

James Milton Powell

May 13, 1914 - July 18, 2005

James Powell was born on his family's farm in Chapel Hill, Tennessee, the eldest child of Milton Thomas Powell (1879-1958) and Aurora Ethel (Ralston) Powell (1889-1972)¹, grandson of James Andrew Ralston (1851-1937), and great-grandson of Andrew Ralston (1798-1863).



Powell Family

When he was 20 years old, James left Tennessee in the midst of the Great Depression and moved to Washington D.C. in search of work. He worked various jobs, including insurance salesman and hotel bell hop. In 1938 he married Dorothy Forsht (1914-2008) of Blair Co, Pennsylvania.² James attended Southeastern University in D.C. 1938-1939.³

¹ U.S. Congressional Record: Hon. Robert W. Ney on July 28, 2005, honoring James M. Powell

² *Ibid.*

³ <http://prabook.com/web/person-view.html?profileId=1456480>

In 1940, while working at Hotel Washington in D.C., James was described as having a dark complexion, brown eyes and black hair. He was 5'8" tall and 170 pounds.⁴ He was also described as a "stocky man, with wavy hair."⁵

Later in 1940, he joined the District of Columbia Metropolitan Police Department (MPDC) and spent six years in the 5th Precinct where he started as a patrolman. He was promoted to Precinct Detective in 1944 and then to Detective Sergeant in 1946, when he was assigned to the Robbery Squad.⁶



In 1953, Powell was promoted to Detective Lieutenant and named the Third District Detective Supervisor.⁷ He graduated from the Federal Bureau of Investigation National Academy in 1955.⁸ In 1958, and after several commendations, he was promoted to Captain and began his work in the U.S. Capitol as supervisor of the Senate Plainclothes Detail. In 1965, he became an inspector and designated chief of the U.S. Capitol Police under the direction of the DC police department.⁹

On December 20, 1979, the Congress enacted Public Law 96-152, signed by President Carter,¹⁰ which created the position of Chief of the Capitol Police appointed by the Capitol Police Board. This law established the Capitol Police as its own independent legislative branch

agency in charge of the safety and security of the Capitol complex.¹¹

In 1980, Congress passed a law retroactively transferring Chief Powell from the Metropolitan Police Department; making him the first federal chief of the U. S. Capitol Police on the rolls of the legislative branch. James served in this capacity until his retirement June 1, 1984, after 44 years, eight months of police service.¹²

⁴ U.S. WWII Draft Cards Young Men, 1940-1947

⁵ <http://www.upi.com/Archives/1984/03/18/Nearly-20-years-as-chief-of-Capitol-Police-from-ant-war-violence-to-terrorist-threats/8065448434000/>

⁶ U.S. Congressional Record: Hon. Robert W. Ney on July 28, 2005, honoring James M. Powell

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ <http://prabook.com/web/person-view.html?profileId=1456480>

⁹ U.S. Congressional Record: Hon. Robert W. Ney on July 28, 2005, honoring James M. Powell

¹⁰ https://www.fredericknewspost.com/archives/a-friend-to-presidents-first-capitol-police-chief-leaves-lifetime/article_5b1326d0-7603-53a4-b5fd-fa593d3713a3.html

¹¹ U.S. Congressional Record: Hon. Robert W. Ney on July 28, 2005, honoring James M. Powell

¹² <http://www.legacy.com/obituaries/fredericknewspost/obituary.aspx?n=james-powell&pid=168453594&fhid=9950>



(WX13)WASHINGTON, May 19--CHECKING HIS NOTES--Chief James M. Powell of the U.S. Capitol police, goes over some material at the witness table as he testifies today at a House Internal Security Committee hearing in Washington. The group is investigating alleged subversion among antiwar groups. Powell said the demonstrators who marched on Congress May 5 were a "riotous mob of people out of control. He ordered the arrest of 1,046 protesters massed on the House steps. (AP Wirephoto)(See AP AAA Wire Story)(rbo41355cpg)1971.

