



By King Wekenmann

09/08/1995

## Major E. K. Humphrey

### **Tribute to a fallen hero and good friend.**

September 8th marks the anniversary of the passing of Major E. K. Humphrey.

This article is a salute to his memory and a reminder to all of the events that had passed.

Our drama began on Friday, September 8, 1995. It started out as a sunny day with the humidity very high. As soon as you stepped outside from your air conditioned house, your clothes stuck to your skin. A typical Florida day.

Life for the Jupiter Police Department was just beginning its usual business day. Officers from the Midnight shift were being relieved and Officers from the Day shift were taking over the road patrol duties. The briefing for the morning was short, not much occurred during the night. As officers were going on the road reporting to their zone assignments, administrative officers were meeting and discussing the weekend events and pondering changes here and there in an effort to improve any determined problem areas.

Major Humphrey began his tour of the station, early in the morning meeting with various officers and issuing orders and sharing jokes and humor. There was no indication of the seriousness of events that the day would bring us as it went on.

A bank robbery call came in over the telephone to the Jupiter Police Dispatch, reporting that an actual robbery occurred at the Admiralty Bank in the Concourse Mall. Sergeants and Lieutenants began to issue their orders quickly over the radio for personnel to take up key positions and to begin to form a perimeter until more information became available. Dispatchers were receiving a vehicle description and were contacting the bridges and have them lock up. A quick description of the suspect and the suspect vehicle went out over the radio.

All units were advised to be on the lookout for a white over blue 2-dr car with a w/m driving. It was reported that the dye pack that was handed to the bank robber when he took the cash, went off.

Units began to quickly move to key areas to begin the vigil of watching for the suspect who was now also reported to be armed with a small caliber firearm. Officer Johnson who was working the East side of the Indiantown Rd bridge reported that he had the suspect vehicle under surveillance and that it was now headed South on US Hwy 1.

Immediately the emergency tone was sounded over the radio by dispatch and Officer Johnson was given the emergency traffic radio clearance. All other police chatter was to cease for the emergency now in progress. A pursuit began. The suspect fled South on US#1 toward Juno Beach. Juno PD had also been alerted. The suspect traveled East on Donald Ross Rd. toward A1A and then headed North on A1A heading back into Jupiter's jurisdiction. The helicopter from Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office was requested to go up and head this way by a Jupiter PD supervisor. The pursuit now headed West on Indiantown Rd., from A1A, back toward US#1. Officer Hess and Sgt. Stickl were now the lead police vehicles in the pursuit.



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The suspect turned on US#1 and began heading south again. This was the exact same way he had traveled moments before. He continued South on US#1 traveling at medium speeds and had no intention of stopping for police. He continued South on US#1 until he got to 45th Street in West Palm Beach and the suspect now turned West.

The suspect had taken the Jupiter Police Department through several jurisdictions at this point. Through Juno Beach, Palm Beach Gardens, North Palm Beach, Lake Park, Riviera Beach and into West Palm Beach.

As the suspect approached Australian Blvd in West Palm Beach, he took a right turn and began to travel north fleeing back into Riviera Beach.

The suspect had a shopping bag over his license plate making it hard for Officer Hess to read. When Officer Hess finally got the tag number, it was immediately transmitted over the radio to the Jupiter Police Dispatcher.

The pursuit continued North until the suspect turned onto Blue Heron Blvd. Now he fled west hoping to elude police. Little did he know it was a futile attempt? The Palm Beach County Sheriff's helicopter was now overhead and the suspect's moves would now be monitored with a better vantage point. The suspect proceeded west until he approached the canals which are just east of interstate 95. He had rear ended a woman in a Jaguar. Traffic was bumper to bumper and there was no escape.

The suspect vacated his vehicle and ran and jumped into the canal. The pursuit officers exited their vehicles and took up positions along the canal. The helicopter had lowered itself just above the water.

The suspect was surrounded and gave up. Sgt. Stickle and Officer Conyette took the suspect into custody. Officer Hess recovered the money and the firearm used in the commission of the Robbery. It was a good feeling to all involved that they had some part of taking this bad guy into custody early in the afternoon. As the adrenalin flow began to subside and as the task to take care of the paperwork was now at hand, things began to return to a normal day.

Still, events were to occur that would change every officer's life of the Jupiter Police Department, and for those who knew Major E. K. Humphrey, forever.

A voice was heard on the radio.

"I'm with Major Humphrey on the 6000 block of Juno Isles Blvd. He is not doing so well, you better get someone over here."

Dispatcher inquired who he was and the civilian voice identified himself and said to get someone over there immediately.

Jupiter Police Officers were now responding from different places and from different zones. All responders were now driving code 3 (lights and siren). A form that Police Officers are all familiar with driving; but, now it was for one of our own.

Juno Beach Police was the first to arrive on the scene and they called the Fire Rescue that was just around the corner from the Major's known location. Officer MacVeigh and Duchene arrived, Officer Wekenmann and Lt. Baker, and finally Sgt. Stickle and Lt. O'Neill. As I stepped out of my police unit and rushed to the Major's side, I heard the medic say that he was gone.

Emotions rushed out from all of us, we had to be sure, and we had to see the truth because the words were heard in a dream somewhere. We looked and we saw the truth. The realization hit home very hard



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that Major Humphrey had passed away. The stately Southern Gentleman was sitting in his police car with his head tilted toward the driver's door. The medics put a sheet on him and now the Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office responded to work the case of his death.

*The word of Major Humphrey's death spread quickly through* the police regiment and the Town of Jupiter. All were affected by the news that Major Humphrey was gone. Not many a dry eye was seen. If anything could close down a city police department, the news of the death of one of our own, very nearly did.

