

Tribute to Keith Cash

Remarks of Michael A. McRobbie
President, Indiana University
IUPD Headquarters (tent in parking lot)
Tuesday, June 18, 2013
3:30 p.m.

1. INTRODUCTION

In 1962, President John Kennedy proclaimed May 15th as Peace Officers Memorial Day and the week in which that date falls as “Police Week.” More than fifty years later, tens of thousands of law enforcement officers from around the world visit Washington, D.C. during the week to honor their colleagues who have died in the line of duty during the previous year.

During last year’s National Peace Officers’ Memorial Service, President Barack Obama addressed the assembled law enforcement officers, saying that “every American who wears the badge knows the burdens that come with it—the long hours and the stress; the knowledge that just about any moment could be a matter of life or death. You carry these burdens,” President Obama said, “so the rest of us don’t have to.”

“This shared sense of purpose,” the president continued, “brings you together as a community: one family, united by a quiet strength and a willingness to sacrifice on behalf of others. The rest of us can never fully understand what you go through,” the president said. “But ...we hold you in our hearts—not just today, but always. We are forever in your debt.”

For those of us who knew and worked with Keith Cash, President Obama's phrases ring true.

Keith understood, in the truest sense, what it meant to be part of not only the tightly knit community of law enforcement officers, but also the Indiana University community.

His love for Indiana University, and the Bloomington campus in particular, was readily apparent to all who knew him.

He certainly possessed a quiet strength and a willingness to sacrifice on behalf of others.

And although President Obama spoke in terms of the "burdens" of those who wear the badge, those of us who knew Keith cannot imagine that he thought of his responsibilities as burdens. It was abundantly clear that for him, as it is for so many of his colleagues, police work was a calling.

Keith answered that call with enormous distinction, serving Indiana University with honor and professionalism for nearly three decades. His tenure as Chief of Police was highly successful and all too short.

We hold him in our memories—not just today, but always.

And we are forever in his debt.

2. KEITH CASH

Keith was born in Louisville, Kentucky and raised in Jeffersonville, Indiana. He graduated from Jeffersonville High School, and went on to earn bachelor's and master's degrees in criminal justice from Indiana University Bloomington.

He began his service with the IU Police Department in 1984 as a patrol officer. He rose through the ranks, serving for nine years as an operations captain on the force, and, of course, he was appointed chief of police in 2010.

He also served as an instructor at IU, a guest lecturer in many classes, and an instructor at the IU Police Academy.

And, in 2004, Keith graduated from the FBI National Academy, which provides advanced investigative, management, and fitness training to senior officers who are proven leaders within their organizations, which Keith certainly was.

His service on the Board of Directors of the Indiana Association of Chiefs of Police was further testimony to his commitment to service and his dedication to the profession.

3. SERVING THE CAMPUS AND BEYOND

For all university presidents, the safety of the members of our university communities is a paramount concern.

Campus police, especially at a major university like IU, face unique challenges.

IU Bloomington is a large and diverse community, with more than 42,000 students, nearly 3,000 faculty, and more than 5,000 staff. Our students come from all 50 states

and 163 different countries—and most of them are living away from home for the first time.

Our campus police also coordinate with other agencies to ensure the safety of the many dignitaries from around the nation and the world who visit our campus, and the safety of attendees at the many sporting events and cultural events we host.

Campus police have to be ready for just about anything, and Keith dealt with more than his share of difficult situations during his tenure as chief, including student protests, a spate of anti-Semitic incidents, and, tragically, student deaths and the disappearance of student Lauren Spierer.

But, in all these situations, I was able rest more easily knowing that Indiana University had a chief of police who was professional, intelligent, collaborative, steady, reliable, and completely trustworthy.

And I knew that I could count on Keith to keep all the university's leadership informed of important developments.

I knew that, above all, he was thoroughly dedicated to protecting and serving all of the members of the IU community.

Keith was known for his hard work and dedication. He took his job seriously, but he was wise enough not to take himself too seriously. As I am sure you will hear from his colleagues and friends today, Keith almost always had a smile on his face. He had an outgoing personality, a hearty laugh, and a wonderful sense of humor. He regularly used that sense of humor to diffuse tense situations, and his laughter was a strong part of the sense of camaraderie that developed among his friends and colleagues.

4. CONCLUSION: THE LEGACY OF HEROES

I want to extend, once again, on behalf of the entire university, our deepest sympathies to Keith's family members and to all of his many, many friends and colleagues.

He will be greatly missed.

The British Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli, in paying tribute in 1849 to a friend and former Member of Parliament who had recently passed away, said: "he has left us the legacy of heroes—the memory of his great name, and the inspiration of his great example."¹

Keith Cash, likewise, has left us the memory of his great name and the inspiration of his great example.

And we are forever grateful.

¹ Benjamin Disraeli, speech on the death of Lord George Bentinck in the House of Commons, delivered February 1, 1849, reprinted in Benjamin Disraeli, *Selected Speeches*, Volume 2, (Longmans, Green, 1882), 286.