Chief Powell's police career included the capture of one of the Puerto Rican nationals later convicted of the attempted assassination of President Truman in 1950, and protecting the Capitol during the unrest, marches and riots in Washington during the 1960s and 1970s.¹³

¹³ <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/07/20/AR2005072002399.html>



6/28/64 WASHINGTON: Rev. Ralph Abernathy (left) and his contingent were confronted by Capitol Police Chief James Powell at the boundary of the Capitol Grounds.¹⁴

“He was recognized by U.S. presidents and members of the Senate and Congress for his professionalism and leadership. Perhaps his greatest legacy was the transformation of the Capitol Police Force from a group of untrained security guards appointed by members of the Congress to the highly trained professional Capitol Police Force of today that consists of over 1200 officers and officials. Instrumental to that effort was his role in the establishment of the Federal Police Academy at Glynco, Georgia, where his recruits received professional police training; as well as his insistence that a pistol range be installed beneath the Capitol and officers be required to qualify annually. He upgraded police communications, initiated the use of bomb and drug-sniffing dogs, and equipped his officers patrolling the Capitol grounds with bicycles and radios.”¹⁵

¹⁴ *UPI Telephoto*

¹⁵ <http://www.legacy.com/obituaries/fredericknewspost/obituary.aspx?n=james-powell&pid=168453594&fhid=9950>



Chief of Capitol Police, James Powell, Far Right
(1981 photo with members of the DC Police Force, VP Bush and Reagan's jelly beans)¹⁶

After retirement, Chief Powell and his wife, Dorothy, were among the first residents of Lake Linganore, a community in Frederick County, Maryland. The Powell's son Joe said his father entered retirement the way he did everything else -- full steam ahead. "He loved his rose garden."¹⁷

¹⁶ <http://www.dcpolicememorial.org/2016/05/21/dipping-into-president-reagans-jar/>

¹⁷ https://www.fredericknewspost.com/archives/a-friend-to-presidents-first-capitol-police-chief-leaves-lifetime/article_5b1326d0-7603-53a4-b5fd-fa593d3713a3.html



U.S. Capitol Chief of Police Terance Gainer and former Chief James Powell at a ceremony rededicating the Capitol Police Headquarters the 'Eney Chestnut Gibson Memorial Building' after three officers killed in the line of duty four years ago.¹⁸

(May 09, 2003)

Jim Powell said his father had considered writing a book after he retired, but when publishers found out it would only contain humorous snippets about life in and around Washington, they weren't interested.

"My father said he worked a lifetime building integrity, and he wasn't about to destroy it."

Although he turned in his badge in 1984, people continued to call him "Chief."¹⁹

Chief Powell died Monday, July 18, 2005, following a brief illness. He was 91.²⁰

¹⁸ <http://www.gettyimages.fr/detail/photo-d'actualit%C3%A9/capitol-chief-of-police-terance-gainer-and-former-photo-d'actualit%C3%A9/99294930#capitol-chief-of-police-terance-gainer-and-former-chief-james-powell-picture-id99294930>

¹⁹ https://www.fredericknewspost.com/archives/a-friend-to-presidents-first-capitol-police-chief-leaves-lifetime/article_5b1326d0-7603-53a4-b5fd-fa593d3713a3.html

²⁰ *Ibid.*

This remembrance was read into the U.S. Congressional Record by Hon. Robert W. Ney on July 28, 2005, honoring James M. Powell, the first Chief of the U.S. Capitol Police:

HONORING THE PASSING OF CHIEF OF POLICE JAMES M. POWELL, THE FIRST CHIEF OF THE UNITED STATES CAPITOL POLICE

HON. ROBERT W. NEY

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 28, 2005

Mr. NEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the passing of Chief James M. Powell, the first Chief of our United States Capitol Police following the separation from the DC Metropolitan Police Department. Chief Powell had a long distinguished career in law enforcement that lasted over four decades and culminated in his work transforming the Capitol Police force into a first-rate Federal law enforcement agency.

He was born on a farm in Chapel Hill, Tennessee on May 13, 1914. Like so many others during the Great Depression, he came to Washington in 1934 to look for work. While working at various jobs in DC he met and married his wife Dorothy E. Forsht on June 4, 1938.

Finally settling on a career, he joined the DC Metropolitan Police Department in 1940. He spent six years in the 5th Precinct where he started as a patrolman. He was promoted to Precinct Detective in 1944 and then to Detective Sergeant in 1946, when he was assigned to the Robbery Squad.

