



## Trooper Kelly L. Poynter

Badge #1191  
EOW ... January 18, 2002

I can vividly remember getting to know Kelly before I actually had the pleasure of meeting him face to face. When I was in recruit training, I lived in Houston, MO, and shared a ride to and from Jefferson City with Kelly's uncle, Neal Poynter, Troop I. Neal would always speak highly of Kelly, and it seemed every story he would tell about Kelly included hunting, fishing, or a comical thing Kelly would do or say. It seemed like every story Neal would tell about Kelly would end in an uncontrolled outburst of laughter. From what Neal had told me, I knew I had to meet Kelly just to find out what kind of a character he actually was.

When I was first assigned out of the Academy, I was assigned to Troop G, Zone 1, Wright County. A short time later, Kelly transferred from Zone 4, Carter/Reynolds counties, to Zone 2, Texas County. I remember one of the first times Kelly and I worked the same shift in adjoining zones. The zone Kelly was previously assigned to did not have any divided highways and Kelly was not accustomed to crossing the median. We were working close enough together that night I could hear his radio traffic to Troop G radio.

I remember him stopping a few cars and running a few operators' license checks just

like any normal night. As the night passed, I overheard his radio traffic as he contacted Troop G radio and requested a wrecker for a full-sized Ford Crown Victoria stuck in the median. I could tell by the tone in his voice and his demeanor, the full-sized Crown Victoria in the median was his patrol car. I quickly headed eastbound and drove past him a couple of times while shining my spotlight in his eyes. I never stopped or said a word on the radio. The next time I ran into him at a training session, I caught all kinds of grief from him, including a few expletives. Kelly was the type of person that would have done the same thing to you, and he was one to appreciate the humor. This was the beginning of our friendship.

Kelly loved the outdoors and he loved having a good time. When Kelly and I would go do something together, you did not want to do anything embarrassing. Kelly would get the biggest kick out of telling everybody he knew, even total strangers about this stupid thing his buddy did, and he would get great satisfaction out of embellishing on the circumstances of the event. After he finished the story, then he would smile at you with that boyish grin and burst out in the one and only Kelly Poynter laugh. Anyone who knew Kelly knows the laugh I am talking about. That was probably one reason Kelly was always late—he loved to tell stories and talk to people everywhere he went.

The one time I can remember getting the best of Kelly (which was not very often) was when he bought a new jet boat. He called and told me he had his new boat, and he

wanted to go to the river and learn the upper part of Current River where I run my boat. We met one Sunday and off to the river we went for Kelly's maiden voyage in his new boat. He followed me up the river for several miles. I would periodically look back to see if he was still following. One time when I looked back, Kelly was nowhere to be seen. I turned around and started running back down the river only to find Kelly and Alison trying to pull his new boat off the gravel bar with about a two-inch hole in the bottom. We stuffed some T-shirts or whatever we could find into the hole in the bottom of the boat, so he could get it back to the landing.

I remember looking back to see if he was following and there was a fountain of water

spraying up from the bottom of the boat into Alison's eyes. She was not very happy. The next time we saw someone, he told them to be sure and not follow me up the river, because I would sure make a guy have a boat wreck. I defended myself by telling the person I had gone through the exact same place, and I did not hit anything, and boat wrecks only happen when you put a rookie behind the wheel. This was the one and only time I can remember Kelly being speechless and not having a comeback.

I remember one time when Kelly and Alison, Trooper Curtis Hubbs and Gina, and I were camping at Big Spring Park in Van Buren, MO. We sat by the campfire telling war stories (lies) to each other and laughing about different things we had all experienced until our sides and our heads hurt so bad we couldn't sleep. Early the next morning, I walked to the nearest restroom and all I heard around the restroom were people talking about not being able to get any sleep because of the girl at the campsite down on the end giggling all night. I immediately knew they were talking about the one and only Kelly Poynter laugh. I went back to the campsite and told Kelly that every person in the campground thought he laughed like a little girl. I think his response was, "We'll have to do it again tonight. Got to make sure all the tourists get their money's worth."



