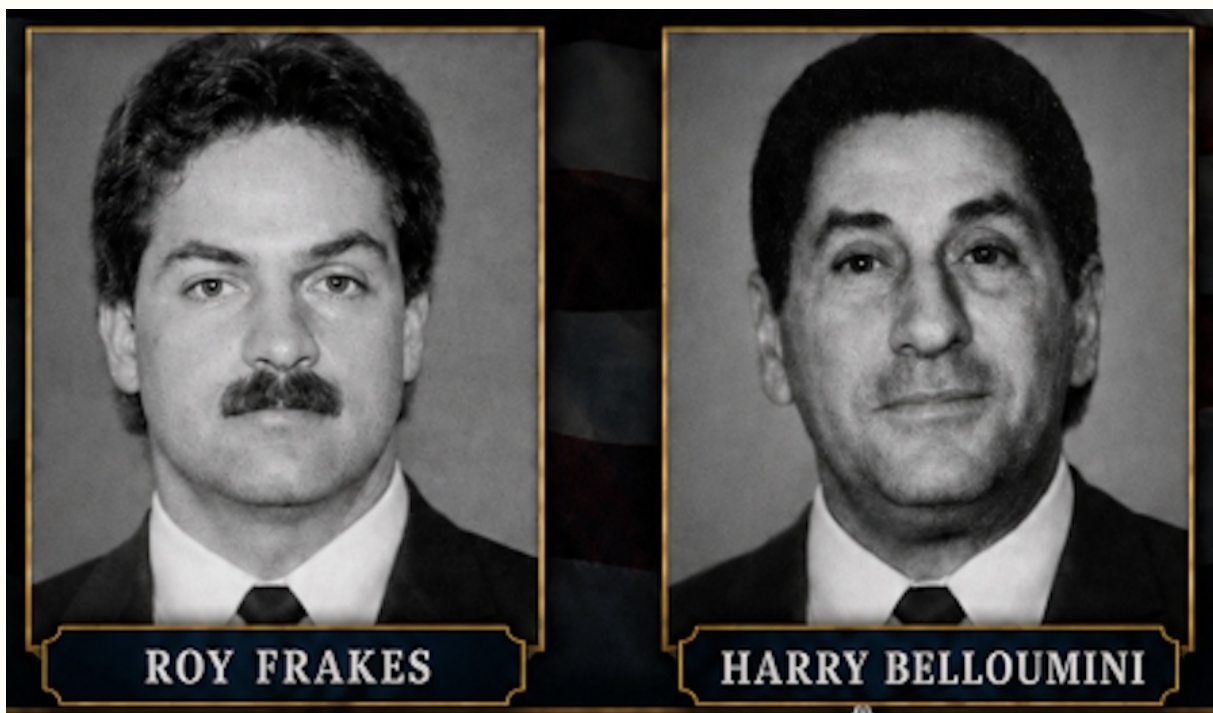


REMEMBRANCE

The Courthouse That Never Forgot

The courthouse family gathers to honor the courage of two men and renew its promise to remember.



Deputy U.S. Marshal Roy L. "Bill" Frakes, left, and Court Security Officer Harry A. Belluomini.

CHICAGO — Thirty-four years to the day after gunfire erupted in the basement garage of the Dirksen Courthouse, several dozen people gathered in the building's lobby to honor Deputy U.S. Marshal Roy L. "Bill" Frakes and Court Security Officer Harry A. Belluomini.

The annual ceremony brought together Federal Judges, Deputy U.S. Marshals, Court Security Officers and courthouse employees to remember the two men who were killed on July 20, 1992, while trying to stop a violent prisoner's escape.



Dozens gather in the Dirksen U.S. Courthouse lobby for the annual memorial ceremony.

For Frakes' widow, Wendy, the turnout was evidence that her husband's service continues to be remembered.

"It makes me feel grateful that his sacrifice has not been forgotten," she said. "Bill was so proud to be a Deputy U.S. Marshal and wanted to make a difference."