In 1953, Mr. Powell was promoted to Detective Lieutenant and named the Third District Detective Supervisor. Five years and several commendations later, he was promoted to Captain and began his work in the U.S. Capitol as supervisor of the Senate Plainclothes Detail. In 1965, he became an inspector and designated chief of the U.S.

Capitol Police under the direction of the DC police department.

On December 20, 1979, the Congress enacted Public Law 96-152. This act created the position of Chief of the Capitol Police appointed by the Capitol Police Board. This law established the Capitol Police as its own independent legislative branch agency in charge of the safety and security of the Capitol complex. Mr. Powell was appointed to be the first Chief of the reorganized U.S. Capitol Police.

Chief Powell not only served with distinction by protecting the legislative branch, but he managed to earn recognition for his protection of the executive branch as well. While on Metropolitan police detail protecting President Harry S. Truman, he apprehended one of the Puerto Rican nationalists during the attempted assassination in 1950.

Mr. Powell retired from the U.S. Capitol Police on September 30, 1984. I am sure I speak on behalf of all the Members of the House of Representatives in expressing our gratitude for his dedicated service.

Our deepest sympathies and prayers go out to his wife, Dorothy; his three sons, Jim, John, and Joe; his sister; three grandchildren; and three great-grandchildren.

Capitol Bomb Made of Dynamite: Expert

BY PHILIP WARDEN
(Chicago Tribune Press Service)

WASHINGTON, March 2—An Army ordnance expert told Senate investigators today he believes 15 to 20 pounds of dynamite were used in the bomb detonated in the Senate Wing of the Capitol early yesterday.

Police sources said the Federal Bureau of Investigation has some good leads on the bomber but that a strong case will be built before there are any arrests. The bombing was not the work of an individual, the police sources reported.

Atty. Gen. John Mitchell and President Nixon discussed the bombing at the White House. Mitchell said so far there has been no indication of a conspiracy. He would not comment on a report that "Weather Underground" claimed credit. He observed persons not involved have claimed credit for past bombings.

Tells of Threats

Chief J. M. Powell of the Capitol police testified at a hearing of the Senate public works subcommittee on public buildings and grounds. He said that threats of additional bombings were received yesterday.

"Just yesterday we received six threats," Powell said. "If we had complied with each threat, there would have been no Congress."

Both the Senate and the House held regular sessions in their respective chambers yesterday as members ignored the bomb damage and the threats.

The bomb exploded at 1:30 a. m. in an unmarked men's room in the oldest part of the Capitol. The Capitol switchboard operator had received a telephoned warning one half hour earlier.

Contents of Warning

It said: "This building will blow up in 30 minutes. You will get many calls like this, but this is real. Evacuate the building. This is in protest of

the Nixon involvement in Laos."

The bomb wrecked the furnishings in adjoining offices which were Capitol "hideaways" of two senior senators, smashed construction glass, tile and sandstone walls in the area, and damaged some Capitol art work.

George M. White, architect of the Capitol, told the hearing that his office estimates that it will cost \$300,000 or more to repair the damages.

Capt. Edwin Joyner of the 67th Ordnance Battalion, Fort McNair, told the subcommittee that "we can't really tell you" what the bomb was. But he said it probably was detonated with a timing device.

"Easy to Bring In"

"It likely could have been dynamite," Joyner said. "The amount—15 to 20 pounds of dynamite. That amount of dynamite was very easy to bring in in a suitcase."

Capitol policeman familiar with dynamite said that would be a bomb of 30 to 40 sticks, since one stick weighs about one-half pound.

Joyner said the estimate of the size of the bomb was made by "just looking at the damages and using our past experience."

Joyner said it would have been easy for a man to walk into the Capitol with other visitors Sunday afternoon [the building was open until 4:30 p. m.] and place a briefcase containing the bomb and walk off.

Placed Behind Wall

"It was placed behind a marble wall, a false wall," Joyner said. "That is what our first impression was."

Robert Dunphy, Senate sergeant at arms and chairman this year of the congressional employees responsible for the Capitol Police Force, said bomb threats seem to be made against the Capitol in groups.

