



NEWS RELEASE

INDIANA LAW ENFORCEMENT MEMORIAL

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Remembering Gary Lieutenant George Yaros 45th Anniversary of Indiana's Only Line of Duty Death Who Had Been a Prisoner of War

Lake County | Gary Lieutenant George Yaros is being remembered today on the 45th anniversary of the ultimate sacrifice he made when he was shot and killed after responding to an armed robbery at the Gary National Bank at 3680 Broadway on August 11, 1981. Of the 181 fallen officers in Indiana who had served in the United States Armed Forces before their line of duty deaths, he is the only one who had been a prisoner of war while serving in the military.

Upon his arrival at 12:05 pm, three suspects were exiting the bank with \$13,000 when one suspect shot him in the chest and as they fled to their getaway car, he shot him again at point-blank range with a .44-caliber handgun. Yaros was taken to St. Mary's Mercy Hospital where he died. He had served with the Gary Police Department for nearly 29½ years and had plans to retire in six months to accept a job at the bank.

George Yaros, 57, was the second-born child of John Sr. and Susana (née Lipps) Yaros and was born on April 12, 1924 in Custer City, Pennsylvania. In 1947, he married Ann Toth and they resided at 5063 Jefferson Street in Gary. He was survived by his wife; son, George Timothy (Lavonne); daughters, Barbara (Wayne) Gallimore and Jane (Phillip) Kalinowicz; his mother; a sister, Marie Ellen (Frank) Decapio; a half-sister, Susan (George) Blakemore; two half-brothers, John II (Grace) and Michael (Ethel) Yaros; and grandchildren, Amanda and Amy Kalinowicz. His funeral was held on August 14 at St. Mark Church in Gary with interment at Calumet Park Cemetery in Merrillville.

Yaros had enlisted in the U.S. Army during World War II in January 1943 and landed in Normandy on D-Day as a private first class in the 506th Parachute Infantry Regiment of the 101st Airborne Division. He was wounded during the Battle of the Bulge in Belgium and while in a field hospital, captured as a prisoner of war by Nazi Germany. Yaros was imprisoned at Camp Fünfeichen (Stalag II-A) in Neubrandenburg, Germany and repatriated after 217 days in captivity on July 25, 1945 before being discharged in February 1946.

The three suspects, after a high-speed pursuit, crashed their car into a tree and they fled on foot before being apprehended. The trio was charged with and convicted of murder in a change of venue to Allen County. The death penalty was sought for all three offenders at trial but in May 1982, Ralph D. Hutson, 32 and David North, 29, both of Gary, were sentenced to 60 years in prison and later discharged in 2011 and 2012.

The jury recommended death only for the shooter, Rufus Lee Averhart, 26, of Gary, who later changed his name to Zolo Agona Azania. The Indiana Supreme Court affirmed his conviction but overturned his death sentence in 1993 and he was again sentenced to death in 1996, which was also overturned in 2002. After the death penalty was vacated, he was resented in 2008 to 60 years for murder and 15 years for armed robbery. In 2017, he was released on a one-year parole after having served 35½ years in prison.

Prior to this incident, Averhart had killed Leonard Wick, 69, during a home invasion in Gary in December 1972 and pleaded guilty to voluntary manslaughter. He was sentenced to 2 to 21 years in prison and after serving 7½ years, he was paroled in July 1980, a month before he killed Yaros.

Lieutenant Yaros is honored on the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial in Washington on Panel 54W, Line 12 and on the Indiana Law Enforcement and Fire Fighters Memorial in Indianapolis on Panel L22, Line 2. He is the 11th fallen officer of the Gary Police Department and the 44th of 58 line of duty deaths that have originated from Lake County.

View our memorial for Lieutenant Yaros at: www.officersearch.inlem.org/officer.php?id=0040

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About the Indiana Law Enforcement Memorial

Founded in 2017, the Indiana Law Enforcement Memorial is a nonprofit organization dedicated to honoring all of our state's fallen officers. Its mission is to honor law enforcement officers who have made the ultimate sacrifice; provide support to their surviving family members and affected agencies; and conduct research into and foster public awareness of Indiana line of duty deaths.

Each of these over 500 officers are memorialized through a website maintained as an exclusive resource to our state with the most comprehensive details to preserve the history surrounding their incidents and an extensive compilation of statistical data.