

OFFICER TRACIE MEIDL



The Medal of Valor is the highest recognition of achievement presented by the Department. It is awarded to employees who distinguish themselves with extraordinary acts of bravery or heroism above and beyond that normally expected in the line of duty.



On August 28, 1994, Officer Tracie Meidl was on patrol in a marked police car in a residential area when she saw a car pass her near an intersection. She stopped at the intersection to yield the right-of-way to a turning Blazer. The other car nearly collided with the Blazer as it passed Officer Meidl's patrol car.

Officer Meidl immediately turned on her vehicle's flashing lights and followed the driver. Her attempts to stop the driver were unsuccessful, and she followed him until he stopped in front of his residence. Officer Meidl exited her car and attempted to talk with the driver, Sidney L. McDermott. She noted he had been drinking. McDermott refused her repeated requests that he stay with his car, and he walked into his residence. Officer Meidl called for back-up. McDermott immediately reappeared and twice ducked in and out of his front door. At one point Officer Meidl heard what sounded like a round of ammunition being chambered, and she immediately took cover behind her patrol car. When McDermott next opened his front door, he had a handgun. Officer Meidl ordered McDermott to drop the weapon; instead, he aimed at her and fired several shots. She drew her weapon and returned fire as a back-up officer arrived.

Corporal Mark Wheelwright assessed the situation and concealed himself in the front yard behind a tree. He had a Department issued shotgun. When McDermott emerged again from his front door, apparently to continue firing at Officer Meidl, Corporal Wheelwright fired his shotgun. McDermott was killed.

At the time of this incident, Officer Meidl had been an officer with the Spokane Police Department for less than a year, having graduated from the Regional Training Center just nine months before this tragic incident.

Tracie first joined the Department as a member of the Police Explorer Scout Post as a teenager, then became a Reserve Officer. She then entered the training academy, and has had a successful career since her graduation. She later became the Department's first female K-9 handler.

Officer Meidl displayed exceptional personal bravery while demonstrating professional judgment in taking cover while calling for backup, and engaging McDermott until support arrived. A less disciplined officer might have panicked or attempted to engage McDermott directly. Officer Meidl was cool under fire and followed her training exactly. Meidl was awarded the Medal of Valor at our Employee Awards Ceremony in February of 1995.