"We'll get a number and then go for some time and not get any," Dunphy said. "As they



[AP Wirephoto]

James M. Powell (left), chief of the Capitol police, confers with Senate Sgt.-at-arms Robert Dunphy as they testify at Capitol bombing probe.

are received, they are evaluated. We have a standard procedure on how to handle such threats. We conduct our own search. We were in the process of doing that, as I understand it, this morning [when the explosion occurred].

"We have six huge buildings. The Capitol is like a Swiss cheese. It's full of all kinds of passages and tunnels. There are 158 acres of grounds."

Question on Threat

"Was this considered a real threat? Asked Sen John V. Tunney [D., Cal.].

"They're all considered real threats," Dunphy said.

Powell told Tunney of yesterday's six threats and said that the callers often fail to make clear which building on Capitol Hill is involved. Powell said

that besides the Capitol there are three House office buildings and two Senate office buildings, all of which have been threatened with bombings. Powell said that since the majority of bombers place their explosive devices on the outside of target buildings, the building surroundings must be checked as well as the building itself.

Assessing the Damage

Powell had told a press conference yesterday that the 15 police on duty at the Capitol began their search once the Sunday night bomb threat was received. The men's room where the bomb exploded was not checked after the threat because it had been checked less than an hour earlier.

White, in assessing the bomb damage for the committee, reported that "by and large, it can be safely said that the structural integrity [of the

Capitol] has not been damaged."

The West Front has not been damaged at all," White said. "It has not been damaged in any way."

The West Front of the Capitol and its possible restoration has been a subject of bitter debate in Congress for the last several years. The late George Stewart, White's predecessor, wanted the West Front rebuilt, warning that vibrations from helicopters, airplanes or a large explosion might cause the badly cracked and no longer plumb walls to crumble. Stewart directed the rebuilding of the East Front of the Capitol, replacing the crumbling sandstone with marble.

Center of Controversy

Much of the controversy over the West Front has concerned whether it should be rebuilt where it stands, or moved farther west to provide additional office space, restroom facilities for tourists and possibly a restaurant for tourists.

Altho the bomb exploded in the western half of the Senate Wing, White said the labyrinth construction of the section completed in 1800 dissipated the explosion and saved the West Front from damage. White said one of the masonry piers which support the arches of the building "has substantial broken pieces." But it appears the pier can be repaired without any problem, he said.

Nearly 20 years as chief of Capitol Police; from ant-war violence to terrorist threats

By ROBERT MACKAY | March 18, 1984

WASHINGTON -- The visions come rushing back to James Powell - violent anti-war demonstrations, an emergency meeting with the vice president, threats of terrorism.

He remembers the elderly House Speaker, John McCormack, pleading with police to haul down a Viet Cong flag hoisted high by anti-war protesters on the Capitol steps.

He remembers a threat by one group to take over the House and place the president of the United States on trial for war crimes, which prompted a high-level strategy meeting with Vice President Hubert Humphrey.

And he amusingly recalls, as if it were yesterday, the drunken senator who drove his car into a streetcar garage and complained the streetcar was in the wrong place.

What is most surprising is Powell, who will be 70 in May, can recall the exact date each of these events occurred.

Powell will retire in June after 19 years as chief of the Capitol Police -- the force assigned solely to protect the Capitol, its office buildings and the people who work within them. He has been a cop for 44 years.

A stocky man with wavy, white hair, Powell has seen the force grow from 196 officers to 1,222, some of them specially trained in anti-terrorist tactics. They even have their own contingent of bomb-sniffing dogs.

'It's been pleasant, in spite of bombs and different things and terrorists,' Powell said in an interview at police headquarters, a decrepit red brick building three blocks from the Capitol.

His office is small and dreary, with its one dirty window letting in little light. His large wooden desk, cluttered with papers, dominates the room. The dark wood-paneled walls are decorated with framed pictures of presidents and other VIPs

shaking his hand. It is a slum compared to other Capitol offices.

Leaning back in his desk chair, his large hands clutching his eyeglasses in his lap, Powell reminisced about being hired in 1940 by the Metropolitan Police Department, his early undercover work and his assignment in 1958 to the Capitol.

