



## Trooper Ross S. Creach

Badge #58  
EOW ... December 12, 1943

Ross Seldon Creach was born January 25, 1919, in Macks Creek, Camden County, MO, the third of eight children to Lester and Lena Christine Creach. The Creach family settled in Macks Creek in 1837 when Ross Creach's great-great-grandfather came to the area from Virginia in an ox-drawn wagon. Ross's father, Lester, was a school-teacher who died August 31, 1930, when Ross was 11 years old. Lena became a post-master in Macks Creek.

Ross graduated in 1935 from Macks Creek High School where his future father-in-law and mother-in-law served as the superintendent and principal, respectively. Ross Creach was introduced to his future wife, Charlotte Marie Harpham, when she walked into the Macks Creek High School for the first time and was struck in the head by a baseball thrown by Ross. Charlotte graduated from Macks Creek High School in 1937, and attended Warrensburg State Teachers College (now University of Central Missouri) where Ross was also a student.

After college Ross and Charlotte began their careers as teachers. Ross taught in Triplett, MO, in Chariton County, and Charlotte taught at a school near Oak Grove, MO. Charlotte signed a contract to teach in which she agreed not to get married, but on November 23, 1940, they were married in

Lebanon, MO. A son, William Ross Creach, was born on September 9, 1941.

Ross became disenchanted with the teaching profession and began his career with the Missouri State Highway Patrol on December 14, 1942. He attended academy training on the Missouri State Fairgrounds in Sedalia, MO. The officers were housed and trained in the administration building on the fairgrounds. The officers were assigned to the fairgrounds from December 14, 1942 to January 28, 1943 with the exception of the period from 5 p.m. on December 23 to 8 a.m. on December 28, so they could spend Christmas with their families.

Ross never learned to ride a bicycle, which contributed to his difficulty in mastering the art of motorcycle operation. His evaluation following the Academy read, in part, "He experienced some difficulty in motorcycle riding and it is doubtful he will make a good rider." Ross finished fourth in a class of 22 officers. Upon graduation Trooper Creach was assigned to live in Troop B, Macon.

Tpr. Creach's career began as the country was embroiled in World War II. The selective service status of members of the Patrol was constantly updated. On a correspondence dated December 4, 1943, from Troop B Commander Captain J.F. Shaw to Patrol Superintendent Colonel Stanley Ginn regarding Tpr. Creach's reclassification of selective service status Captain Shaw wrote, "(Tpr. Creach) does not want us to make a request for deferment as he feels that it is his duty to enter the service."



*Tpr. Ross Creach, right, and a fellow officer are pictured.*

Around that same time, an insurance salesman tried to sell Tpr. Creach a life insurance policy for his small but expanding family. Tpr. Creach told the salesman the only way to beat an insurance policy was to die and he did not plan to die.

On Sunday, December 12, 1943, two days before his first anniversary on the Patrol, Tpr. Creach was directing traffic as a trucking company attempted to remove a trailer from the ditch on U.S. Highway 36, five and one-half miles west of Shelbina, MO, in Shelby County. The trailer had been pulled from the ditch and was on the westbound lane with tractor-trailers in front and behind the disabled trailer. Tpr. Creach stood on the eastbound lane with a flashlight accompanied by a truck driver, who also had a flashlight. Flares were lighted at each end of the line of trucks to caution oncoming traffic. At approximately 8 p.m., a westbound vehicle approached at a high rate of speed.

Tpr. Creach began waving his flashlight to signal the driver to slow down. As the vehicle approached, the truck driver ran from

the roadway. Tpr. Creach was struck by the passing car and killed instantly. His body came to rest under the disabled trailer. The westbound vehicle continued after the impact with Tpr. Creach and turned around in the ditch past the westernmost tractor. The driver, Theodore Roosevelt Kendrick, exited his 1936 Ford Roadster, which bore the evidence of the impact with the young trooper, and approached the group of truck drivers who had been working at the scene. The drivers described Kendrick as intoxicated and wanting to fight. Kendrick stated that he had been drinking on Saturday and Sunday and could not remember anything from the time he left a tavern in Shelbina until he was told he had killed Tpr. Creach.

