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## Violent end to a life of duty

### Deputy sheriff killed in gunfight spent his career in jobs of service

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Reading Eagle

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Kyle D. Pagerly had seen danger.

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He was a military police officer in the Balkans and Iraq and a volunteer firefighter for Spring Township.

But the 28-year-old Wilson High School graduate's most dangerous job might well have been his last.

Pagerly, a Berks County deputy sheriff working in the fugitive warrants division, was fatally shot Wednesday night in Albany Township with a semi-automatic AK-47 rifle by a man wanted by a joint state police-U.S. marshal's task force, authorities said.

Pagerly is the first Berks deputy killed in the line of duty.

The gunman, Matthew M. Connor, 25, dressed from head to toe in camouflage, was shot and killed by law enforcement officers near his home about 6:30 p.m., authorities said.

Pagerly, one of two K-9 officers in the sheriff's department, went with troopers, federal marshals and other deputies to look for Connor at his parents' house in the first block of Pine Swamp Road.

Authorities knew Connor recently had threatened to kill himself and others, that he was likely armed and inclined to provoke police so they would shoot him, according to court records.

On Monday, state police were called to his residence after he threatened to kill relatives and fired several shots from a handgun into the ground near them about 8:30 p.m., troopers said. Connor put the barrel of a handgun in his mouth, then aimed at his sister, investigators said. He ran into the woods after throwing a suicide note in the yard, they said.

Troopers said Connor's father, Maurice, told them that his son had talked about provoking police so they would kill him. He said his son spent nine months in a psychiatric hospital when he was 18 or 19.

Troopers searched for Connor on Monday and Tuesday, even using a helicopter on Tuesday.

On Tuesday, state police at Hamburg got an arrest warrant signed by District Judge Kim Bagenstose, charging Connor with reckless endangerment, making terroristic threats, weapons offenses and related offenses.

According to investigators:

Authorities learned Connor was in the area of his family's home Wednesday evening and assembled a team and went to the house to look for him.

While they were talking to relatives, authorities learned Connor was talking on his cellphone from a nearby house. They went there, and Laura Bond, his girlfriend, told them that Connor had gone into the woods behind the house. Bond told officers that Connor might have a gun.

The team went outside to look for Connor. As Pagerly crested a hill, Connor stood up, holding an AK-47 rifle.

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Above, Berks County Sheriff's Chief Deputy Tony Damore, front, and other deputies salute as the hearse containing the body of Kyle D. Pagerly passes the courthouse. At right, Pagerly with his partner Jynx in 2009.

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Pagerly, who was wearing a helmet and body armor, ordered him to drop the rifle and gunfire erupted.

Pagerly was struck by several rounds, and at least one shot penetrated his armor into his chest.

His partner, Jynx, was beside him. Neither the K-9 nor any other officers were injured. Officials said Jynx grabbed the pants of his handler after he was shot and dragged him out of the line of fire.

Pagerly was flown to Lehigh Valley Hospital near Allentown, where he was pronounced dead at 8:44 p.m. by a staff physician. Following an autopsy Thursday morning, the coroner's office ruled the death a homicide.

Connor was pronounced dead at the scene by Berks County Deputy Coroner Ronald C. Peters.

An autopsy was conducted Thursday night in Reading Hospital, but there was no ruling, pending further investigation.

**Statewide mourning**

Sadness over Pagerly's slaying was felt across the state.

Members of the Berks delegation to the state Legislature called for a moment of silence at the start of Thursday's session, and Gov. Tom Corbett ordered all state flags in the Capitol Complex and at state facilities in Berks lowered to half-staff until the funeral.



Spring Fire Commissioner John H. Schach Jr. said Pagerly started as a junior firefighter with the West Wyomissing Fire Company before the township fire companies merged. He graduated to senior firefighter, attaining the rank of lieutenant.

Pagerly's father, David, also has been a firefighter, Schach said.

Schach said he learned a few hours after the shooting that Pagerly had been gravely wounded.

"He was a good firefighter, a good guy," Schach said. "He had a very nice wife. They bought a house in Shillington. I can't say anything but good about him."

Pagerly's widow, Alecia, is expecting their first child.

Pagerly's family was unavailable Thursday night.

Sheriff Eric J. Weaknecht has assigned a deputy sheriff to stay with Pagerly's body and another to stay with his widow until the burial.

Contact Steven Henshaw: 610-371-5028 or shenshaw@readingeagle.com.

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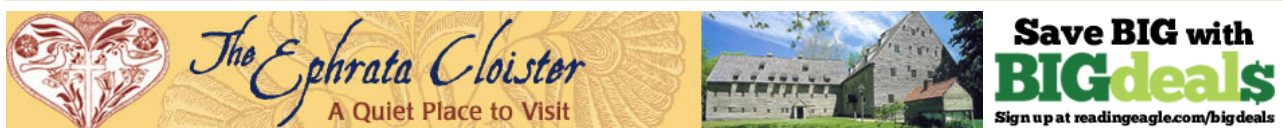
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