

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

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**June 28, 2021**

# **John Frank Wright**

**Commissioned – September 10, 1951**

**End of Watch – June 28, 1953**



The Washington State Patrol's thirteenth fallen officer was John Frank Wright who served less than two years with the agency before his untimely death at the hands of a hit-and-run driver in the early morning hours of Sunday, June 28, 1953. The driver fled the area, but was found just two hours later and told investigators he thought he struck a bridge abutment. Hospital blood tests showed the driver had alcohol in his system in the hours following the collision.

A native of Hilo, Hawaii, Patrolman Wright was a WWII veteran. A son, husband and a father to two young sons, he had recently celebrated his 28<sup>th</sup> birthday when he was killed. He left behind a grieving family, agency and state. We remember...

## **BIO**

John Wright was born on June 8, 1925, to Howard H. Wright and Carrie L. Linekin in Hilo, Hawaii, and was raised alongside his two brothers, Howard and Peter. His father supported his family by working as a salesman in an automotive garage.

At the age of 18, Wright joined the United States Army Air Forces (the forerunner of the US Air Force) serving from 1943 to 1946 in the second half of World War II. He rose to the rank of sergeant while serving with the 15<sup>th</sup> Weather Squadron.

The desire to serve his country and community continued after Wright's three year tour. He chose to join the Washington State Patrol, and was commissioned September 10, 1951, with the 16<sup>th</sup> Trooper Cadet Class, assigned to the Spokane Valley detachment.

## **END OF WATCH**

Washington State Highway Patrolman John F. Wright was tragically killed in the early morning hours of June 28, 1953, just three months shy of his second anniversary with the Washington State Patrol. Wright was outside his patrol car talking with a motorist on the shoulder of East Sprague at Barker Road in Greenacres. Both vehicles were at least four feet off the roadway when a driver sped past and struck Wright, throwing him some 77 feet.

The gravely injured patrolman was transported to Sacred Heart Hospital but sadly succumbed to his injuries just four hours later. The driver, Joseph V. Nolin, a 20-year-old airman first class, fled the area, but was found two hours later. Nolin was taken into custody and told investigators he thought he struck a bridge abutment. Hospital blood tests showed Nolin had alcohol in his system in the hours following the collision.

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Patrolman Wright was survived by his wife, Barbara Dianne, 4-year-old son John and 15-month-old son Daniel, as well as his parents. He was posthumously awarded the Washington Law Enforcement Medal of Honor on May 11, 1998.

The Washington State Patrol remembers John Wright with appreciation and respect. Still a young man at the time of his death, his life was already one of purpose and impact. He had joined the military during a time of war and then returned home to seek a new position of service with the Patrol, all while starting a young family. The tapestry of his life's story contains threads of both the common and extraordinary – strands of valor common to the era, of duty continuing after wartime, and then, of sacrifice honored by the ages.

Woven together, we see he was a patriot, a citizen, a family man, a public servant, and a good and decent person.

And we remember...

## **Washington State Highway Patrolman John Frank Wright**

**End of Watch – June 28, 1953**

***Gone But Never Forgotten***