



Lieutenant Owen Landdeck

End of Watch: August 17th, 1979

On August 17th, 1979, Farmington Police Department Training Lieutenant Owen Landdeck, was killed in the line of duty during a police academy training exercise.

On the afternoon of August 17th, 1979, Lt. Landdeck was participating in a role playing training exercise with the Cadets of Farmington Police Academy II. The training scenario consisted of a Family Crisis Intervention exercise, which was designed to prepare the new officers for the real life encounters they would soon be facing as certified police officers.

All of the cadets were present when instructed to empty their weapons. Their weapons were then inspected for confirmation that they were, in fact, empty. As the scenarios began, the cadets were issued blank bullets. The academy class consisted of (9) nine cadets, of which eight had already gone through the training exercise, leaving only one. Since the scenarios called for two officers, one of the cadets was instructed to participate in the exercise for a second time in order to assist Cadet Greg Willis as his backup.

As the situation unfolded, the cadets were confronted by multiple disorderly subjects, leading the situation to quickly become out of control for the cadets. Lt. Landdeck, playing the role of an uncooperative, deranged subject, fled the room on foot, at which time a cadet gave chase. As the exercise continued to play out, the cadet asked if they could request additional backup, at which time they were informed they could. Two additional cadets then entered the scenario as backup officers. As the corporal checked the first cadet's weapon, Lt. Landdeck retrieved a revolver and fired two shots at the participating cadets. A second cadet, whose weapon had yet to be checked, then entered the exercise and fired a single shot. When this took place, the cadet was approximately twelve feet from Lt. Landdeck. At the shot sound of the shot, all involved with the training exercise recognized that the shot was vastly different from the blanks fired in previous exercises.

Lt. Landdeck was struck in the upper left chest and immediately fell to the floor. Cadet Greg Willis, who was positioned behind Lt. Landdeck, was then struck by the bullet after it had exited the Lieutenant's body, striking him in the right arm, where the bullet lodged. This took place at approximately 1523 hours. The cadets immediately began to administer first aid and C.P.R. to Lt. Landdeck. Sadly, he succumbed to this catastrophic injury a short time later.

Lt. Landdeck was a twenty year veteran of law enforcement at the time of his death. Previous to his ten years with the Farmington Police Department, he also served with the Albuquerque Police Department for a decade. Prior to his promotion to Lieutenant in August of 1979, Lt. Landdeck rose through the Department, promoting to Corporal in December of 1977 and Sergeant in April of 1978.

At Lt. Landdeck's funeral, then Farmington Chief of Police Robert Schmerheim was quoted as saying, "It was a great loss to the police department. He was a fine officer, top notch." Det. Lt. Jess Markle described his fallen comrade as being a "very community oriented" officer. One of Lt. Landdeck's major accomplishments during his time with the Farmington Police Department was the "Officer Bill Program," which brought officers into the local classrooms where they interacted with students, a pre-cursor to today's School Resource Officers.

Lt. Landdeck's memory is honored through the Owen Landdeck Training Award, which is issued to those employees who exceed the normal requirements in rendering training to the members of the Department or the community.

Lt. Owen Landdeck, sadly, became the second Farmington Police Officer to fall in the line of duty. He is survived by his wife and two children.