

Jenkintown Borough Officer John J. Plunkett E.O.W. 3/9/1957

Officer John J. Plunkett made the ultimate sacrifice on March 9th, 1957. He served fifteen years with the Jenkintown Borough Police Department and previously with the United States Army in World War I. Officer Plunkett chose to join the police force in light of the dispatch of the younger members who left to fight World War II. Prior to his position as a Police Officer, Officer Plunkett worked for the Evening Public Ledger as a line-o-type operator and briefly for the United States Postal Office. On the day of his sacrifice, Officer Plunkett was investigating a public disturbance call during his 1 A.M to 1 P.M. shift on the 200 block of Leedom Street, in Jenkintown when he suffered a fatal heart attack while chasing a suspect in a bar fight.

Officer Plunkett was a Veteran of the United States Army, having served overseas in France during World War I. He was also a member of the McKinley Fire Company in Abington and played a fife in their Fife and Drum Corps. Officer Plunkett was an avid baseball fan and enjoyed attending Phillies games. He loved spending time with his grandson, Jack, at the local country club collecting golf balls. He was survived by his wife Elizabeth, and three children Elizabeth, John and Joseph. Son, John Plunkett, and grandson, Bob Plunkett, attended the ceremony along with other family members and friends. DA Ferman addressed the audience and the Plunkett Family: "Today is a very special day in Jenkintown as we honor the memory of Officer John Plunkett. We are particularly honored to have three generations with us today, his son, grandson and great grandson among other family members and friends. In addressing the family, DA Ferman said: "We are here for you, today and every day. We will always remember your father, your grandfather, your great grandfather, we will always remember his sacrifice and we will always be here to honor the work and sacrifice and commitment of our law enforcement officers across the county."

James Binns, founder of the Hero Plaque Program, thanked the borough of Jenkintown for their sponsorship. This is the 271st Hero Plaque we have dedicated and the 25th now in Montgomery County. Binns said: "the reason that we do these plaque dedications is not only to pay homage to the individual who gave his life, but also to pay homage to you [the family] who have made a great sacrifice and have had to live without him. It is for the men and woman that you see here in uniform who are putting their lives on the line every day." Montgomery County First ADA, Kevin Steele said: "While reading about Officer John Plunkett, two words came to mind, service and sacrifice; service to his country as a member of the US Army, and service to his community as a firefighter and a police officer. The sacrifice that he made on the day he died going out on a call to protect members of the community. Every officer in the room knows that not a day goes by that we understand the sacrifice that you make every day putting on the uniform and going out to do the job. Know that as you do that and as this plaque is given and as other things are done in memory, we have your back and we will continue to have your back."

Jenkintown Chief of Police Albert DiValentino said: "Fifty-seven years after his death, is a tribute to his dedication and service to the Jenkintown community. It is an honor for me to be a part of this event. Time certainly does not diminish respect. He was a good and caring man and a dedicated police officer. May he rest in peace and may he always be remembered with this plaque as it is going to be embedded on the Jenkintown Police Department wall."

Montgomery County Commissioner Chair Josh Shapiro said: "To all of you who protect us, thank you for your service. To the Plunkett family we honor your grandpa, great grandpa, your father

and your friend, and we also want to recognize the service and sacrifice that you have made and we appreciate all that you have done for our community in allowing his memory today to be reflected upon a reminder of his bravery. He was the ordinary guy doing extraordinary things. From attending baseball games with his son to fighting in WWI and serving the Jenkintown community as a police officer, always making sure someone else was safe, always making sure he was looking out for someone else. The lesson of today is that we should never forget those who go out and serve each and every day.”

Mayor of Jenkintown, Ed Foley, said: “I have only been mayor 5 years but it didn’t take long to realize that there was such a thing as the first family of a borough and it really is the Plunkett family. Hearing about this loss reinforced everything about the Plunkett family and the tradition of service passed down through the generations. That is an important value that other families could benefit from. What we are doing here today is not only to remember the sacrifice but the ideals that Officer John Plunkett stood for and that survive today.”

Bob Plunkett, grandson of Officer John Plunkett, said: “Officer John Plunkett was my grandfather he was a wonderful person, the family really appreciates the honor that the community and County is bestowing upon him right here with this plaque. On behalf of the family, we thank everyone very much.” In attendance was Officer Plunkett’s son, John Plunkett, eighty-eight years old, who expressed his appreciation for his father and for the legacy his father has left behind. He explained: “My father was a strong man. He was a great father, a great brother to his sister, and was a strong figure in each of our lives.”