'They painted such a rosy picture of a nice assignment,' Powell said of the officers who persuaded him to work in the Capitol. 'Now that the Korean War had wound down, Congress was going to adjourn every August.

'I found soon after I was up here, however, that Congress wasn't necessarily going to adjourn in July or August. In all of my time here, I don't think they've ever done that.

'I'm not complaining. It's been a challenging experience.'

The Capitol Police unit was created in 1828, but it was seldom needed. That changed in the early 1950s, when a group of Puerto Ricans shot some congressmen on the House floor. The force became more permanent, but remained small. That changed with the protest demonstrations of the 1960s.

'One time we had group that pledged to march on the Capitol and take over the House of Representatives by force and try the president for being a war criminal,' recalled Powell, who became Chief of Police in 1965.

Powell said he forced the issue of how to handle the threat when he told House Speaker McCormack, 'This group will get into the Capitol over my dead body and I'm not planning to die.'

A concerned McCormack quickly set up a strategy meeting among Powell, the attorney general and Vice President Humphrey, where all agreed to back Powell if force were needed to keep the group out of the Capitol.

The protesters never got that far.

'Fortunately for me, they sat down and blocked the walk and refused to get up,' Powell said.

'Then we had the May Day group -- that was the most challenging I guess of the whole thing. They came here with the purpose of shutting down the whole city.

'The hardline group planned to take over the Capitol, which was on a Wednesday, May 5, 1971. The main body swung around to Pennsylvania Avenue and marched up there. The House was in session. They were trying to break into the speaker's office. We had barricaded it.

'One had taken off all his clothes. Others were urinating in public, smoking marijuana, drinking liquor. Some would pull up their pants and sit down and defecate in public and everything else.

'They had a Viet Cong flag flying. The speaker says, 'Please get that flag down.' I'm getting all this over the radio.

'To me, if there ever was a disorderly group, this was it. Members of Congress would come out and say, 'Chief, you've got to do something about this and we'll back you'.'

Powell ordered the protesters to get off of the Capitol steps. When they refused, his officers arrested 1,200. The police were later sued for civil rights violations and were found liable for \$12 million in damages.

'We were tried; they weren't tried,' Powell lamented.

But, he sighed with no apparent bitterness, 'It was just the times, you know?'

In 1971, a bomb exploded in the first-floor washroom on the Senate side of the Capitol.

'The need for security was becoming more obvious,' Powell said.

The bombing led to the installation of closed-circuit television cameras in the Capitol and an attempt was made to station a police officer at every entrance to the Capitol and its office buildings.

Despite these security measures, another bomb exploded last October in a second-floor hallway of the Senate side of the Capitol. Also, anonymous telephone threats were received.

Security was tightened even more. Now, tourists and press have to pass through metal detectors to enter the buildings, and some sections of the Capitol have been closed off to the general public.

He referred to these measures as his 'frustrations.' But then there were the more humorous moments.

'I remember one time one of the senators -- a real nice fellow - had a little too much to drink. In those days we had the streetcar tracks that used to go under where the drinking fountain is now. He came in there instead of the legislative garage.

'He was blowing his car horn at a streetcar motorman, who was ringing the bell and yelling.

'So he turned to me and said, 'Cap, would you believe that somebody put the damn streetcar tracks in the garage?'

'I told him it didn't surprise me ... and I would have the streetcar tracks moved out of the garage the next day.'

Powell said when he retires June 30, he is 'going to fish a little, relax, get my breath and travel a little.'

The Frederick News-Post

A FRIEND TO PRESIDENTS; First Capitol police chief leaves lifetime of stories, respect

Jul 22, 2005

He rubbed elbows with presidents, dined at the White House, arrested the Rev. Ralph Abernathy, stood tall as farmers drove tractors over city sidewalks and received countless memos from notable Washington characters such as J. Edgar Hoover, vice presidents and members of Congress. James M. Powell, the first chief of the U.S. Capitol Police, also loved to tell stories, wave to children as they waited for the school bus on his Lake Linganore property, and share his roses and tomatoes with neighbors.

Chief Powell died Monday following a brief illness. He was 91.

Although he turned in his badge in 1984 after more than 44 years as a cop, people still called him "Chief."

