



May 2, 2014

Biographies for Sgt. Scott Johnson and Trooper Gabe Rich

Sgt. Scott Johnson was born in Fairbanks, but grew up in Tok where he graduated from Tok School in 1987. He was 45 at the time of his death. Johnson was a North Slope Borough Police Officer for three years before joining the Alaska State Troopers ranks in 1993. Afterward, he headed to Fairbanks where he worked his entire 20-year trooper career. During his long esteemed career, he worked as a patrol trooper; was a field training officer; was a canine officer, instructor and canine unit supervisor; supervisor of the Fairbanks Areawide Narcotics Team; patrol shift supervisor; an assistant team leader for the Northern Special Emergency Reaction Team (SERT); and finally rural unit sergeant. He is survived by his wife, daughters ages 16, 14, and 12; his parents and siblings.

Trooper Gabe Rich was born in Sayre, Pennsylvania, but moved to Fairbanks shortly after his birth. He graduated from Lathrop High School in 2006. He was 26 at the time of his death. He spent four years working as a patrolman with the North Pole Police Department before deciding to become an Alaska State Trooper in 2011. Trooper Rich worked in Fairbanks patrol for the majority of his 3 ½ years as a trooper, then moved to the Rural Unit. He is survived by his fiancé, their 1-year-old son; and his parents. He was in the process of adopting his fiancé's 8-year-old son.

Johnson and Rich joined the Interior Rural Unit on the same day – Jan. 1, 2014. The rural unit consists of a sergeant and three troopers that serve villages both on and off the road system. This four-person unit's jurisdiction goes as far west as Kaltag and north to Arctic Village, each located 310 and 241 air miles from "D" Detachment headquarters in Fairbanks where the unit is based. Because unit troopers have to travel a great distances to respond to a call, getting to the location is time consuming. In addition, adverse weather conditions can at times hamper a trooper's response time. Unit troopers provide public safety for 23 villages scattered throughout a sparse area. To do this, the members heavily rely on air travel to respond to the different calls. Some members of the unit are certified to fly a state aircraft. Otherwise, troopers rely on a non-commissioned state pilot or charter a local aircraft service to fly to the villages off the road system or drive great distances to get to communities on the Dalton, Steese and Elliott highways. The unit sergeant also supervises the two troopers at the Galena post. Rural unit troopers also provide oversight to six Village Public Safety Officers in the Interior.

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