

William Morris Blakemore, Class of 1969.



Engine 55, a four-person engine company including Lieutenant Lerma and Primate Blakemore, responded to the report of a residential structure fire along with other units. Engine 55 was the first unit on the scene and reported a working house fire.

Lieutenant Lerma stepped from the apparatus to perform a size up of the fire and was immediately shot by a gunman who had been hiding in the

garage of the house. The gunman continued to fire, striking Private Blakemore as he sat in the back of the pumper preparing his protective equipment. The driver of Engine 55 moved the apparatus forward out of the danger zone. The fourth member of the crew had been on the opposite side of the apparatus preparing his protective clothing and jumped onto the running board as the apparatus was moved to safety. As the gunman engaged and killed a deputy sheriff, firefighters moved Lieutenant Lerma to a safe area and began treatment. Lieutenant Lerma was pronounced dead at the scene and Private Blakemore died in an ambulance en route to the hospital. Both were killed by shotgun blasts to the head. After the scene was secured, firefighters extinguished the fire in the house and discovered the body of the gunman's wife. A deputy sheriff was also killed. Lieutenant Lerma's father was killed in the line-of-duty in 1977. Lieutenant Lerma was carried to his

rest in a fire truck named after his father. The gunman was an off-duty Memphis firefighter. He was responsible for the fire in the house, and he was likely the person who reported the fire to the Memphis Fire Department through a 9-1-1 call.