Charlotte Creach, who was pregnant, was at home in Macon, MO, with her son, William, when she received the news of her husband's death. Tpr. Creach's uncle came to Macon and took Charlotte and William to Macks Creek to prepare for the funeral.

The day of the funeral, December 16, was bitter cold as Tpr. Ross Creach was laid to rest at the top of a hill in the Macks Creek Cemetery. Charlotte Creach recalled seeing all of the flowers that had been delivered, frozen from the weather, and wondering how she was going to pay her bills and feed her family. Tpr. Ross Creach was removed from the state payroll on December 16, 1943, just four days after his death, with instructions to forward his paycheck to his wife.

On December 27, 1943, Theodore Roosevelt Kendrick was arraigned in Shelby County and entered a plea of guilty to the charge of manslaughter in the Circuit Court of Judge Henry Libby. Judge Libby in his pronouncement to the court, regarding Kendrick, stated, "I have known this boy all his life. He has many good qualities. I have always found him truthful and upright, [and] industrious. Among his finest qualities has been his love for his mother and his concern for her. He has been cheerful and accommodating and heretofore a good

citizen, an industrious, useful mechanic. I don't believe Ted Kendrick, as I knew him, ever willingly or consciously committed this act; but he did, under the statements here, indulge in the excessive use of intoxicants and got in an automobile and in a condition not such as to be able to drive it in a careful and prudent manner, drove it recklessly and perhaps, as in his confusion he states, blindly and without much knowledge, into and against the body of this man and caused his death. I am not minimizing the tragedy.

operators statewide. This collection paid the funeral expenses and provided Mrs. Creach with an additional \$525.

On January 22, 1944, Rickey Seldon Creach, was born to Charlotte Creach, one month and ten days after his father's death.

Charlotte Creach returned to school with the help of her parents in caring for her children. She earned a bachelor's of science degree in education from Northeast Missouri State College in Kirksville, MO. She resumed her career in teaching that, among

## Son to Wife of Slain Patrolman

VIENNA, Mo., January 25 —A nine-and-a-half pound son was born Sunday night to Mrs. Ross S. Creach at the home of her parents, Mr. and Mrs. E. D. Harpham, in Vienna.

The child's father, a highway patrolman, was killed when he was struck by a truck near Macon, Mo., a few weeks

Mr. and Mrs. E. D. Harpham are announcing the birth of a grandson, born to their daughter, Mrs. Charlotte Creach, Saturday evening. The little lad weighed 9 and 12 pounds and will answer to the name of Rickey Seldon. Dr. Howard was the physician and all concerned are doing nicely. Mrs. Creach has another son, Billy.

Mrs. Beulah Cunningham is hav-

On the other hand, I feel this man's plight has proceeded not from any bad or criminal motives, but rather from the excessive use of intoxicating liquors and the carelessness results from it in the driving of a motor on the highway. The sentence I impose here will not aid the deceased." Judge Libby eventually sentenced Kendrick to four years in prison. Judge Libby never mentioned Tpr. Creach by name despite his repeated praise of Kendrick. His only reference to Tpr. Creach was, "Here was this deceased, a patrolman out on the highway in the exercise and discharge of his duty."

Once again Colonel Ginn requested the rank and file of the Patrol contribute to assist with the funeral expenses and to provide additional funds to Tpr. Creach's wife and son. Eight hundred sixty-five dollars was collected from patrolmen and radio

other obstacles, required her to attend National Aquatic School, so she could have a swimming certificate to teach physical education in Joplin. The training was held at the Lake of the Ozarks and a part of the training was to swim to the bottom of the lake and return with a rock.