He worked his way up through the ranks, starting as a rookie with the Metropolitan Police in 1940 after stints as a hotel bellhop and insurance salesman.

During a covert operation, he nabbed two men for stealing, and then selling, gas ration coupons. He worked in various bureaus on the force and eventually was promoted to captain with the Metropolitan Police and detailed to its subsidiary, the U.S. Capitol Police.

The Tennessee native with the slow drawl convinced lawmakers that the Capitol Police needed to be an independent entity to effectively protect the nation's capital.

Following an act of Congress signed by President Carter, James Powell was officially sworn in as head of the new, independent force.

Respect for all

Colleagues said Chief Powell was successful because he treated everyone with respect, regardless of their standing in society.

"He had a knack for calming everyone," said Assistant Chief James Rohan. "He was quite a man."

Chief Rohan, who grew up down the street from the Powells and is often kidded about cutting their grass, said he admired his mentor's dedication to his officers and the people he served.

When he took over the force, officers worked six days a week, were paid a base salary and were not paid overtime. "The K-9 unit and bomb squads were developed under his watch," Chief Rohan said, adding that Chief Powell promoted training and professionalism. "He also instituted plans for special events He was quite a gentleman."

He said Chief Powell's success can be traced to his knowledge of the personalities of players in Washington, and not just those in high places. He would personally meet with people leading protests to ensure everyone knew the rules.

He wasn't one to run the show from behind a desk. Chief Powell loved being right smack in the middle of it all.

He saved a multitude of photographs and news articles about events, investigations and arrests. A picture of him with the Rev. Abernathy was published in newspapers worldwide.

Chief Powell assisted in the capture of a man who attempted to assassinate President Truman and in the arrest of a suspect in a train robbery.

He kept the peace for legislators as they discussed impeachment issues and listened to Watergate testimony. He was on the streets during the Vietnam protests and was prepared when farmers rolled into town on their big John Deere tractors.

But it wasn't all cops and robbers. Chief Powell and his wife often attended White House functions. Some early invitations were Western Union telegrams, and he was instructed to present them to officials when he arrived.

Candid pictures in his album show Presidents Nixon, Eisenhower, Kennedy, Ford, Carter, Johnson and Bush Sr. Also preserved are mementos of sad times such as JFK's funeral procession.

He arranged for Bette Davis to meet Anwar Sadat, and he chatted with astronauts. Another picture shows him with Washington Redskins Coach Joe Gibbs holding the Super Bowl trophy.

A lasting legacy

"He was involved in everything because he wanted to be," said Robert Howe, a retired officer who is now a security adviser for the Sergeant of Arms for the U.S. House of Representatives.

"He was our founding father," Mr. Howe said. "He was one great human being. He never had an ego."

Chief Powell not only knew every officer, he had a personal relationship with them. "He was loyal to the last. He left a legacy."

"When he took over, officers only got two weeks of training," Mr. Howe said with a laugh. "We basically learned to put on the uniform. The rest we learned from the guys we worked with."

Mr. Howe said Chief Powell had acquaintances and contacts on many levels and didn't hesitate to call on them for help, or vice versa. "I remember Mr. Hoover calling and asking the chief if there was anything the FBI could do to help."

The chief responded by requesting that U.S. Capitol officers be allowed to attend the FBI Academy. Mr. Hoover approved four slots a year, enabling supervisors to get enhanced training.

Chief Powell knew his way around Washington and learned how to get things done, Mr. Howe said, adding that his mentor went about it the right way so not to offend anyone.

The chief counseled his officers when they messed up, but then moved on.

Robert Langley, who, at 39, was the youngest deputy chief, said his boss pushed people to do their best, and took pride in their accomplishments.

Former Chief Langley, now also retired, said the force was fortunate to have had a man with Chief Powell's vision. "His low-key attitude and his grandfatherly nurturing were his attributes."

The chief taught by example. "Every situation would remind him of something that had happened. And, every story had a moral."

He said Chief Powell brought the department together in more ways than one. "He taught us that people had a constitutional right to disagree with the government and their right to lawful protest."

The chief insisted his officers respect the rights of protesters as long as they didn't cross the line. If that barrier was broken, there was no holding back.