We learned that at one point the major was involved in the pursuit. It is believed that the Major was head on with the suspect in an effort to slow his progress, during the pursuit. Others had seen him pull off the road at Juno Isles, but thought nothing of it. The pursuit was heading out of town and officers around thought he was just dropping out of the pursuit.

A service station attendant nearby saw his vehicle strike a speed limit sign. She quickly dialed 911 because she saw him get out of his police vehicle and collapse. 911 did not answer fast enough so she hung up when she saw him get back in the car. 911 called her back and she explained what she saw, but now it appeared to be a minor accident. Major Humphrey drove just a little further, about 1/10 mile down the road and his vehicle came to rest against some blocks that surrounded a palm tree.

This is where the civilian by the name of Ralph, had located him, and used the Majors radio to call for help.

I am certain that the Major knew he was in trouble. I am equally certain that the Major did not get on the radio channel to ask for assistance, because he did not want to jeopardize the officers involved in the pursuit.

The viewing was held on Monday, September 11, 1995. It was reported to all personnel that Major Humphrey would be at Quattlebaum funeral home and that those who wanted to visit, could do so. When I arrived I saw many officers from many agencies that were present and paying homage to the family and giving their last respects to the Major. He lay in state with an honor guard at his head and an honor guard at his feet. They did the Major proud parading their neatly pressed Class A uniforms. The major was dressed in his uniform with the gold badge and the gold collar brass sparkling in the low lights. On the shoulders, he wore his rank of honor, the leaf cluster designating his position. His hands grasped his cap of his Class A garment. The Major always did look very sharp in his uniform.

I remember overhearing his wife Fran remark that she saw faces today that she had not seen in Thirty Years. There were many, many Humphrey stories circulating that night. The love that these people felt for him, could be felt by all. They shared jokes, and other humorous stories that were shared to them by the Major himself.

It was time to inter the Major on this Tuesday, September 12, 1995. The Jupiter Police Department reported for duty in their class A's on this awkward and sullen day. This was the day that we would inter our first officer that died while performing his duty.

The Jupiter Police Department did lose another officer once. Officer Ray Hopper died on his first day of vacation. He was fishing with his sons and the smallest fell in. Ray did not know how to swim, but he jumped in after his son. Ray had clutched his son as the current was pulling him away from shore. On shore Ray had another son who was trying to pull them back to shore with a fishing line, until it broke. Ray was found later deceased, still clutching the body of his deceased son.

The Police Department proceeded to the St. Peters Catholic church as a unit. The Palm Beach County



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Sheriff's office was taking over the duties and calls for services during the morning hours for the Jupiter Police Department while we bade the Major farewell. As officers left their vehicles by the church, they marched as a unit to take their place as honor guard in front of the Church doors. As the family and the Major passed by, a salute position was taken by all. It came from the heart. A service was held and we heard from Father Chuck and Reverend Derryberry whom both had love and warmth to offer to the family and to those who felt the loss. It was a touching service, many agree. Officers once again lined both sides of the walkway while the family and the Major's casket passed by. A solemn salute was again presented. Now the Jupiter Police Department marched in procession to their cars where the vehicle procession would take its final vigil.

As the motorcycles began to escort the brigade with the immediate members of the family and the Major's body following, the procession grew to an awesome number, with numerous police cars turning on head lights and blue lights as the procession began to turn onto the roadway. Many police officers turned out for this event. They came as far as Miami in the South and from Jacksonville in the North. This was a sight to behold. The chills could still be felt going up and down the spine as one would view all the police cars. Never have this many police vehicles ever been seen in one place in Jupiter. It struck wonderment and awe to many.

The respect and the love could be felt coming from the citizens of Jupiter as the procession slowly thundered down the road. Citizens had exited their cars and stood beside the roadway with their heads bowed and their right hand held over their heart. That was respect that I had never witnessed before. It still wells tears in my eyes and I proudly salute these citizens. The Major would have been proud to see this. His family was very touched by the respect that was shown on this day. The Funeral procession entered the gates of the Riverside memorial.

We were greeted by the Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office mounted patrol who were standing as honor guard for the Major's entrance. Patrol officers formed a line along a row where the pall bearers would carry Major Humphrey's body for the last time. The call to salute was given as the Major's family and his body passed through. The salute came from the heart, we knew we were near the end of the ceremony. The pall bearers rested his body atop the grave site, and the grave site service began. All uniformed officers remained at attention. A final call for salute was given. This one lasted a long time, for it was the last one.

The colors were taken off the coffin by the honor guard and the flag was presented to Major Humphrey's widow. The shrill sound of the bag pipes could be heard playing Amazing Grace. This touched the soul of every officer present. As if this was not enough, taps now played. In the background commands were being given and a 21 gun salute now echoed throughout the community. The helicopters now paid their final homage and flew over our heads in the missing man formation. Then came the final radio call, "Major Ed Humphrey, ID 101, 10-7"(out of service). This sent a chill through the crowd and stabbed at the heart, and yielded many a tear. We knew that this was final. The Major would have been proud. We will miss him.

"The Lion patrols his land with a vengeance, to assure the pride lands are safe. The lion calls out into the night and the Pride could be heard to answer him. The lion stalks the Pride land to chase any evader away. The pride is ever so important, that the Lion would lay down his life. Now the Pride grows wary and worried as they call out in the night. The answer that they warmly welcomed no longer echoes in the night. The Lion can no longer answer the call he once heard. The heart of the Lion has left the Pride. The Lion has joined the stars watching the Pride lands."



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Our fallen comrades in blue must be remembered. In our memories, we rejuvenate our own souls with their energy and tenacity, even though we feel the loss again, but fondly.

I salute you, Major Humphrey.