

~ A ~ MONUMENTAL Tribute

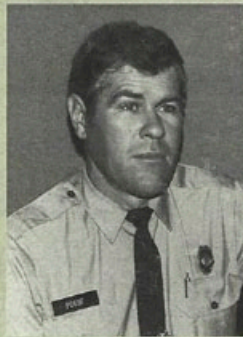
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IN 1981, two conservation officers were murdered after responding to a complaint of illegal trapping activity in a remote area of Owyhee County in southwestern Idaho. The incident drew national attention and opened a discussion that would improve the way Idaho conservation officers were trained. It also changed the Fish and Game Department's rules regarding the optional use of personal firearms by officers in the field to a policy of mandatory carry of agency-issued sidearms.

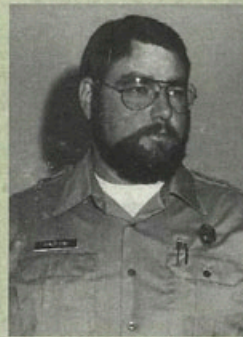
They came from every corner of the State to honor two men they had never met. But for members of the Idaho Department of Fish and Game it was an important event to commemorate these officers who made the ultimate sacrifice for the benefit of protecting Idaho's wildlife resources. On May 13 2015, Conservation Officers William (Bill) Pogue and Conley Elms Jr. were honored with a monument placement and dedication ceremony at Bull Camp, where they were killed as they attempted to arrest a suspected poacher on January 5, 1981.

The idea of placing a monument at the site of the murders began in the fall of 2013 according to then Assistant Enforcement Chief Blake Phillips. As the project gained momentum, a small group of the enforcement staff made a few visits to Bull Camp to finalize the plan. From the start, the Pogue and Elms families had supported the concept of a monument and were kept updated as to the progress by Phillips, who had become close to both families though he had never worked directly with either of the two officers. After

In Memory of Our Fallen Officers



William (Bill) Pogue
August 8, 1930 - January 5, 1981



Wilson Conley Elms Jr.
March 15, 1946 - January 5, 1981

Monument Dedication
Bull Camp, Owyhee County, Idaho
May 13, 2015



A program commemorating the monument dedication was created as a keepsake.

the murders, the families created a memorial fund from remaining reward money that had been offered to catch the killer. It was meant to provide Idaho Conservation Officers with additional safety equipment and training. In later years Phillips oversaw dispersal of those remaining funds, and so he acted as liaison between the families and the Department during the monument development process. Wanting something natural that would blend in with the surrounding environment it

was decided that the monument style would be a rock inscribed with the names of the officers and their 'End of Watch' date. The monument was paid for by the Idaho Conservation Officers Association.

Since Bull Camp was in a Bureau of Land Management Wilderness Area, there were hurdles to overcome. The Fish and Game Department needed to obtain a special use permit to place the monument. But because the location was designated wilderness no vehicle travel was allowed or even feasible due to the rugged topography. To solve these issues a special stretcher-like carrier had to be fashioned out of metal poles and canvas to cradle the 600 pound chunk of granite rock and transport it over a mile across difficult terrain.

The day before the dedication attendees rendezvoused at the 45 Ranch, creating a memorial tent community around an open field near the ranch house. The 45 Ranch had played a significant part in the events of January 1981; ranch owner Ed Carlin had placed a call to Officer Pogue to report finding illegally set traps.

Pogue then contacted neighboring Officer Conley Elms for assistance after two other officers, including Conley's brother Mike, also an Idaho Conservation Officer, were unavailable. Leaving Boise late on January 4, the two officers drove through the night reaching the rim above the 45 Ranch in the early morning hours. They slept in the truck and later that morning had breakfast with the ranch owner where they learned of a second illegal trapping location, this time in the Bull Camp area.



In this vintage photograph of Bull Camp, taken during the initial investigation, two “X”s can be seen. The “X” on the lower left marks the location of the trapper’s tent where the murders occurred. The “X” on the right marks the spot along the river where Officer Conley Elm’s body was discovered.
(Photographer unknown)

After investigating the first complaint and citing the trapper for his illegal activities, Officers Pogue and Elms drove to Bull Camp to investigate the second complaint and set out to hike down to the trapper’s remote camp located three miles from the Idaho/Nevada border.

