

## Slain George AFB officer remembered

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VICTORVILLE — Gloria Roberts remembers vividly the morning she received news that her husband, Security Policeman Isiah Roberts, had been shot multiple times while answering a domestic disturbance call at George Air Force Base.

Multiple pints of blood were donated by base personnel as physicians tried desperately to save the 37-year old Tech Sergeant, who was admired and respected by many at GAFB and throughout the High Desert, his family said.

Roberts told the Daily Press that April 17, 1969, will forever be etched in her heart as the day “Isiah left this earth,” her side and the couple’s children, Gary, Terri and Windsor.

“I was at home with my kids when the doorbell rang and the First Sergeant came to deliver the news,” Roberts, 81, told the Daily Press as the 50th anniversary of the incident approached. “I remember it was past midnight when he came and told me that Isiah had been shot, he was at the hospital and that it was not good.”

Roberts, who taught at Harry R. Sheppard Elementary School on base during that time, said she was “shocked and stunned” when a visiting military chaplain told her that it was best “not to go to the hospital” and to remember Isiah like she last saw him.

“I remember my mom going to the door and talking to a man from the military, who told her that my dad had passed away,” said Terri Roberts, who lives in Las Vegas. “I remember my mom breaking down and crying. I also remember not wanting to believe that it was true. It was a lot to process for a 10-year old.”

After the shooting, Sgt. Albert V. Parmes, 26, was taken into custody by military police after shooting Roberts in the back and his partner, 26-year old Staff Sgt. Joel E. Reynolds, Jr. in the left hand, the Daily Press reported.

Parmes was convicted of second-degree murder and was sentenced to 35 years in prison, but was released after serving only seven years, the Daily Press reported.

Despite the passing decades, Roberts said the memory of her father has not faded, with photos of her father and his dogs offering thoughts of happier days.

The youngest child of the family, Windsor “Wendy” Richmond, said her memory of the tragic night was “very minimal,” adding that she remembers her father through family photos.

“There’s this one photo of my family at Disneyland,” said Richmond, who lives in Victorville. “One photo shows my father and I riding the Dumbo ride. You can tell by the photos that he was a man who really loved his family.”

Richmond said her brother, Gary, who was 10 when his father was killed, heeded the word delivered by the base commander, who told him that he was now “the man of the house.”

“He kept that message diligently his whole life,” Richmond said of Gary, who died in 2017 of a heart condition. “He tried so hard to help my mom — he wanted to be there for her.”

“Isiah was a likable fellow and everyone thought so well of him,” Gloria Roberts said. “Even the base officers noticed how well he worked with the younger kids in uniform. He was always helping people.”

Four months after the shooting, a public ceremony was held at the base to rename the newly constructed theater the “Roberts Memorial Theater.” During the event, Sheriff Frank Bland recognized the slain airman as one of three top graduates from the San Bernardino County Sheriff’s Academy.

Bland called the fallen Roberts “a great man,” who loved his family, his country and the opportunity to serve others, the Daily Press reported.

Gloria Roberts said her husband attended the Sheriff’s academy to prepare himself for civilian employment after he retired from the military.

During the ceremony, Victorville Mayor David A. Brownell was on hand while Col. Carmel M. Shook, 831st Air Division commander, presented Mrs. Roberts with an Air Force Commendation Medal and Certificate of Service in his honor.

“It was a wonderful ceremony and they even sent a security police representative from Washington D.C to speak,” said Roberts, a member of the Gold Star Wives of America. “That was nearly 50 years ago, but it seems like it happened only yesterday.”

A native of Atlanta, Georgia, Isiah Roberts served in the Air Force for 19 years, which included his assignment to the 831st Security Police Squadron.

“We met in Florida during my senior year, when he was stationed at Patrick Air Force Base,” Roberts said. “We got married on October 16th, 1955 during my first year of college. That’s when he was assigned to Japan. He wanted me to go with him, but I stayed behind and moved over the following year.”

In June 1958, the couple’s son was born in Japan just before the family moved back to Patrick AFB, where their two daughters were born.

“We stayed in Florida while Isiah was stationed in Alaska,” Gloria Roberts said. “We moved to George Air Force Base in 1965 and we lived at 604 Carolina Street until Isiah was shot four years later.”

In 1997, former Security Policeman Michael Kennedy, who worked alongside Roberts, discovered that Isiah’s name had not been listed on the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial in Washington, D.C.

After two years of Kennedy contacting several organizations, including the Air Force and Pentagon, Roberts’ name was added to the memorial.

“After I received the official word that Isiah Roberts would be added to the memorial, I made a surprise visit to his widow,” said Kennedy, 71, who lives in Fontana. “I had not contacted her or the family before because I did not want to disappoint them if the application for his inclusion was rejected for some reason.”

In May 1999, Kennedy and his wife attended the National Police Week “Candlelight Ceremony” with Gloria Roberts and her children as Isiah Roberts’ name was officially added to the memorial in Washington, D.C.

“We attended the police memorial, the parade, and we listened to the vice president share his address,” Roberts said, “We were also shown Isiah’s name etched in stone at the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial.”

On the 20th anniversary of his Roberts’ death, his family held a memorial service on base and questioned whether Isiah would be remembered after the planned closing of GAFB in 1991.

“George Air Force Base has been closed for nearly 30 years and most of the buildings have deteriorated,” Roberts said. “Before the base closed, I managed to salvage the photo of Isiah that was placed in the theater.”

City of Victorville spokeswoman Sue Jones told the Daily Press on Monday that the old theater, located on Sabre Boulevard, is vacant and is located in an area scheduled for upcoming development.

“The City of Victorville and its development partner, Stirling Development have created an industrial park at SCLA that is home to manufacturing, warehousing and industrial companies,” Jones said. “Plans call for the development of a warehousing facility at Phantom and Nevada. As a result, the theatre building and other abandoned buildings near it will be demolished.”

A member of the California Retired Teachers Association, Gloria Roberts said her days are filled with weekly league bowling, church attendance and participation as a member of the Delta Gamma Society, NAACP, National Negro Women’s Council and National Council of Negro Women.

“I’ve been active in the community since the ’70s, and I continue to spend a lot of time volunteering and working on various board positions,” Gloria Roberts said. “Serving others is what Isiah and I did for many years. I’m just continuing the job alone.”

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