

# Hundreds make trek to pay respects

BY JULIE DE BRUIN  
Metroland Media Group

The threat of rain did not stop hundreds of mourners from lining up at a Barrie funeral home Tuesday to pay respects to York Regional Police Const. Robert Plunkett.

Among those making the trip was Brian Craig, who drove from his home near Waterloo to say goodbye to an old neighbour. He lived next to the Plunketts when he was growing up in Auburn, a tiny community near Goderich. His mother still lives there.

"He was a just a good kid," said Mr. Craig, as he waited in line. "He was a real nice boy."

Keith Scott played men's fastball with Const. Plunkett and remembers him as a sports enthusiast. The last time he saw him was a few years ago at a fast-ball tournament in Goderich.

Const. Plunkett, 43, was killed Thursday while investigating air-

bag thefts in Markham.

As he was trying to stop a suspect, the vehicle rammed into a tree, pinning the 22-year veteran between the vehicle door and the tree. He died of his injuries.

A 19-year-old Toronto man is charged with first degree murder and appeared in court yesterday. A 23-year-old Toronto man was also arrested.

Markham firefighter John Brassard, a friend of Const. Plunkett, will miss the way he treated children.

"Always the tease, the kids loved him because of the attention he would always pay them, especially my little guy," Mr. Brassard said.

Vaughan firefighter Terry Smith didn't know Const. Plunkett personally, but, as a former York Region police officer, he knows a lot of his colleagues.

The firefighter spent six years on the York Regional Police Ser-

vice. As a firefighter, he is often sent out to the same calls as police officers.

Because those who work with emergency services have a close kinship, they often attend each other's funerals.

In fact, Mr. Smith said many services have an honour guard to attend funerals and visitations.

Paul Culham felt compelled to pay his respects because of the dedication and sacrifice of police officers.

"They're doing something for us," he said.

He is angered over the senselessness of Const. Plunkett's death. "He lost his life because of something stupid someone did."

Const. Plunkett was recognized in 1998 for bravery after rescuing a senior citizen from Swan Lake in Markham.

—With files from Joe Fantauzzi

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