

## Deputy Sergio Aleman

August 1, 2012

Tragically, and in a scene that sadly plays itself out countless times each year on the expressways of the United States, the citizens of Milwaukee County have lost one of their finest. The law enforcement professionals of Milwaukee regional law enforcement have lost one of their most committed and passionate partners; and foremost in our thoughts and prayers today, the sons and daughters, the parents, and the wife of Deputy Sheriff Sergio Aleman have lost everything.

In a profession that I have loved for over 34 years, the task now falls to me to perform the action that every law enforcement executive dreads: to summarize the tragic death, and valiant life, of a deputy sheriff killed in the line of duty in a heartrending traffic crash on our expressway system.

Yesterday afternoon, at 12:17 pm, Deputy Sheriff Sergio Aleman, who proudly carried Badge #163 for the Milwaukee County Sheriff's Office since June of 1994, in a distinguished career lasting just over eighteen years, surrendered his life in a two-car crash on southbound Interstate 43 S/B at Fond du Lac Avenue.

Deputy Sheriff Aleman, operating a State DOT-provided motorist assistance squad, a 2009 Chevrolet Silverado K2500 Heavy Duty pickup, was driving southbound in lane #3, the rightmost lane of the freeway, as he approached an area of traffic congestion.

Deputy Aleman crashed into the rear of a flatbed towing truck operated by N&S Towing, a Milwaukee-based company. The N&S vehicle, driven by a 21-year old employee who was not injured in this crash, had slowed due to congestion occurring in the Marquette interchange. The driver of this tow truck is **not** to blame for this incident. He did nothing wrong.

In the impact of the crash, the flatbed portion of the tow truck tore into the driver's compartment of Deputy Sheriff Aleman's squad, and he suffered catastrophic injuries.

For the initial responding deputies of my agency, their grief today is unimaginable. They are dealing with the recall of their attempts to save Sergio's life, and his ultimate death, on the side of the roadway of downtown Milwaukee.

While the initial investigation of this sad and deadly crash does not, at this time, appear to constitute a criminal investigation, I remind all of our citizens that the life of a freeway patrolman is one of great danger. The Expressway system is a deadly and unforgiving beat for a cop to patrol. Last year alone, of the 173 law enforcement officers who lost their lives in service to their communities, 20% did so in traffic and motorcycle crashes, second only to gunfights as the deadliest threat an officer faces. Over the past decade 547 officers, nearly a third of those killed in the line of duty, have died in car and motorcycle crashes in the United States.

Deputy Sheriff Aleman had, prior to the crash that took his life, handled 4 earlier incidents on the Expressway system that morning; most recently, he had

cleared from assisting another MCSO Deputy in her investigation of a suspected impaired driver shortly before the crash. As was so typical for Sergio, he had done what he always did over his 18-year career: He heard an officer getting involved in something on the radio, and moved quickly to see how he could help.

As was so apparent on our local media yesterday, this tragic crash created a huge scene in the Marquette interchange. The assistance of the agency members who responded from across all of the MCSO Divisions; the Milwaukee Police Department; and most particularly the Wisconsin State Patrol, who are conducting the investigation of this crash, were greatly needed and highly appreciated. The Technical Reconstruction Unit of the Wisconsin State Patrol has worked tirelessly over the past 24 hours to analyze this incident.

My office has been in touch with our Governor, for whom this agency holds such favor in his heart; Our County Executive, County Board Chairwoman, and Chaplaincy Corps.

I want to acknowledge my gratitude for the expeditious and much needed response of the Milwaukee Police Department's Police Officer Support, or POST Team, in providing peer grief counseling to my deputies at our Patrol Division substation yesterday in the aftermath of this brutal crash.

As is always the case in the life of a cop, the partners of Deputy Aleman must process their emotions; mourn their loss; and find the strength to go back out and patrol the community that Sergio loved so much.

The assistance of the Wisconsin State Patrol is both impressively professional, and greatly appreciated. Only when their investigation is complete, and the beloved and grieving family of Deputy Aleman fully informed of the particulars of Sergio's passing, will those facts be made available to the public.