Mr. Langley, who went on to be acting chief for a year, said Chief Powell remained active with department activities after his retirement. "We were a family," he said. "He came back and kept in touch."

Wonderful neighbors

After he retired, Chief Powell and his wife, Dorothy, were among the first residents of Lake Linganore.

Last May, neighbors surprised the chief with a party on his 90th birthday. Children decorated a table with balloons and wrote their own cards.

"Everyone loved the Powells," said Lisa Bowman. "They used to sit at the kitchen table, and look out their window. Everyone who drove or walked by would see if they were there and wave."

From that window, the couple watched children wait for the school bus at the edge of their property. "They loved the kids. When he was in better health, he would go down and talk to them."

Ms. Bowman said the first child to the bus stop would take the chief his morning paper.

"When I took my daughter to show them, he ran out and cut some roses," Ms. Bowman said. "I was so touched and honored. He loved growing roses. He was always so proud of them."

Another neighbor, Sandra Locke, said she and others enjoyed his stories. "He had the best stories about old Washington and about his childhood in Tennessee."

Ms. Locke said the Powells were wonderful neighbors who kept an eye on things. "They're missed."

Chief Powell's sons -- John, Joe and Jim -- spent Thursday morning at Robert E. Dailey & Son Funeral Home sifting through albums and setting up photographs, letters and commendations.

When they were growing up, their father didn't talk much about his work or share a lot of his experiences. But John remembers that his dad got him and his son in for President Reagan's State of the Union address.

Jim thought it was interesting that his dad and Gen. William Westmoreland died the same day. He pointed to a letter the late commander had written, thanking his father for his assistance.

Joe said his father entered retirement the way he did everything else -- full steam ahead. "He loved his rose garden."

Chief Powell considered writing a book after he retired. But when publishers found out it would only contain humorous snippets about life in and around Washington, they weren't interested.

"My father said he worked a lifetime building integrity, and he wasn't about to destroy it," said Jim Powell.

Like their father, the Powell brothers had many stories to tell.

https://www.fredericknewspost.com/archives/a-friend-to-presidents-first-capitol-police-chief-leaves-lifetime/article_5b1326d0-7603-53a4-b5fd-fa593d3713a3.html

The Washington Post

Obituaries

Thursday, July 21, 2005

James M. Powell *Capitol Police Chief*

James M. Powell, 91, the first chief of the U.S. Capitol Police after the force was separated from the D.C. police department, died July 18 of congestive heart failure at Shady Grove Adventist Hospital. He was a resident of Lake Linganore in Frederick County.

His legacy included transforming the Capitol Police from a group of untrained security guards who owed their jobs to the patronage system into a professional police force guarding the 181-acre Capitol complex. He was instrumental in establishing the Federal Police Academy at Glynco, Ga., and he insisted on the installation of a pistol range beneath the Capitol, where officers are required to qualify annually. He upgraded police communications, initiated the use of bomb- and drug-sniffing dogs and equipped officers patrolling the Capitol grounds with bicycles and radios.

"Some members of Congress think we have too many police officers," he told The Washington Post in 1979. "We all agree we like to have a revelation of our free democratic society, keeping our public buildings open, but with all the dissidents who come here to raise hell, we have to be prepared to protect the peace."

Mr. Powell was born on a farm in Chapel Hill, Tenn., and came to Washington in 1934 looking for work. After a range of jobs that included hotel bellhop and insurance salesman, he joined Washington's Metropolitan Police Department in 1940.

He spent six years in the 5th Precinct as a patrolman and precinct detective before being promoted to detective sergeant and being assigned to the robbery squad. In 1953, he was promoted to lieutenant and assigned to command plainclothes detectives in the 3rd District. Five years later, he became a captain and was assigned to the U.S. Capitol, where he served as commanding officer of the security detail for the U.S. Senate.

In 1965, he became an inspector and designated chief of the U.S. Capitol Police within the D.C. police. In 1980, Congress transferred Mr. Powell from the D.C. police department and made him the first chief of the U.S. Capitol Police on the rolls of the legislative branch and separated from the D.C. police.

Mr. Powell's law enforcement career included the capture of one of the Puerto Rican nationalists convicted of the attempted assassination of President Harry S. Truman in 1950. He was one of the plainclothes detectives assigned to cover Truman on his morning constitutionals around the Tidal Basin, and he also helped protect the Capitol during the unrest, marches and riots of the 1960s and 1970s.

