

Trooper James M. Bava

Badge #162
EOW ... August 28, 2015

When I met Trooper James M. Bava, if I would have had any idea that we would soon lose him, I would have told him to turn around and find another career. That would have saved his and the Patrol family the pain of mourning his early passing. However, because only God knows the future, I had the pleasure of becoming acquainted with one of the finest men ever to become a member of the Missouri State Highway Patrol. In the short 20 months he was in our zone, he positively influenced us and many others, leaving us lamenting that we did not have more time with him.

My first day with James as his field training officer, I recognized quickly there was something different about him. He was quiet and humble with a generous smile and a sharp mind. James reserved his speech only for positive conversations and comments, and never spoke ill of anyone. As time went on, I noticed

Tpr. James Bava, his fiancée Rose, Pastor Jonathan & Mrs. Shanna Rector shared a close friendship.

he never complained, but I thought that might be only because he did not want to be evaluated poorly for his attitude. I later understood that James' attitude was always positive and he did not complain—ever. What few words he spoke were consistently kind and uplifting. He was a great conversationalist, but rarely initiated discussion. With time, I learned that James' positive speech and attitude were merely two of many manifestations of his good heart—a heart he had devoted to his Savior, Jesus Christ.

After the funeral, I became more acquainted with James' family. By getting to know his family, it became clear why James was the good, God-loving man he was. I heard stories about several sacrificial and loving acts of his, and I was disappointed he had never shared them with me. But, that was who he was. He was a humble, loving servant that rarely spoke about himself and





Tpr. James Bava takes part in stop and approach exercises during recruit training. Tpr. Bava was a member of the 97th Recruit Class.

never bragged. After knowing James and later learning so much about him, both my wife and I have since committed ourselves to be more like James in our endeavor to be more like Christ—to be humble servants who speak ill of no one. In our minds, James was an example of which the apostle Paul speaks in 1 Corinthians 11:1, “Imitate me just as I also imitate Christ.”

Although I made a feeble attempt, it is difficult to do justice to the memory of such a good man. Trooper James M. Bava made more of an impression on me in the meager two years I knew him than most people would in a lifetime. Even so, he was gone too soon and I miss him. August 28, 2015 was a day that will forever live in my heart, as a fine man left me longing for more time with him on this planet. As Sergeant Doug B. McPike, Troop F, said, “It was an honor to serve with James, and I feel blessed to have known him. I’ll miss him, and I’ll never forget him.”

(This article by Cpl. Bruce A. McLaughlin, Troop F, first appeared in the September/October 2015 issue of the Patrol News.)

It is impossible to sum up a man’s life with a few words, pictures, and testimonies; but, a man like James told his own story by the way he lived. Ask anyone who knew James, he was a man of Godly character, integrity, and love. I met James in January 2009, at Greenville College in Greenville, IL. James was sitting in a barren college dorm inside of Holtwick Hall reading a book while the rest of second floor was busy with move-in day. After a floor mate of mine pointed out a new face sitting alone, I quickly approached James. I asked him what he was doing (as he was obviously reading a book). With a quick and sly smile he replied, “Reading a book.” Instantly, James and I began a conversation and, little did I know, a best friendship.

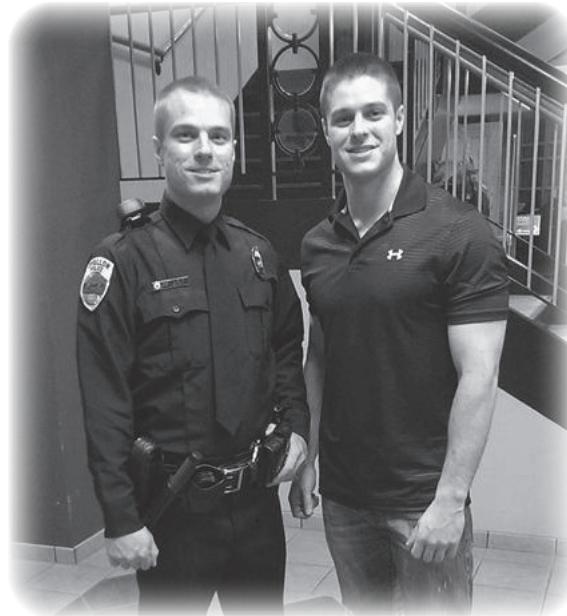
That semester seemed like four years with James and our crew. We laughed, cried, and made memories that will last a lifetime. James and I enjoyed playing baseball, lifting weights, and pranking others. He was very intelligent, quick witted, and easily became a friend magnet. James was always a man who knew what he wanted, but took his time getting there. He knew he wanted to become a police officer. He liked photography, but he loved the idea of law enforcement even more. He was driven, selfless, and everything he said or did was always out of love. He saw his future fiancée Rose, and he knew he would marry her one day. He was planning to until his life ended abruptly August 28, 2015.

James and I remained close until the day he died. He stood in my wedding, and he had asked me to stand in his. Excitedly, I shared the good news of my wife and I’s new baby due in February 2016, and he was excited to be Uncle Jamesy. He was a dedicated family man, friend, and loved Rose with all his heart. James will always be one of the best men I know. College was

exciting for us, full of memories, but we were more excited for days to come. His future was bright, and he loved his career. I saw how proud he was of his older brother, Joshua, for being a police officer, and I knew he enjoyed sharing in the duty of protecting and serving others.