In March 1950, Charlotte Creach wrote to Patrol Superintendent Colonel David Harrison to volunteer her services to assist in any way she could in establishing a pension plan for spouses of members of the Patrol. She acknowledged in her correspondence that any legislative change would not benefit her personally other than to help ensure that future widows would not suffer her same fate of financial hardship. Col. Harrison responded, in part, "At the present time I know of nothing that can be done toward a retirement plan for members of this organization."

Floyd Bonner, Ross Creach's uncle, was in the military service in Panama at the time of Ross' death. William Creach idolized his great uncle Floyd and asked him to marry his mother. On May 5, 1951, Charlotte Creach married Floyd Bonner. This union caused an unusual change of familial connection in which Charlotte's former mother-in-law became her sister-in-law. Though Floyd Bonner had been an electrician in the U.S. Army, he and Charlotte began to raise their family on a 640-acre farm in Macks Creek below the cemetery. Charlotte taught in the Macks Creek school system and later at Camdenton High School. Together the Bonners had three sons: Mark, Mike, and James.

In 1966, Floyd and Charlotte moved to the Los Angeles, CA, area where she continued in the teaching profession and eventu-

ally obtained a master's of arts degree in education from California Lutheran College. Charlotte worked in the San Fernando High School of the Los Angeles Unified School District from 1966 to 1993, where she taught and served as a college counselor on scholarships. During her tenure, she conducted tours of colleges with students, which included the athletic facilities at the University of Southern California where one of her students told her he would some day win the Heisman Trophy. Charlotte recalled she laughed about the boastful prediction of her humorous student, but she eventually saw his prediction come true when Charles White was named the 1979 Heisman Trophy winner.

Charlotte Bonner was again widowed in 1982 when Floyd Bonner died. Floyd was also buried in the Macks Creek Cemetery.



*Mrs. Charlotte Harpham Creach Bonner visited the National Law Enforcement Memorial during a trip to Washington, D.C..*

*Charlotte Creach Bonner found her husband, Ross, listed on panel 27W, line 12.*

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William Ross Creach graduated from the University of Missouri in 1963 with a bachelor's of arts degree in political science and, in 1965, was appointed vice consul in the Diplomatic Service by President Lyndon Johnson. His first assignment was in Germany where he met and married a German native whom he eventually divorced. They had a son, Andrew, and a daughter, Leslie, who graduated from the University of Arizona and the University of California-Berkley, respectively. Both of their professional careers were in the field of computers. Leslie was a millionaire by the time she was 30 years old and resides in the Silicon Valley.

Tpr. Creach's son, Rickey, whom he never saw, graduated from Southwest Missouri State University in Springfield. Rickey served as a mathematician in military intelligence and taught school in St. Louis for a period of time before embarking on a career in the computer field with Costco. Rickey Seldon Creach died of a heart attack at the family farm in Macks Creek on October 8, 1983, leaving his wife, and a son, Eric Creach, who attended law school at the University of Missouri.

The Bonners oldest son, Mark, became a doctor and resides in Washington, D.C. During a visit to Washington, Charlotte was taken to the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial by her son, Mark. There for the first time she was able to see Tpr. Creach's name inscribed on panel 27W, line 12. As she recalled her visit, Charlotte stated, "I still miss him to this day. It was such a shock. You think you are going to grow old with someone. A part of me died that day, too."

Charlotte Creach resides in Oregon, and still owns the farm in Macks Creek near the cemetery where she will be buried between her husbands.

Tpr. Ross S. Creach was the first member of the Missouri State Highway Patrol to be

killed by an intoxicated driver. He would not be the last.

*(Lt. James P. Ripley, Troop A, researched and wrote this profile in 2004. Ripley retired in 2013.)*

*On September 29, 2006, a portion of U.S. Highway 54 in Camden County from the eastern city limits of Macks Creek to the western city limits of Camdenton was dedicated as the "Trooper Ross S. Creach Memorial Highway." Tpr. Ross S. Creach was the fifth member of the Patrol to make the Ultimate Sacrifice.*