

MIAMI-DADE COUNTY

# Lost grave of Black Miami rookie cop killed 40 years ago finally found, police say

BY CHARLES RABIN

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Police say they've found the unmarked tomb of a Black cop killed on duty 40 years ago. BY JOSÉ A. IGLESIAS

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In the morning hours of Sept. 2, 1981, a rookie cop by the name of Nathaniel Broom stopped a Volkswagen Beetle on a Miami street corner with three men inside suspected of taking part in a robbery. The men ran and Broom, 23 and only nine months on the job, gave chase.

As the officer raced up Northwest Second Avenue and then turned the corner onto 11 Street in what the Miami Herald described at the time as a “rundown section of Miami called Overtown,” Robert Patton, 24, was kneeling on the ground, waiting. Holding his gun with both hands, Patton fired at Broom as he came into sight. The bullet struck his heart. He was killed almost immediately.

Broom was buried — and then, somehow, the location of his remains became a mystery to Miami police. Now, 40 years later, a retired detective and her old boss believe Broom's grave has finally been found.

"It's him. We know it's him," said Jerry Lynn Dellamico, a retired Miami robbery detective who has spent years searching for the lost graves of officers killed in the line of duty. "I saw the spot and knew immediately in my heart it was him."

The apparent discovery of Broom's grave was both timely and unexpected.

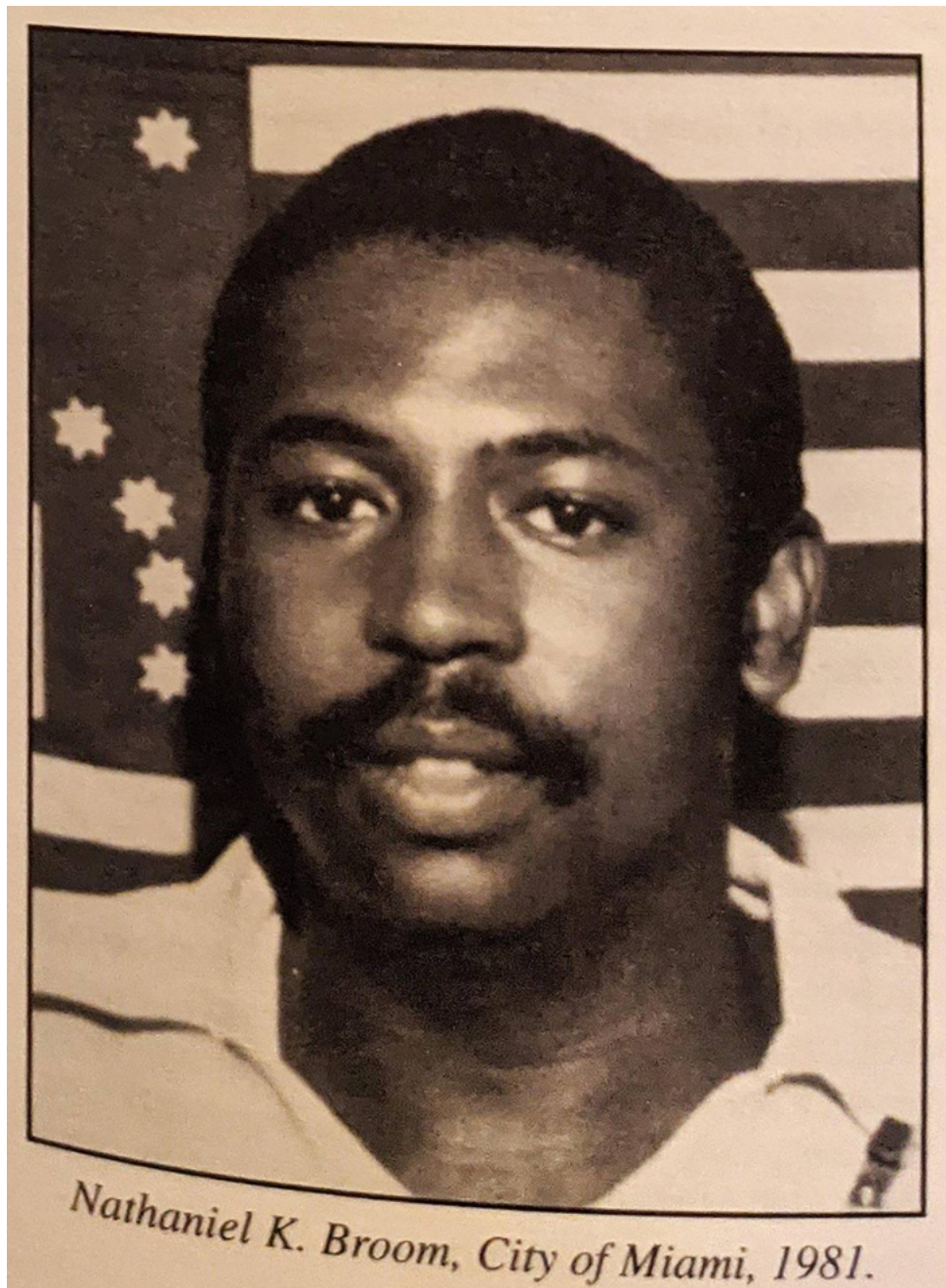
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It happened Tuesday, just two days before an annual celebration of fallen South Florida police officers at Tropical Park, in an out-of-the way and [unkempt cemetery in Allapattah](#) where many of Miami's most well-known Black pioneers like Athalie Range, Gwen Cherry and Overtown developer D.A. Dorsey have been laid to rest.



