

*Remarks for the
Dedication of Harold Ray Presley Memorial Monument
August 29, 2002*

(recognize Steve Holland, other dignitaries)

In the gospel of Matthew, Jesus tells us “blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God.”

Sheriff Harold Ray Presley was a peacemaker. He swore an oath to protect, to serve, and to be there for the innocent people of Lee County. He died defending that oath; he died a peacemaker.

It is never easy to lose someone like Sheriff Presley, or any other law enforcement officer who makes the ultimate sacrifice to defend the peace and the safety of our communities. Their deaths serve as a reminder of the danger they face each day and the strength of their commitment to the innocent.

I want to speak for a moment to those here who work in law enforcement. You do so much that is taken for granted. Unfortunately, it is usually the tragedies that remind us of the risks that are taken every day, risks each you know all too well.

We all want to feel safe. But, in finding that safety we cannot forget the work done to lead us to it.

We aren't the ones on patrol. We aren't the ones faced with life-or-death situations on a regular basis. We aren't the ones who are first on the scene of a fatal accident or disturbing crime scene.

That's the job of the men and women of law enforcement – and they do it well.

I've heard it said that the best car safety device is a rear-view mirror with a police car in it, and I'm sure there are plenty of drivers who would share that view.

The work they do on a daily basis hasn't changed since the first law enforcement officers began walking a beat. The tools of the trade may be different, but the work's the same – it's the same in Mississippi as it around the nation and the world.

One interesting thing about law enforcement work – at the end of the day, there’s no tangible product. There’s no way to measure what’s been done in the day, other than to see kids playing outside; people wearing their seatbelts; families walking through their neighborhoods in the evening.

We do know that every man and woman who wears a badge and takes an oath “to serve and protect” has qualities that help them rise above the rest.

They are our heroes. They are people of honor – in their instinct and in their actions. They are the best in your world, and more than good enough for any other world.

They are people like Harold Ray Presley.

So today, we dedicate this memorial to him, to the memory of his service, and to the memory of all those who have served and fallen. This is our way of holding onto the memories of lives well lived and things we don't want to lose.

It's our way of simply saying, "thank you."

Sheriff Presley was one of the best. He was a peacemaker and a child of God. May God hold him close, and bless his memory here among us.