

MPO BOOKER SHACKELFORD

YEARS OF SERVICE | 1973-1979

Booker Shackelford began his career in law enforcement with the City of Norman in 1973; becoming the first African American police officer in the history of the department.

SHACKELFORD'S ROAD TO NPD

Booker Shackelford received his Bachelor of Science Degree in Education with a minor in History from Northeastern State College where he played football. Often described as a giant of man by stature and spirit, Shackelford stood 6'3 and weighed around 270 pounds.

Upon graduation from Northeastern, Shackelford continued his education at the University of Oklahoma (OU) and pursued a second degree in Physical Therapy. Shackelford was a charter member of OU's first African American Fraternity, Alpha Phi Alpha, Zeta Zeta Chapter. While at OU, Shackelford met his wife of 40 years, Sherryl. Sherryl explained that she was the one to first present the idea of law enforcement to her husband. As newlyweds, Sherryl worked for NPD's Records Division and learned the department was hiring for the next police academy. After weighing all options, Shackelford believed joining NPD was something he wanted to do.

SHACKELFORD'S TENURE WITH NPD

Booker Shackelford was a graduate of the 10th Norman Police Academy in April 1973. Shackelford rose to the rank of Master Police Officer and served as a member of the NPD Special Weapons and Tactics Team (SWAT) for six years. Shackelford left NPD in 1979 when he was offered a job opportunity with General Motors.

CONTINUED INFLUENCE AFTER NPD

Booker Shackelford would go to work for General Motors for over 20 years before returning to law enforcement. Upon his return to law enforcement, he was employed by the Cleveland County Sheriff's Office as a School Resource Officer. When the program was cut by the Sheriff's Office, Shackelford would go on to work for the Norman Public Schools Police Department where he continued his career until his passing in 2010. Shackelford loved his career as a School Resource Officer.

Shackelford was a man of faith and was active in his church serving in many capacities. Shackelford's life exemplified service. In 2010, Shackelford was posthumously awarded the City of Norman's Human Rights Award for his devoted service to his community.



"SHACKELFORD'S APPEARANCE AND DEMEANOR COMPELLED ME TO PURSUE A CAREER IN LAW ENFORCEMENT."

- Terry Sterling, Retired OKCPD Officer



WORDS FROM THOSE WHO KNEW AND WORKED ALONGSIDE SHACKELFORD

SHERRYL SHACKELFORD

Booker was a gentle and kind man. Sherryl told of a story about a plumber that came to do work on her home. The plumber noticed a photograph on her wall of Shackelford and asked how she knew him. Sherryl explained that it was her husband. Tears began to swell in the eyes of the plumber as he told a story about her husband. The plumber explained his son was troubled and involved with the wrong groups of people. One day Shackelford arrived at his home and asked if he could take his son for ice cream. The plumber explained he does not know what was said during this conversation but explained this encounter helped change the trajectory of his son's life.

RETIRED NPS CHIEF & NPD OFFICER | HAROLD STAFFORD

Harold Stafford worked with Booker during the mid-1970s, while an officer at the Norman Police Department. Retired Chief Stafford detailed Booker as a great guy, a gentle giant and a Christian man. "He was a great example of a human being, a real man. He was a man of God and always had a bible with him. I rarely saw him get angry, but when he did, he would just lift them in the air and to get their attention. When we were on patrol together, I heard a story about Booker having to respond to an apartment complex in regards to a disturbance at the pool. One of the residents called Booker a racial slur. Booker walked over to the guy, picked him up, and told him to never say that again. The guy got the message. Booker usually laughed things off and never abused or hurt anyone. He worked for me when I was the Norman Public Schools Chief. He changed a lot of lives. He was a mentor, and was more of a counselor than a police officer. He worked in the Alternative School and set an example for everyone he came in contact with. I didn't have to go out to the school that Booker was assigned because he'd handle everything. I never had to back him. People were drawn to him and never met a stranger. It was a sad day when I learned he passed away."

"HE CHANGED A LOT OF LIVES. HE WAS A MENTOR, AND WAS MORE OF A COUNSELOR THAN A POLICE OFFICER."

- Harold Stafford, Retired NPD Officer & Retired Norman Public Schools Chief of Police

RETIRED OKLAHOMA CITY POLICE OFFICER | TERRY STERLING

Terry Sterling, a retired Oklahoma City Police Department Officer, explained he never personally knew Shackelford, however, Shackelford had an impact on his pursuit of a career in law enforcement. While Sterling was in high school, Shackelford came and spoke to his class. Sterling said Shackelford's appearance and demeanor compelled him to pursue his career in law enforcement.

RETIRED NORMAN CHIEF OF POLICE | PHIL COTTEN

Retired Chief Phil Cotten, Norman Chief of Police from 1996 to 2011, worked with Booker when he was a young officer in the early 1970s. Chief Cotten fondly remembered Booker as a “giant teddy bear” that “got along with everyone.” Cotten reminisced that Booker would often drive around in his patrol car “sort of slouched down, so people thought he was a little guy, until he exited his patrol unit. He would sort of unfold as he got out of the car and he would just keep unfolding, getting larger and larger and you realized that he was a mountain of a man!” Cotten recalled fondly that the police department had a “football team” and they’d play the fire department and other teams from time to time. Booker played running back and he just “plowed through folks.” Booker was a great man who is greatly missed.

RETIRED NPD DETECTIVE | DAN PRYKRYL

Retired Norman Police Department Detective Dan Prykryl worked briefly with Booker during the mid-1970s. He described Booker as a nice guy and great human being. "He was a smart officer that he never heard anyone complain about."

NPD DEPUTY CHIEF | RICKY JACKSON

"As a rookie officer I would often hear stories of Booker Shackleford from officers that had worked alongside him and citizens that knew him when he worked for Norman PD. I would meet Booker on occasion, when I had business at the alternative school or the Cleveland County Courthouse. Booker was the first African American police officer for the Norman Police Department and I was the third. I was curious about his experiences, being the first black police officer in Norman, in comparison to my experiences. How much had changed and how much had remained the same? I would chat briefly with Booker from time to time, but never had the opportunity to talk at length. I told him once that I'd like to get with him and talk about a few things, about his experiences and he was open to that. There was no sense of urgency as neither of us were old men. Unfortunately, we never got the chance. My impression of Booker was that he was a kind, gentle, friendly and personable individual. He was easy to talk to and laid back. The lesson I learned from Booker was to not put things off. Seize the opportunity while you have it. There are no guarantees that you can do tomorrow what you could have done today. I was saddened at his passing, but had an opportunity to provide a service to him and his family in another capacity. As the commander of the police Honor Guard detail assigned to render honors at his funeral ceremony. "

