

Trooper Dennis H. Marriott

Badge #804
EOW ... June 13, 1981

On a cold January morning in 1975, Dennis H. Marriott reported to the Highway Patrol Academy to become a member of the 44th Recruit Class. The mass confusion created by the ever present Academy staff was bewildering for all of us—including Dennis, who tried desperately to take it all in stride. He openly expressed frustration with the intensity of the confusion being created and told anyone who would slow down to listen that things would get better if the class would work together.

From the first day in the classroom, as each class member had to stand in front of their classmates and introduce themselves to the class, Dennis's strong character and determination was evident. He told the class he had given up a career in the U.S. Army to become a Missouri trooper, and that he was going to do his best to excel in all aspects of the recruit training. The great pride he had in his family, and especially in his children, was the main focus of his introduction. He talked about his reliance on his religious beliefs to help him successfully complete the 20 weeks of training.

The members of the class were quick to come together as a team. Dennis could always be counted on to do his part and help anywhere he was needed. He was an intense academic competitor and strived to finish at or near the top of his class. He was one of

the older members of the class and his maturity showed in everything he did.

Dennis was assigned to Troop F, Zone 2, in Jefferson City and I was assigned to Troop F, Zone 1, so our shifts and work area assignments were always overlapping. The informal policy was if you were not on the air reporting for duty 30 minutes ahead of your scheduled time you were late. Dennis had an intense passion for his work and was almost always on the air long before the 30-minute requirement. If our zone was busy working with the aircraft on speed enforcement, Dennis would often show up to help. He felt that a good day's work was a must for everyone, and never had much time for idleness. He was a "strictly business," person and worked as hard or harder than anyone in his zone.

Dennis's wife, Cindy, was a dedicated stay-at-home mom and she helped my family by watching our daughter. This provided me with the opportunity to know Dennis as a family man and father away from our Patrol duties. Dennis was open about his love for his family and his strong religious beliefs. He was not a person to leave the future to chance and talked about all the plans he had for his growing family in the future.

Dennis and I worked together for just over seven years and he never swayed from his beliefs, or love for his family and for the Highway Patrol. He approached every day with the same determination and burning desire to do his job to the best of his ability.

Shortly after I was assigned to the Training Division, Dennis was conducting a car stop involving a suspected drunk driver when he was struck by another car, ironical-



This Marriott family portrait was taken in 1979.

ly, driven by a drunk driver. He was standing at the roadway edge interviewing the violator at the time he was hit. The violator then used his patrol radio to call for help. The driver who hit Dennis left the scene and was arrested a short time later by officers from the Jefferson City Police Department. Dennis was taken to the University of Columbia Medical Center with major injuries including massive head injuries. His family and zone members were immediately at his side and a few days later he succumbed to his injuries.

Dennis's traffic crash was the first traffic crash involving a member of the Highway Patrol to be reconstructed. The reconstruction, along with the rest of the criminal investigation, was used at trial to convict the driver of manslaughter and she received a 10-year sentence for the offense. The recently created organization, The MASTERS, was quick to react and helped the Marriott family with financial support.

I will never forget Dennis' strong beliefs and absolute dedication to his family, his faith, and the Missouri State Highway Patrol.

(Ret. Captain B. Chris Baker wrote this article in 2005.)

With four officers losing their lives while performing their duties, 2005 was a very difficult year for the Missouri State Highway Patrol. Each loss of an officer compels me to reflect on the officers who have been killed since I have been employed with the Patrol.

The first officer killed after I became a member was Dennis Marriott, my field training officer, who was hit by an intoxicated driver in 1981. Prior to Dennis, there had not been an on-duty death since 1970.

The role of a field training officer is one of the most important our officers perform. If not for a committed FTO, a new officer may not receive the training they need to succeed. I could not have asked for a better FTO than Dennis Marriott. Dennis was a hard-working officer who thoroughly enjoyed his job. He did not complain when things did not go exactly as he wanted, but continued to do the job he loved.

