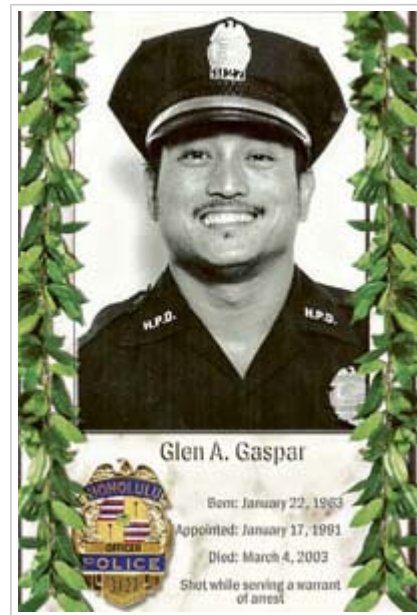
I can't tell you how proud I was the first time I was handed one of these jerseys knowing what it symbolized. It gives me chicken skin just thinking about it.

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I'm team-mates at Kailua Canoe Club with several of these police officers who proudly serve and protect our community, and continue to honor Glen every year. And like Glen, they too have children, who they say goodbye to everyday, knowing the dangers of their job.

Glen's daughters were his world. I remember his good friend and fellow officer Kevin Nakano once told me, "Glen was always telling his daughters how much he loved them and how much he missed them. He would always say, 'Don't worry, Dad's going to be home for dinner.'"

We must never forget. A memorial honoring our fallen heroes is a good start. The Hawaii Law Enforcement Memorial Foundation still needs to raise \$900,000 to build the \$1.1 million memorial. For more information on how you can help, go to <http://www.hlemf.org> or call 330-7744.



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