

Detective Carrington Honored in Death

The body of Detective Sean Carrington, Bronx Narcotics (OCCB), lies in a hero's grave in Mount Hope Cemetery in Hastings-on-Hudson, New York. Another name has been added to the ever mounting list of police martyrs who have met death in the performance of duty.

His memory was honored at his funeral on January 23, 1998 by thousands of neighbors, friends and colleagues, and a large delegation of city and police officials, including Governor George Pataki, Mayor Rudolph Giuliani, Bronx District Attorney Robert Johnson, Police Commissioner Howard Safir, First Deputy Police Commissioner Patrick Kelleher, Bronx Borough President Fernando Ferrer, and Queens District Attorney Richard Brown.

Over 8,000 law enforcement officers, who journeyed from as far as New Jersey, Delaware, Pennsylvania and Massachusetts, lined the streets around Washington Avenue in the Bronx, enduring the freezing rain as the downpour competed with the hum of the Aviation unit's aerial salute and the bagpipes' mournful wailing of "Amazing Grace."

Inside The Garden of Prayer Cathedral of the Church of God in Christ, Detective Carrington was given a full Inspector's funeral. Old and New Testament readings were recited by Brother Ted Jefferson and Elder Jay Gooding, the choir sang "I'll Fly Away," and Bishop William J. Robinson eulogized with a solo rendition of "Precious Lord."

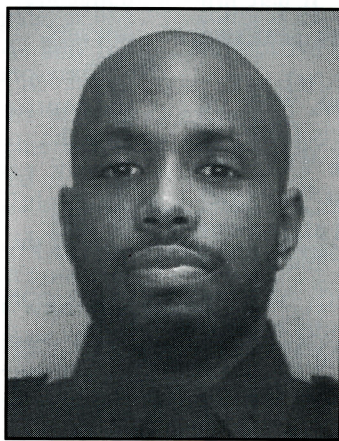
Shot and killed by a drug dealer with a Tec-9 semi-automatic pistol on January 19, Carrington was 28-years old, and left behind a fiancée and a two-year old daughter. He died at Lincoln Hospital after three bullets ripped apart his shoulder, chest and heart.

Carrington joined the Department of Corrections in 1989 after completing two years at John Jay College of Criminal Justice. He transferred to the Housing Division of the NYPD in 1994, later moving to the Narcotics Division where he earned his gold detective shield in August of 1997.

Carrington was acting as the back-up officer in a "buy and bust" narcotics deal in an apartment building at 1660 Andrews Avenue in the 46th Precinct, which ironically saw the most dramatic crime drop in the City last year. The drug suspects suddenly opened fire, resulting in such a loud exchange of bullets that neighbors thought firecrackers were exploding. Carrington was unable to wear his bullet-proof vest because such bulky protective gear is the giveaway to a drug dealer that his buyer is actually a cop.

The aftermath of the shoot-out found ex-con Leon Smith dead at the scene. Ballistics tests proved that the bullets that killed Carrington hailed from his gun. Smith, 33, had a rap sheet including drug, weapons, and grand

larceny charges, and had been imprisoned for manslaughter in 1986 for shooting a man while beating him with a .357 magnum. Smith had plea-bargained to a second-degree charge, and after being rejected by the parole board twice, was released in 1994 after serving eight years of a six-to-12 year sentence. Freedom left him to team up with career criminal Maurice Bolling, his partner in the Carrington slaying. At the time of the crime, Bolling should have been in a Virginia prison for jumping parole.



"There's no question that Bolling and Smith were in the wrong place at the wrong time," said Mayor Giuliani. "They should have been in jail."

"We have to do more...to protect the people of this state, particularly the people who risk their lives to protect us," said Gov. Pataki. The Governor's outrage comes shortly after two other Detectives, Wafkey Salem and his partner Lourdes Gonzalez, were shot by paroled drug dealer Luis Quintero on December 29, 1997. Three bullets hit Det. Salem in the chest and abdomen, but were repelled by Salem's life-saving vest. Det.

Gonzalez was so concerned about getting medical assistance for her partner that she didn't even realize she had been hit in the arm.

The killing of Det. Carrington has sparked debate over a number of hot-ticket issues, including: the optional wearing of bullet-proof vests; outdated and malfunctioning equipment, such as transmitters; Bronx District Attorney Robert Johnson's previous failures to seek the death penalty; the risky tactics used to fight the war on drugs; the high percentage of undercover narcotics officers who are Black or Hispanic; and Albany's failure to revamp the parole system, with the Governor and Mayor calling for reforms to a justice system that releases hardened criminals before complete sentences are served.

In his eulogy, Mayor Giuliani compared Det. Carrington to civil-rights leader Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., whose birthday was celebrated the same day the detective was gunned down.

"He was working toward a world where children are not tempted by heroin and cocaine...where people don't use guns and knives. Both Dr. King and Det. Carrington have secured their places in history."

And so another name graces the new police memorial in Battery Park City.

"When you met Sean," said one of his colleagues, "you automatically liked the guy — his smile, his warm heart. People gravitated toward him. It feels like losing one of the family."

"There are 38,000 heroes in the NYPD," added Police Commissioner Safir. "Det. Carrington was an outstanding undercover, which is to say he was a hero among heroes."