That evening at the “memorial” camp, all gathered to hear Enforcement Chief Greg Wooten speak about the shooting incident, from the initial call in the late hours of January 4th through conviction. The next day’s program was outlined, and the Department’s Honor Guard practiced, as did a rifle team created specifically for

this event. The next morning a caravan of Fish & Game trucks drove the roughly 40 minutes from the ranch across the dusty desert, now speckled with spring wildflowers, to the wilderness boundary. From there, over the next few hours, everyone took turns carrying a section of the stretcher containing the monument. It took a dozen people at a time to transport the 600 pound stone over the rim and into the steep canyon, a vertical drop of around 600 feet, to the spot where the officers died. Bull Camp is marked by a couple of century-old stone buildings across the river from where the shootings took

place. As the group approached the site, someone pointed out a few old tent pole pieces scattered in a small clearing where the killer’s tent was likely to have been located. The poles were well worn and decaying from years in Idaho’s harsh high desert climate. Could these be remnants of the actual tent poles that link back to the events of 34 years ago? It presented an eerie step back into the past.

Most of those attending the dedication were Fish and Game Department personnel, and included 55 of the roughly 100 state officers, Director Virgil Moore, and members of the Department’s Communications Bureau who recorded the event. Director Moore was a young fisheries biologist in 1981 when the murders occurred, and it was his first visit to the site. Assistant Enforcement Chief Phillips was a wildlife tech for the Department at the time of the murders and recalls how the Agency struggled to get through the tragedy. Also in attendance was retired Conservation Officer Gary Loveland. He had worked with Officers Pogue and Elms and had spoken with Pogue the evening the violation was first reported. Loveland had been asked by Pogue to accompany him, but he had a prior commitment to work waterfowl hunters the next day and was unable to go. For Gary, the memories are still tough and something he thinks about nearly every day. As a representative of the family, Bill Pogue’s younger brother Eddie traveled from California and, in his mid-70’s, made the trek to the site. He had come hoping the event would bring closure, but after more than three decades the pain and anger are still present. Over the years, the families have had to endure not only the loss of their loved ones, but an extended trial process, high profile national media coverage, and, in some circles, the elevation to folk hero status of the officers’ killer. It was not Eddie’s first time here, as he had made the trip shortly after the murders. Over the years other family members have also come to see the area, but this time the trek in and out of the canyon in the desert heat would have been too difficult for some to make. On this occasion Eddie reminisced about his brother’s life and the strong

It took a bit of ingenuity and everyone’s effort to move the massive stone over the rugged terrain to its final destination.
(Photo courtesy of IDFG)





Now in place, a monument honoring the service of our two fallen officers overlooks the South fork of the Owyhee River. (Retired Officer Gary Loveland far left bottom row. Eddie Pogue bottom row center in brown shirt). (Photo courtesy of IDFG)

bond that still exists between the Pogue family and the Fish and Game Department. "You're an extension of the Pogue family" he said. "Having all these officers here, in particular, (at) this memorial has been so special."

The memorial rock was set in place with the etched names of the officers facing the

South Fork of the Owyhee River. On the other sides of the rock were inscriptions provided by the two families:

"... so precious fisheries and wildlife resources I valued can be used, enjoyed and appreciated by present and future generations" - Conley Elms, and *"Blessed are the Peacemakers"* - Bill Pogue.

"There is a quiet and reverence this place represents now" said Fish and Game Director Virgil Moore. "It is sacred ground where the blood of our officers was spilled. It will forever be part of our memory." One officer found a shed deer antler along the path into the canyon, and placed it next to the monument, in a gesture to honor their memory. The Fish and Game Honor Guard began the ceremony with posting the colors. Chief Wooten spoke of honoring the service of these officers, and an invocation was made by Assistant Chief Phillips, followed by a 21 gun salute and Taps.

Though the monument ceremony was brief, the entire two days surrounding the event will remain a "career moment" forever etched in the minds of those who participated. Since the dedication, as part of every new officer orientation, each Fish and Game class has made the trek to Bull Camp to walk in the footsteps of Officers Bill Pogue and Conley Elms. What a powerful way to honor their service and remember their sacrifice. ☪

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