

Theo Cobb Dies In Road Mishap

Soldier Will Face Charges Manslaughter

Popular Patrolman Run Down and

Killed As He Performed His Official Duties

Veteran Trooper Theo Cobb, 43, 28 Fifth avenue southwest, was run down and killed by a hit-and-run driver early Sunday morning tragically ending 14 years of continuous service with the Oklahoma Highway Patrol.

Trooper Cobb died at 5:45 a.m. Sunday of multiple injuries approximately three hours after he was hit by a speeding car while investigating another accident two miles north of Fox on state highway 76.

Driver of the death car was 20 year old Max Fairchild of Alma, a soldier stationed at Camp Chaffee, Ark.

Fairchild surrendered a few hours later to Healdton City Marshall Bill Ratliff. Fairchild turned himself over to Ratliff 40 minutes before Cobb died in the Hardy Sanitarium.

The driver is being held in the Carter county jail pending the filing of manslaughter charges.

Fairchild told Ratliff that he knew he hit Cobb but that he was too frightened to stop and continued to his home. He told his parents of the accident. They accompanied him to Healdton to surrender.

Trooper Charles Branch, working with Cobb, said Cobb saw the approaching car and stepped out from behind the wrecker to slow the car down with a wave of his flashlight.

Cobb was hit by the right front fender and knocked 63 feet. He landed face down, lying half on the pavement and half off onto the shoulder. He was rushed to the Ardmore hospital but doctors were unable to save his life.

His injuries included a crushed left leg, multiple head injuries, cuts, bruises and abrasions and internal injuries.

Branch gave this account of the hit-and-run accident:

"Trooper Cobb and I had just finished investigating the accident. The wrecker was all hooked up and ready to remove the vehicle from the bridge when Cobb saw the approaching car. As the vehicle neared Cobb stepped a few feet from the wrecker and began to wave his flashlight in a motion to signal "slow" or "halt". The car kept coming at a very high rate of speed - between 70 and 80 miles an hour I would say - and as it approached the bridge it suddenly swerved to the left

and into Cobb. The impact knocked Cobb 63 feet near the parked patrol car. All the red lights on the wrecker and patrol car were burning.

"The driver's speed was never checked. When he stuck Cobb the vehicle swerved back across into the right lane and kept going."

A 16-unit road block was immediately set up over 10 counties for the hit-and-run driver. Tulsa and Oklahoma City, and other city police officers volunteered to join the hunt.

Branch broadcast the alarm and called the Ardmore patrol station for an ambulance.

County Attorney Gene Ritter said he probably would file manslaughter charges against Fairchild today pending further investigation.

Cobb, one of the most popular patrolmen in the service was in the first class of recruits when the unit was formed in 1937. He had completed 14 years of service with the department this summer and had been awarded two five year service stars. He would have been eligible for his third service star next summer.

During World War II he went on military leave from the patrol. He served with the shore patrol in the U.S. Navy. When he returned he was stationed a short time at Durant before being returned to Ardmore. He had been stationed at Ardmore for the past five years.

Of the 14 years of service Cobb had spent approximately 12 years in Southern Oklahoma units the most of this at Ardmore where he had established his home.

Cobb was a native of Thackerville in Love county and was well known throughout Southern Oklahoma. He attended the first school and was stationed at Sayre and Elk City for two years before coming back to Southern Oklahoma to live.

Cobb is the third state patrolman to be killed in the line of duty since the patrol was organized in 1937.

His death is the sixth traffic death in this county in 1951.

Members of the patrol with whom Cobb had been associated will be active pallbearers.

Services will be Wednesday at 3 p.m. in the First Baptist church, conducted by Dr. Karl H. Moore, pastor. Burial by Harveys will be in Rose Hill cemetery.

The Masons will direct graveside rites. Members are requested to be at the Masonic hall at 2 p.m. Assisting as pallbearers will be Lieut. Harold Watson, Lieut. Floyd Bown and O.O. Campbell, all of Durant; R.C. Bailey, Atoka, and B. Wages, Oklahoma City.

Cobb is survived by his wife, Julia, 28 Fifth avenue southwest; two daughters, Mrs. Jack Cason, Las Vegas, Nev., and Miss Joy Cobb of the home; a son, Gerald Theo, a student at Southeastern

State college, Durant; one brother, Melvin, Sacramento, Cal.; five sisters, Mrs. Rufus Bond, Mrs. Kenneth Dee Lashaw and Miss Patsy Cobb, all of Dallas; Mrs. Elmo Foster, Oklahoma City, and Mrs. John Hunt, Ardmore, and his mother Mrs. Hattie Cobb, Thackerville.

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by Bill Hamilton, Staff Writer