

Abinger Township Officer Thomas Mathews E.O.W. 6/29/1949

Officer Mathews made the ultimate sacrifice when he was shot and killed as he patrolled Abington Township with Officer Clark Cutting. Through their aggressive actions, the officers interrupted a burglar leaving the scene of a residential burglary in the Rydal section of Abington Township. A foot chase ensued in the early morning hours, and as Officer Mathews approached the suspect, a gunfight ensued, with the suspect and Officer Mathews exchanging gunshots. During the exchange, Officer Mathews was fatally wounded and the suspect fled on foot. Immediately an extensive manhunt began. As a result of the investigation and cooperation of many police agencies, the suspect was apprehended in Virginia. Ollie Carey was tried, convicted, and sentenced to death. Carey was a career criminal with a record dating back twenty three years. At the time of his death, Officer Mathews was survived by his wife Mary and son, Michael, who was only two at the time of his father's death.

Officer Mathews was a four-year veteran of Abington Township Police Department and was active in the Montgomery County Fraternal Order of Police Lodge 14. Officer Mathews served in the South Pacific as a paratrooper during W.W. II in the Philippines with the 11th Airborne Division. Before joining the US Army he graduated from Northeast Catholic High School in Philadelphia. He was a decorated veteran of the U.S. Army and a member of the Color Guard. In June of 1999, the Abington Township Police Department marked the 50th anniversary of his passing with the dedication of a plaque at the Abington Township Complex in his memory. Officer Mathew's name also appears on the National Law Enforcement Memorial in Washington, D.C. At the time of his death, at age thirty two, Office Mathews and his wife Mary, had a two-year-old son, Michael. Michael now lives in Dallas, Texas with his wife Donna, and their four children, Thomas, Donna Michelle, Michael and Stephen.

Son of Officer Mathews, Michael, could not attend the ceremony, however, his wife Donna, their two grand-daughters, her sister and Officer Mathew's best friend's sons, Gary Seums and Dennis McCauley were in attendance. District Attorney Ferman said, "Every single day men and women in law enforcement will see this plaque as they enter this Police Department and they will know about Officer Mathews sacrifice. We lost Officer Mathews sixty-six years ago and his memory still resonates today. We are surrounded by men and women in law enforcement whose lives are on the line every day and yet they leave their homes willing to protect the citizens of this community as Officer Mathews did in 1949. It is so important that we honor all of these officers every single day. The memory of Officer Mathews sacrifice will live on through this plaque."