



# SPOKANE POLICE DEPARTMENT

CHIEF OF POLICE  
FRANK STRAUB, Ph.D.

## LETTER OF AWARD

To: Ofc. Bruce Palmer  
From: Frank G. Straub, Jr., Chief of Police  
Date: July 14, 2014  
Re: Lifesaving Award

Sergeant Jason Reynolds recently nominated you for the Spokane Police Department's Lifesaving Award. The Lifesaving Award is given to department personnel who, by their immediate actions, have saved a human life under unusual and/or extraordinary circumstances. When the Special Awards Committee reviewed your nomination, it was clear that you are most deserving of this recognition.

Sergeant Reynolds wrote:

*"On June 9, 2014, at about 10:00 am, a drowning call was dispatched just east of Division in the Spokane River. The victim was reported to be floating down the middle of the river screaming for help. The water levels of the river in June are dangerously high and extremely cold from the winter runoff. The river was running at 8100 cubic feet per second on this day compared to an average of 1500 to 2000 cubic feet per second in July and August. The temperature was probably in the low to mid 50 degree range and the victim probably had less than 20 minutes to get out of the water before drowning.*

*Officer Bruce Palmer responded from the north side of town and was able to get the victim in sight within minutes of arriving. When he spotted the victim, he was several hundred yards east of Division and floating west bound quickly. The victim was obviously distressed and went under the water multiple times. If the victim passed under the Division Street Bridge, he only had a couple hundred yards before he would have gone over the dam and downtown falls. The Spokane Fire Department and Spokane County dive teams had been activated but were still at least 10 minutes from having boats and divers in the water. By this time the victim would have drowned or went over the dam at the rapid rate he was drifting.*

*Officer Palmer ran west along the north side of the river he made the decision to jump the fence and grab the life preserver ring from the Red Lion Hotel outdoor pool. He ran ahead of the victim and got onto the Division Street Bridge. He dangled the life preserver from the bridge and yelled at the victim to grab it. The rope was barely long enough for the ring to hit the water when the victim grabbed it. Officer Palmer hung over the edge and held the victim there until others arrived to assist. When fire department personnel arrived they were able to throw more ropes over the bridge and the victim grabbed those as well. It was obvious that the victim was quickly losing strength between the constant pulling of the current and the extremely cold water temperatures. Officer Palmer made the decision to work his way along the bridge pulling the victim towards the south bank to waiting police and fire. Officer Palmer, Officer Kellee Gately and fire department personnel pulled the victim approx. 50 yards to the bank where he was pulled onto dry land. Officer Gately said the rope wasn't long enough to reach over the railing so Officer Palmer had to put his hand through each individual railing picket to move the victim inches at a time.*

*When the victim reached the bank he was barely conscious and hypothermic. He was transported to the hospital. I spoke with the Emergency Room doctor in the trauma room. He said the victim's body temperature was so low that their thermometers would not read his temperature. He also said the victim would have surely died had he remained in the water any longer and was surprised that the victim was even able to hold onto the safety ropes that were thrown to him.*

*Based on statements from the ER doctor, on-scene Fire Department personnel, SPD Command Staff, and media, it is clear that Officer Palmer is well-deserving of the Life Saving Medal. I hereby nominate Officer Palmer for the Life Saving Medal for his quick decision making that undoubtedly saved a citizen's life. Without Officer Palmer taking quick and decisive action the victim would have definitely drowned in the river."*

Officer Palmer, the Lifesaving Medal is being awarded to you for your heroic actions in the incident outlined above. You will be awarded the Lifesaving Medal during the 2014 Annual Employee Awards Ceremony. A copy of this letter will be placed in your personnel file.

Frank G. Straub, Jr. Ph.D.  
Chief of Police