After retiring in 1984, Mr. Powell enjoyed growing roses in his garden.

Survivors include his wife of 67 years, Dorothy Forsht Powell of District Heights; three sons, Jim Powell of Chesapeake, Va., John Powell of Ijamsville and Joe Powell of Manassas; a sister; three grandchildren; and three great-grandchildren.

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<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/07/20/AR2005072002399.html>

The Frederick News-Post

James Powell

Obituary

Mr. James M. Powell, 91, retired chief of the U.S. Capitol Police and resident of Lake Linganore, Md., passed away on Monday, July 18, following a brief illness. Chief Powell was the husband of Dorothy Forsht Powell, whom he married June 4, 1938.

Born May 13, 1914 in Chapel Hill, Tenn., he was the son of the late Milton Thomas and Aurora Ethel Ralston Powell.

Chief Powell came to Washington in 1934 and worked at a myriad of jobs from hotel bell hop to insurance salesman before joining the Metropolitan Police Force in 1940. Chief Powell spent six years in the Fifth Precinct as a patrolman and precinct detective before being promoted to Detective Sergeant and assigned to the Robbery Squad. In 1953, he was promoted to Lieutenant and assigned to command the plainclothes detectives in the Third District. Five years later, he was promoted to Captain and detailed to the U.S. Capitol, where he served as Commanding Officer of the Security Detail for the United States Senate. In 1965, he was promoted to the rank of Inspector and designated as Chief of the U.S. Capitol Police. In 1980, Congress passed a law retroactively transferring Chief Powell from the Metropolitan Police Department; making him the first federal chief of the U. S. Capitol Police on the rolls of the legislative branch.

Chief Powell's police career included the capture of one of the Puerto Rican nationals later convicted of the attempted assassination of President Truman in 1950, and protecting the Capitol during the unrest, marches and riots in Washington during the 1960s and 1970s. He was recognized by U.S. presidents and members of the Senate and Congress for his professionalism and leadership. Perhaps his greatest legacy was the transformation of the Capitol Police Force from a group of untrained security guards appointed by members of the Congress to the highly trained professional Capitol Police Force of today that consists of over 1200 officers and officials. Instrumental to that effort was his role in the establishment of the Federal Police Academy at Glynco, Ga., where his recruits received professional police training; as well as his insistence that a pistol range be installed beneath the Capitol and officers be required to qualify annually. He upgraded police communications, initiated the use of bomb and drug-sniffing dogs, and equipped his officers patrolling the Capitol grounds with bicycles and radios. He retired June 1, 1984, after 44 years, eight months of police service.

Surviving besides his wife of 67 years are his sons, Jim Powell and wife Sandy of Chesapeake, Va., John Powell and wife Sandy of Ijamsville and Joe Powell of Manassas Va.; three grandchildren, John Powell and wife Tina, Jake Powell and Jason Powell; three great-grandchildren, Jordan Powell, Jackson Powell and Jada Powell; and his sister, Ruth Powell. He was preceded in death by his grandson, Jimmy Powell; sister, Mary Cheek; and brother, Clarence Powell.

Chief Powell is at the Robert E. Dailey & Son Funeral Homes, P.A., 1201 N. Market St., Frederick, where friends may call from 1 to 9 p.m., Thursday, July 21. The family will receive friends from 5 to 8 p.m. Thursday at the funeral home. Funeral services will be held at 10 a.m., Friday, July 22 at the funeral home. Interment with full honors will be held at 1:30 p.m. Friday at the Cedar Hill Cemetery, 4111 Pennsylvania Ave., Suitland, Md. Those attending are asked to assemble at the main gate by 1:15 p.m.

The family requests that memorials be made in memory of Chief Powell to the American Heart Association , Memorials & Tributes Processing Center, P.O. Box 5216, Glen Allen, VA 23058-5216 or the Alzheimer's Association , 108 Byte Drive, Suite 103, Frederick, MD 21702.

<http://www.legacy.com/obituaries/fredericknewspost/obituary.aspx?n=james-powell&pid=168453594&fhid=9950>