James died as he lived: a hero. I know he saved at least two other friends from depression and suicide. He modeled his faith in Jesus Christ daily, and rarely had to say anything. His infectious smile and loving attitude made it to where anyone could be friends with him. When I met him at Greenville College I was not a follower of Jesus Christ. He impacted me greatly by co-leading a Bible study on my floor, encouraging me to go to church with him or student-led chapel, and having great one-on-one talks whether it was theology or talking through an issue. Because of James, I later dedicated my life to Jesus Christ and am now a pastor.

James Bava will always be my best friend, role model, and hero. James valiantly went to Ferguson, MO, twice to keep the peace, and never had one bad thing to say about anyone there. He was quick to defend his law enforcement family, but was just as quick to call them out if they were in the wrong. The death of my best friend James Matthew Bava is hard to bear. But, as he encouraged me to remember: God is control. I was honored to speak at his funeral, meet his law enforcement family, and spend time mourning with his family. His family is a direct representation of who James was, and it warms my heart to see a family so devoted to God and each other.



Joshua and James Bava posed for this picture on the day Joshua was sworn in as an officer with the O'Fallon (MO) Police Department.

Thank you to the Missouri State Highway Patrol for your professionalism, dedication, and love you displayed through this great tragedy. Thank you to the Bava family for your love and the opportunity to know your son, brother, and loved one. May God bless the Bava family, law enforcement community, and those mourning James Bava.

James, I cannot wait to see you again in Heaven.

(This article by Pastor Jonathan Rector, a close friend of Tpr. Bava's, first appeared in the September/October 2015 Patrol News.)

It has been almost two weeks since you have passed from this life. Even as we prepared for and held the services and memorials for you we still can't believe that you're gone. We keep looking at the front door, hoping that at any minute you will walk in with your gym bag full of dirty clothes and give us that typical, "Hey, what's up?" Then you'd look at us with a big smile on your face and give us both a hug while saying you missed us. We miss your smile and the humor that always made us laugh. We remember when you were very young and you loved tagging along

whenever we had to make a quick run somewhere. You always loved to be close by mom and dad. While you grew up to be a strong and confident young man you also grew in compassion, understanding, and forgiveness. Even when you teased one of the family, it was never mean-spirited, but always in fun. We are so proud of you, son.

Throughout your entire life you met and made many friends. All of them experienced what a wonderful, giving, and loving young man you are. Every person you met seems to have a story about how funny, helpful, dedicated, and loyal you are, James. You had an amazing gift of making every person you met instantly feel comfortable. We are so proud of you as a person and how you lived your life. You chose to live it with laughter and love and openly shared your Christian faith with anyone who was willing to listen.

You loved your friends and family unconditionally. Even when mom and dad nagged at you your love was unwavering. We have always had a loving relationship with you, son, and for that we are forever blessed. There were so many things we wanted to say at the funeral services, but couldn't because we were still trying to understand all that had just happened. However, we do want everyone to know what a perfect son you were. Beyond the great big smile was a great big heart with tremendous capacity to love others. You lived life to the fullest and were preparing to move into the next phase of your life—marriage and then children. Your legacy will be carried on by those you left behind.

Tpr. James M. Bava stands between his parents, Jim and Alyce, after the 97th Recruit Class graduation ceremony in 2013.

Their lives are forever changed because of you.

Holding your funeral was the most difficult thing we have ever done. No parent should ever have to bury their child. Living life without your smiles, hugs, and laughter is so difficult. You were our third child and one of the greatest blessings in our lives. The overwhelming love and support we received from your friends is helping us through this difficult time. We felt your hugs from every friend of yours who came up to us. Our family is stronger because of you. This is because everyone loves you, James.

As painful as it is to laugh without you physically by our side we will choose to do so. That is the lesson you've taught us. Thank you for the life lessons. Thank you for loving us. Thank you for the best 25 years of our life. Thank you for your hugs and kisses. Thank you for enduring life with gratitude. Thank you for coming home every birthday and holiday and occasional weekends. Thank you for being so understanding and forgiving. Thank you for openly sharing your Christian faith. Thank you for being a great son, brother,



uncle, and friend. Thank you for the honor of being called your mom and dad.

We love you very much, James. We miss you so much it hurts. We hold to the promise of our Heavenly Father that we will see you again in Heaven when we leave this life.

Love always,
Mom and Dad

“I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die.” John 11:25-26

(This article by Mr. Jim and Mrs. Alyce Bava first appeared in the September/October 2015 issue of the Patrol News.)

Trooper James M. Bava (#162), 25, died in a one-vehicle traffic crash in Audrain County. Tpr. Bava radioed he observed a motorcyclist commit a traffic violation on Missouri Route FF in Audrain County. A few minutes later, communications operators at Troop F Headquarters in Jefferson City attempted to contact Tpr. Bava by radio and did not receive a response. At 8:35 a.m., Troop F received a report regarding a Missouri State Highway Patrol vehicle being involved in a single vehicle crash on Route FF, just east of Audrain Road 977. Emergency responders arrived on the scene and confirmed Tpr. Bava had been killed in the crash. In November 2015, the Audrain County Prosecuting Attorney's Office charged a 20-year-old Mexico, MO, man with second-degree murder, resisting a lawful stop, resisting a member of the Missouri State



Tpr. James Bava, his fiancée Rose.

Highway Patrol in discharge of his official duties, careless and imprudent driving, exceeding the speed limit, and failure to register a motor vehicle with the Department of Revenue.

Tpr. Bava was survived by his parents, fiancée, three sisters, and a brother. Tpr. Bava is the 31st member of the Patrol to make the Ultimate Sacrifice.