For it is the family of Sergio Aleman with whom our thoughts now rest. We are enveloped by our sense of their shattering grief this morning, and our respect for Sergio's lifetime of service to our nation.

A resident of Oak Creek, Deputy Aleman leaves behind a devastated wife, Jenna, and 5 children, ages 22 through his youngest, a 6-year daughter, who awakened this morning to be reminded anew that they have lost everything. He leaves behind parents who never imagined the sad reality of burying a son.

Our agency has lost a partner and a beloved friend. And the citizens of this county have lost a lifelong citizen, and a tremendous Deputy Sheriff.

Sergio Aleman graduated Bay View High School in 1981 and served the United States Navy before beginning his career of civilian law enforcement. In his initial application with my agency, he summed his desires poignantly: **"I've always wanted to be in law enforcement because if I could make a change in the community by helping to stop a crime in our streets, it would be safer for both my children and the children of other families. I would work for this Department until I'm 65 if I could."**

And sadly, while Sergio's wish for longevity was cut tragically short, his impact in the years he **was** given spoke volumes.

Serving in our Detention, Airport and Patrolling Divisions, Deputy Sheriff Aleman amassed three meritorious service commendations:

For a 2007 5-car injury crash to which he responded, without stopping to ask for permission, as all great cops do, before his shift had even begun.

Later in 2007, he fought his way into the passenger compartment of a fatal rollover crash, through shattered glass while becoming soaked in gasoline, to reach an unconscious driver.

In 2011, Deputy Aleman was honored at our yearly Awards Banquet for doing that which he knew so well: Behind the wheel of a marked squad, serving on the freeway, and hearing the radio come to life with the APB for an armed robbery in progress at a CVS pharmacy at the intersection of Brown Deer and Port Washington Roads. Sergio did what he always did; He moved toward the crime scene. Spotting the vehicle, he gave chase. When the suspect abandoned his vehicle and fled on foot, Deputy Sheriff Aleman followed suit. For that arrest, Sergio was also honored by the Exchange Club of Milwaukee, one of the city's oldest service organizations, at their annual Crime Prevention Awards.

But Sergio was not coasting to an easy, and well-earned, retirement.

This past July 13<sup>th</sup>, Sergio positioned himself on the side of the roadway and kept watch for a vehicle that was wanted for a bank robbery that had just occurred at the US Bank in Germantown. He spotted the suspect vehicle, and, accompanied by a responding Milwaukee Police Department squad, apprehended an armed robbery crew wanted in a string of bank holdups in our region. As Washington County Sheriff Dale Schmidt stated in his commendation to Deputy Aleman for that arrest of a 10-time bank robber: "Your willingness to get involved and arrest two suspects is admirable. Your work was one of the final important pieces needed to end this string of crimes."

Cops like Deputy Sheriff Aleman do not come along every day: Physically fit; passionately committed; an unblemished employment history spanning over 18 years; and as committed to his community as I have seen in my decade with the Sheriff's Office.

We have lost a good cop; but we in the profession soldier on. Sergio had, himself, dealt with that reality three times in his career, with the losses of his partners David Demos 15 years ago, and Sonny Bang and Ralph Zylka only three years after that. Our agency has not suffered such a loss in twelve years. But the loss of Sergio, who sought the pride of this profession, but surely never to join the list of lost heroes he now stands silently alongside, reminds us of a sad but basic truth.

No officer ever knows what tour of duty may be his last.

The scheduling of funeral events and memorial services for Deputy Sheriff Aleman will be broadcast once known.

Our agency has set up a memorial fund in Deputy Sheriff Aleman's name, at Tri City National Bank. The name of the fund is "The Deputy Sergio Aleman Memorial Fund". Anyone interested in donating can stop in at any Tri City bank and make a donation, which will be turned over to Sergio's family at the appropriate time.

Captain Tim Carnehan, of the Wisconsin State Patrol; and Dr. Karen Brasel of Froedtert Hospital and the Medical College of Wisconsin, join me today.