*The Kelly L. Poynter family: Alison, Nathan, Kaleb, and Kelly.*



*You're never too young to go hunting with Dad! Left, Kaleb is all smiles sitting on the tailgate of Kelly's truck. Below, Nathan is impressed with the turkey Dad brought home.*

Kelly was one of the most personable, caring, honest people you could ever meet. Every time I would be feeling down, Kelly could sense it and he would call and check on me and see if there was anything he could do to help. I have been with him on several occasions when he would do the same for others. We would be going somewhere and he would make a comment about how someone he talked to the other day seemed to be down and out. Shortly after that he would either be talking to them on the phone, or we would be sitting in their driveway. Nobody could be around Kelly for very long and not be in a good mood. He was always jovial and positive, no matter what the situation.

Kelly dearly loved his family and especially his boys. He was always bragging on Kaleb and Nathan. The night prior to Kelly's death, he and his oldest son, Kaleb, and my son, Bailey, and I went gigging on the Current River. Kaleb and Bailey enjoyed that night more than any two kids I have ever seen. Kelly called me the next morning and was already planning the next gigging trip



with the boys, because he loved to see kids have a good time. Kids always had a good time around Kelly. Unfortunately, that gigging trip never came. Kelly was a devoted and loving father; I think he was a kid at heart himself.

As the days, weeks, and years pass, people come and go in a person's life. But, the experiences and memories I shared with Kelly will be with me forever. Kelly made





*Nathan found a four-legged friend while attending the National Law Enforcement Memorial ceremony in May 2003.*

the world a happier place. I thank God for giving me the opportunity to have had such a special person in my life. Kelly, someday when we meet again it will be in a place where the fish are always biting, the deer are always within 40 yards of the deer stand, and there are no boat-killing rocks in the river.

You will always be remembered.

*(Corporal Bryan C. Gruben, Troop D, wrote this article in 2005. Sergeant Bryan Gruben is currently assigned to the Field Operations Bureau.)*

I could tell you a lot of things about Kelly, but everyone close to him already know these things. Because of that, I am going to be selfish, and tell you about a perfect day in my life and the way I will remember my brother.

Late one night at work Kelly says, "Curtis, let's go fishing tomorrow."



*Tpr. Curtis W. Hubbs, Troop G, holds the paper while Kaleb makes a rubbing of his dad's name at the National Law Enforcement Memorial in Washington, D.C., May 2003.*

I tell him, "Don't twist my arm, and I will go with you."

The first step in this process is to ask Nathan if we can borrow his boat to go fishing without taking him on this trip. This is a very tough task, because Nathan and Kaleb love going on the river with Daddy. But, we get approval, and Kelly tells me to meet him at his house in the morning.

I arrive at the house to see Kelly with that big Kelly grin standing in his driveway already laughing about something that probably happened days ago. We load up and we are off. We get on the river and the only cares we had were seeing who could tell the most embellished story — of course, all of the details being completely accurate. We fish until we need a break, then we find us a gravel bar.

Kelly begins throwing a folding dining room table and chairs onto the gravel bar. I just looked on. Kelly then digs a hole in the rocks and throws in some charcoal. And, yes, Bryan, he did tell me that he learned this technique from you. We throw on some bratwurst and we sit back in our chairs, looking at the river and laughing until tears come from our eyes.

At this time .... in this moment, we could not imagine being any place else. This is a perfect day with my brother on the river, which will be in my heart forever. Kelly, I love you, and you will always be with me.

*(The article written by Tpr. Curtis W. Hubbs, Troop G, originally appeared in the March 2002 issue of the Patrol News.)*

*Trooper Kelly L. Poynter was survived by his wife, Alison, and their two sons, Kaleb and Nathan. Tpr. Poynter, 27, was killed while working a traffic crash on U.S. Highway 63 two miles south of Houston, MO, on January 18, 2002. While he was investigating the initial crash, another vehicle struck and killed him. The driver of the car, who had been drinking, was charged with involuntary*

*manslaughter. At Trooper Poynter's funeral, blue balloons with messages from his sons were released during the graveside ceremony. As they moved toward heaven, R. Kelly's "I Believe I Can Fly" accompanied them. Everyone present felt the depth of this family's loss when they saw Tpr. Poynter's youngest son wave goodbye to the balloons as they floated away.*

*At a ceremony on October 25, 2002, a portion of U.S. Highway 63 was designated the Trooper Kelly L. Memorial Highway. Trooper Kelly L. Poynter was the 22nd member of the Patrol to make the Ultimate Sacrifice.*



*Alison, Nathan, and Kaleb Poynter, and Missouri Representative Don Koller unveil the Trooper Kelly L. Poynter sign at a ceremony on October 25, 2002.*