

Lawmen, town say goodbye

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FELTON — Sheriff's Deputy Mike Gray was buried in Felton Cemetery Saturday — above the town where he grew up, where he lived, and where he fell in the line of duty.

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A procession of motorcycle officers led a hearse bearing his flag-draped coffin to Felton Cemetery after funeral services attended by more than 1,000 peace officers and friends.

Santa Cruz County Sheriff's deputies stood in the front lines of more than 600 lawmen who came from as far away as San Luis Obispo and Eureka. Their ranks filled the parking lot of St. John's Catholic Church after

the service as mourners gathered in front of the cement-block church.

The men and women, black bands across their badges, stood silently at attention as the coffin was carried from the church. They saluted their comrade as the hearse bore him away.

The town was still as the motorcycles with flashing lights led the cars bearing Gray's family and close friends slowly from the church to the cemetery.

The fire siren wailed once as they passed.

Minutes later, a 21-gun salute echoed through the smoke-filled mountain hollows.

Buglers blew taps at the family's

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Dan Coyro/Sentinel

Final salute

FELTON — Members of the sheriff's office gave a final salute to Deputy Mike Gray who died Jan. 13 after being shot by an ex-mental patient and loner. Hundreds of law officers, community members and friends joined Gray's family Saturday for a moving farewell to the slain officer.

Funeral

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graveside service, and officers in town bowed their heads when they received word the coffin had been lowered into the ground.

The sun shone weakly through gray clouds.

In a moving display of support and compassion, hundreds of peace officers had crowded into St. John's church with Gray's family, friends and community members for the funeral. Hundreds more overflowed into the parking lot of the church on Highway 9, just a few hundred yards from where the 40-year-old deputy was shot Jan. 3.

He had stopped to question a suspicious-looking hitchhiker, who opened fire with no warning. Shot twice in the abdomen, Gray survived eight hours of surgery, and clung to life for 10 days. He died Jan. 13.

Authorities say his assailant, Leslie Grover Wyman, was a former mental patient who took his own life after the shooting.

Highway Patrolman Jeff Lee, 24, also was shot when he responded to Gray's radio call for help.

Lee, a cast on his arm and limping from a thigh wound, sat in the hushed church among law enforcement officers, firefighters, county officials and Gray's neighbors.

The slain deputy's family, including his wife, Deanna, their six-year-old son, Bobby, his parents, Bob and

Dorothy Gray, brother, Jim, and grandmother, Edith Costella, sat in the front rows.

Mourners filled the pews and lined the walls. Many wept while Father Mike Marini, Gray's cousin, celebrated a Mass of Christian Burial. He termed the service a celebration of life, and said Gray would have told him to "keep it light."

The first thing that word reminded him of, he said, "is all the beautiful days we've had these last 10 or so days; how somehow winter divided itself, and the sun shown through with all its warmth, and we all reflected that. . . .

"That warmth came to us not only from the sun but also from the hearts of all those who have told us about their prayers, who have let us know about their good wishes, and those especially who, in imitation of Michael who spilled his blood, have poured theirs out that others might live. . . . A time of warmth, a time of life. . . .

"But its a cloudy day today and we have to face that. And we must not forget," he continued, "that we walk in the darkness of a tragedy. . . . We must still face the wife without a husband and the son without a father. This is a tragedy."

If the warmth of the past few days does not live on and spread itself, Father Marini said, it will be a useless tragedy.