

SC Highway Patrol Special Awards for 2019

Medal of Valor Award:

Troop 4, Post B Corporal Roland S. Bennett

On April 18, 2019 at 4:22 p.m., Blythewood TCC informed Corporal Bennett of a BOLO regarding a red Toyota Prius traveling south on I-77 into South Carolina being followed by a Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department helicopter. The BOLO stated that the suspect vehicle had been involved in an armed robbery in Charlotte, North Carolina, and that the rear window had been shattered by gunfire. Corporal Bennett observed the vehicle near Exit 82 and initiated a traffic stop. The Prius refused to stop for Cpl. Bennett's blue lights and siren and a pursuit was initiated.

The pursuit traveled south on I-77 and Corporal Shank became a secondary officer near Dave Lyle Boulevard. Corporal Shank positioned his vehicle in front of the fleeing Prius in an effort to slow the vehicle down but was struck from behind by the Prius. After the intentional contact between the vehicles, Corporal Bennett performed a PIT maneuver on the suspect vehicle, but the driver of the Prius regained control after striking the guardrail and continued to flee south on I-77. Corporal Bennett again pursued the fleeing Prius until the driver attempted to exit I-77 at the 75 mile marker. The driver drove through the grass portion of the exit ramp in an attempt to elude the Troopers, where he struck a tree.

Corporal Bennett immediately began heroic efforts in an attempt to save the lives of the occupants of the Prius that had begun to burn due to the collision. Trooper Primes arrived on scene within seconds and joined the lifesaving efforts of his fellow Troopers. As the fire escalated, Corporal Bennett faced with numerous empty fire extinguishers as the fire escalated, Corporal Bennett used various implements, to include his bare hands, to extricate the occupants of the engulfed vehicle. The troopers worked as a team and directed all responding units in their life saving efforts. The Troopers were able to remove two of the three passengers from the burning vehicle.

During this event, Corporal Bennett, displayed amazing bravery in the face of danger by putting his own life at risk as he dealt with the fire while freeing two of the occupants.

Purple Heart Award:

Trooper Michael R. Burgess Troop Seven/Post B

On June 10, 2019, at approximately 11:06 p.m., Corporal R.H. Gleich and Trooper Burgess were conducting a driver's license checkpoint at the intersection of Till and Langley Roads in

Orangeburg County. During their checkpoint, these troopers observed a black Honda sedan approach them. As the driver of the vehicle appeared to notice the “checkpoint ahead” warning signs, the vehicle stopped in the roadway, turned off the headlights and started backing down the roadway.

Trooper Burgess immediately activated his lights and siren and approached the vehicle. Corporal Gleich pulled his vehicle behind the violator’s vehicle in a rolling roadblock to preserve the safety of the public. Corporal Gleich and Trooper Burgess approached the vehicle, giving verbal commands to the driver, which he disregarded. In an attempt to flee from the scene, the driver continuously made several evasive maneuvers to escape but his actions were clearly an intentional act when he struck Trooper Burgess with the front of his vehicle.

Trooper Burgess tried to get up, but he fell down on the highway. After realizing that Trooper Burgess sustained possible severe injuries, Corporal Gleich called for an ambulance. After being seen at The Regional Medical Center in Orangeburg, Trooper Burgess was treated for a head injury, cervical strain, an ankle and shoulder sprain, and a knee contusion and released the next morning.

The violator fled and after weeks of evading law enforcement, the violator turned himself in. He pled guilty to “Hit-and-Run, involving great bodily injury”, “Failure to stop for a blue light” and “Reckless Driving.”

After extensive physical therapy, Trooper Burgess was able to return to full duty on July 31, 2019.

Medal of Valor and Purple Heart:

Trooper First Class Paul A. Wise Troop 4, Post B

On June 2, 2019, Trooper First Class Paul Wise was on patrol in York County when he observed an unrestrained driver on Mt. Gallant Road. Trooper First Class Wise activated his blue lights; however, the driver refused to stop and a pursuit was initiated. The driver made several turns in an attempt to elude Trooper First Class Wise and ultimately turned on to India Hook Road. At the end of India Hook Road, the vehicle attempted to turn into a campground, where the driver lost control and struck a post, disabling the vehicle.

The fleeing driver exited his vehicle and started shooting at Trooper First Class Wise. One of the first rounds fired into the patrol vehicle’s windshield struck Trooper First Class Wise in the chest, where his ballistic vest stopped the bullet. After the initial volley of shots directed at Trooper First Class Wise, the assailant ran toward Trooper First Class Wise and then ran past the now-disabled patrol vehicle, all the while firing multiple rounds at Trooper First Class Wise. Even after being struck by the initial gunfire, Trooper First Class Wise saw the rapidly approaching shooter, exited his patrol vehicle in an attempt to find additional cover, and started returning gunfire from beside his patrol vehicle. Trooper First Class Wise was able to strike the

shooter with gunfire, causing the assailant to fall to the ground approximately 20 yards from Trooper First Class Wise's patrol vehicle.

Trooper First Class Wise, not knowing the severity of his own medical condition at the time, calmly and heroically directed responding units as to the best way to approach the active scene to ensure the safety of all responding units. Trooper First Class Wise was not only struck in his ballistic vest but received other injuries in his head and neck area as well. Trooper First Class Wise requested medical assistance for himself, as well as the assailant, while he stayed behind cover, since he did not know what other possible dangers he faced. Once the backup units arrived, the suspect was placed in handcuffs and under arrest. Trooper First Class Wise recovered and returned to work shortly after the incident.