

*****For Immediate Release*****

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Conard C. Tolson
Commissioned – November 12, 1928
End of Watch – March 24, 1929



The Washington State Patrol's third fallen officer was one of two brothers who served the State of Washington. At only 39 at the time of his death, Washington State Highway Patrol Officer Conard C. Tolson had lived a full and fascinating life and one that was both appreciated and missed upon his passing. (Note: Patrolman Tolson's name is listed as both 'Conard' and 'Conrad' in historical documentation but it is thought that Conard was his legal name and Conrad was the more usual American pronunciation.)

He was a military veteran, a former missionary to China, a husband, a father, and he served with the agency alongside his brother, T. C. Tolson. Both men served in the early years of the Washington State Patrol (then named the Washington State Highway Patrol) when motorcycle and side cars were the only traffic enforcement vehicles used, there were far more dirt roads than paved roads, and more horses than cars upon them. The nine decades that have passed since his death have done little to erase the poignancy of that loss as his service and sacrifice resonates still, and his name is always spoken with reverence in the halls of the Washington State Patrol. We remember...

BIO

Conard Tolson was born on March 15, 1890, in Knoxville, Tenn., to J. Melvin Tolson and Harriet Miller.

The U.S. Army veteran married Hassie Lee Longmire, and the couple welcomed daughter Brucie Lee. The family served as missionaries in China in the early 1920s before moving to Washington State.

Tolson was commissioned with the Washington State Highway Patrol on November 12, 1928, under the command of William Cole, the agency's first Chief. The family lived in the Tacoma area where his brother, T.C. Tolson of Auburn, was also serving in the Washington State Highway Patrol.



Historical Photo - Patrol Officers at the Spokane Air Show in 1927, one year prior to Tolson's service. Like many police agencies of the era, WSP began as a motorcycle only operation in the years following WWI. That war's "new" technology - motorcycles - were readily available in surplus and were well suited for a still untamed western landscape. WSP's original Patrolmen rode Indian Motorcycles, but by the late 20's had transitioned to the Harley Davidson models shown in the photo for their power and adaptability. Paddy wagons and cars would not become standard issue until the 30's and 40's. Uniforms were not common until 1924 when officers began buying their own. Prior to that time, daily attire was expected to be suited to the profession and the sometimes brutal weather.

END OF WATCH

Patrol Officer Conard Tolson was tragically involved in a fatal collision after serving only four months with the Washington State Highway Patrol. While patrolling the Seattle-Tacoma highway near the Pierce/King County line, an oncoming motorist drove into Tolson's lane. The officer attempted to steer away from the oncoming sedan, but was ultimately struck with the rear end of the vehicle. The driver of the sedan was arrested for manslaughter.

Patrolman Tolson was survived by his wife and daughter. His wife, Hassie, passed away in 1970, and has since been buried alongside Conard at the Tacoma Cemetery. They have three great-grandchildren, Gary, Cheryl and Linda, who are now living in the Montesano area. In May 2016, Tolson was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor for his actions on March 24, 1929, by the Law Enforcement – Medal of Honor Committee.

Though his time of service was short and the time since his passing long, the Washington State Patrol still holds Patrol Officer Conard Tolson in the highest of esteem. We remember that he had the love to serve his family, the devotion to serve his God, and the courage to serve his country and state. We were made better by that service and we remember...

Washington State Highway Patrolman Conard C. Tolson

End of Watch – March 24, 1929

Gone But Never Forgotten

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