Dennis was committed to serving others and felt by being the best officer he could be he was fulfilling that commitment. He was soft-spoken, and even during an enforcement contact made people feel at ease. He enjoyed the camaraderie he had with his fellow officers. Dennis worked hard, but I also remember he played hard, too. He and his wife, Cindy, had four children who kept them busy. He loved his work, but also loved being a husband and father.

I know Dennis felt he was called by God to serve, and serve he did. The Missouri State Highway Patrol was blessed to have Dennis for the short six years he proudly wore the blue uniform. The lives Dennis touched are much better for having known him.

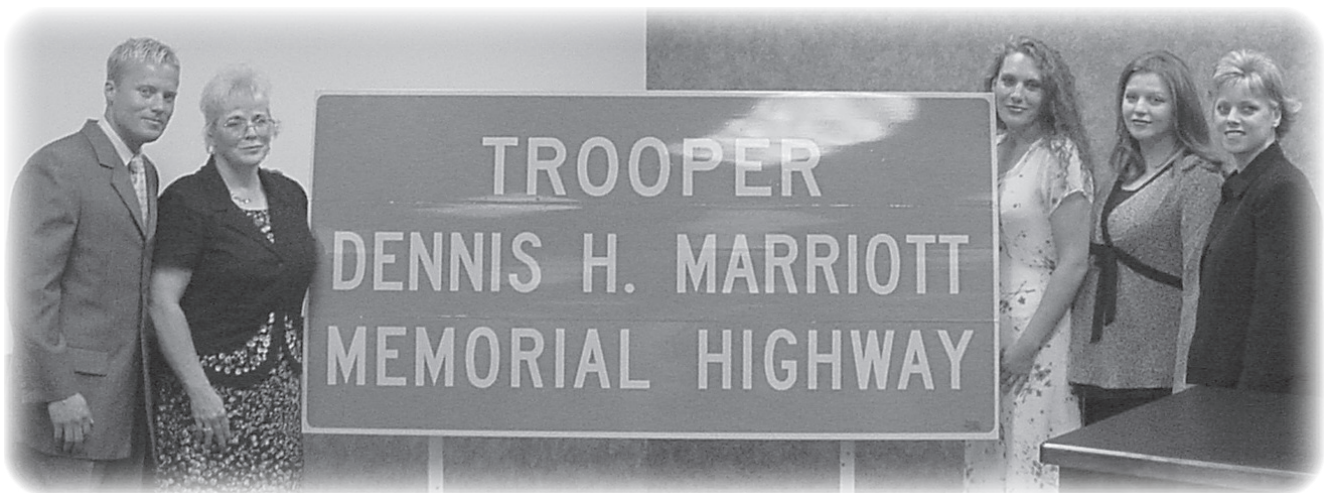


The Marriott family in 2002: (seated, l to r) Rebecca, Cynthia, Michael; (standing l to r) Jennifer and Cindy.

(Lt. Charles E. McCrary, Troop H, wrote this article in 2005. Lt. McCrary retired in 2011.)

Trooper Dennis H. Marriott, 36, died on June 13, 1981, after being struck by a drunk driver on June 1, 1981. He had exited his vehicle after stopping a violator. The incident occurred on U.S. Highway 54 south of Jefferson City, MO. The driver of the vehicle that struck Tpr. Marriott was stopped and arrested by local police a few minutes after the crash. Tpr. Marriott was survived by his wife, Cindy, and four children: Cynthia, Michael, Jennifer and Rebecca.

On Friday, September 10, 2004, a stretch of U.S. Highway 54 from Missouri Route 179 and traveling westbound for approximately one mile was renamed the Trooper Dennis H. Marriott Memorial Highway. Trooper Dennis H. Marriott was the 11th member of the Patrol to make the Ultimate Sacrifice.



The Marriott family, Michael, Cindy, Jennifer Zachreson, Rebecca Wattleworth, and Cynthia Stonehocker, attended the dedication ceremony for the Trooper Dennis H. Marriott Memorial Highway in 2004.