The People We're Here to Speak About



U.S. Marshal LaDon A. Reynolds addresses those gathered in the courthouse lobby.

U.S. Marshal LaDon A. Reynolds, who leads the Marshals Service in the Northern District of Illinois, began his remarks with a quotation attributed to abolitionist Wendell Phillips: "The first duty of society is justice."

The words were fitting, Reynolds said, because "the people we're here to speak about today stood for justice." Reynolds remains the U.S. Marshal responsible for operations in the Northern District of Illinois.

An Ordinary Workday, Extraordinary Courage

Frakes, 30, and Belluomini, 58, were killed on July 20, 1992, during an escape attempt by a bank robbery defendant after the sixth day of his federal trial. After freeing himself from his handcuffs with a smuggled key, he shot Frakes twice in the courthouse garage. Belluomini confronted the defendant and the two exchanged gunfire. Belluomini was mortally wounded but seriously wounded the defendant, who made it partway up the garage ramp before shooting himself.

"I remember that day because it was the first year I worked full time in the courthouse," recalled Chief Judge Virginia M. Kendall. "I will never forget that moment because it was when it became absolutely clear to me what it meant to be a public servant."

U.S. Magistrate Judge Gabriel Fuentes told the audience that the tragedy remained a reminder of how an ordinary workday can suddenly demand extraordinary courage.

"On that morning, nobody knew that two of our family members would not be going home," Fuentes said. "No one knew the level of heroism that they would display that day."

Fuentes asked those gathered to consider what might have happened if Belluomini had not returned fire. Jackson Boulevard was at the top of the ramp, he noted, along with another Court Security Officer and people inside their cars.

"It's difficult to fathom the depth of what could have happened next," Fuentes said.

Lives of Service

Frakes, an Avon, Illinois, native, had been a Deputy U.S. Marshal for only nine months. Chicago was his first assignment. Reynolds recalled that Frakes had earned bachelor's and master's degrees in political science from Western Illinois University and had worked as a private bodyguard before achieving his ambition of joining the Marshals Service.

Belluomini had spent more than three decades with the Chicago Police Department before serving for three years as a Court Security Officer. He was only months away from retiring. He left behind his wife, Milly, two daughters, Anne and Karen, and a son, Michael. All three children followed their father into the Chicago Police Department.



Bill and Wendy Frakes in 1990.

What Their Sacrifice Changed

The attack changed more than the lives of the officers' families and colleagues. The tragic incident led to changes in how prisoners are transferred between courthouses and detention facilities nationwide. Frakes' death also became part of U.S. Marshals Service training on the proper use of restraints, the methods prisoners use to defeat them and procedures for searching detainees.



The honorary designations meet outside the Dirksen U.S. Courthouse at Jackson Boulevard and Dearborn Street.

A Corner That Remembers

Outside the courthouse, the men's names meet at the intersection of Jackson Boulevard and Dearborn Street. Dearborn between Jackson and Adams streets bears the honorary designation Roy L. "Bill" Frakes Memorial Way, while Jackson between Dearborn and State streets is designated Harry A. Belluomini Way.

Frakes' street sign was unveiled in 2022, three decades after his death, joining the existing designation for Belluomini and symbolically reuniting the two men at the corner beside the courthouse they died protecting.

We Will Remember

Wendy Frakes said continuing to tell their stories is important not only for their families, but also for the people who were protected by their actions.

"These fallen officers gave their lives in order to maintain peace and order in others' lives," she said. "Their sacrifices should be honored for the lives they saved."

Fuentes acknowledged that many people outside the courthouse and law enforcement communities may no longer know what occurred there in 1992. But he said those who work inside the building have a responsibility to remember.

"We will remember as we must," Fuentes said.

"When they go on to do their jobs every day, they need to know that if the worst happens, we won't forget. We'll be there for them."

Asked what she hoped a young Deputy U.S. Marshal would carry from her husband's story into the job, Wendy Frakes focused on the lesson that became painfully clear 34 years ago.

"I hope a young deputy appreciates the dangers of the job, stays alert and always comes home at night."