Miami, Florida, May 7 2021 - Nathaniel K Broom, killed in the line of duty in 1981. Somehow, the location of his remains became a mystery to Miami police. Now, 40 years later, a retired detective and her old boss believe Broom's grave has finally been found. Jose A. Iglesias *MIAMI HERALD FILE PHOTO*

## HERO COPS

Police say the identification of Broom's grave coincided with the annual launch of a Miami police program called HERO, which stands for "Honoring Every Resting Officer" and seeks to memorialize all 40 Miami officers killed in the line of duty since 1895.

Dellamico coordinates the program. Any Miami officer who wishes can be assigned a name or two and is then responsible for adorning the grave with a small flag and a badge. Miami Police Cmdr. Dan Kerr said the laying of memorials is usually accompanied by a testimonial from the assigned officer about what led to the untimely death.

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“I usually tell the story of how they died to whoever is there,” said Kerr. “If no one is there, I still tell the story.”



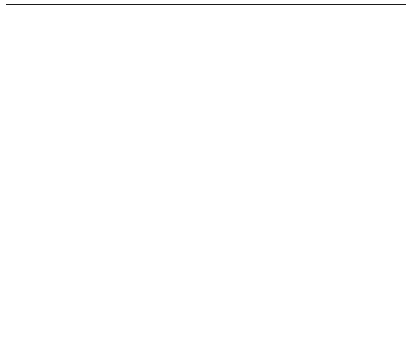
Miami, Florida, May 7 2021 - Commander Dan Kerr pics up debris scattered around the grave of officer Victor Butler who was killed in the line of duty in 1971. Officer Butler's grave is Evergreen Memorial Park in Allapatah. Jose A. Iglesias [JIGLESIAS@ELNUEVOHERALD.COM](mailto:JIGLESIAS@ELNUEVOHERALD.COM)

Until about a year ago, the tombs at Lincoln Memorial Park Cemetery were stacked on top of each other above ground with overgrown shrubbery and ficus, banyon and oak trees rooting into the concrete tombs. The only way to find a grave site was to climb over and around them. Very few of the concrete caskets were identifiable. That changed when a South Carolina man named Jessie Wooden — who learned the mother he never knew was buried there — obtained an interest in the property.

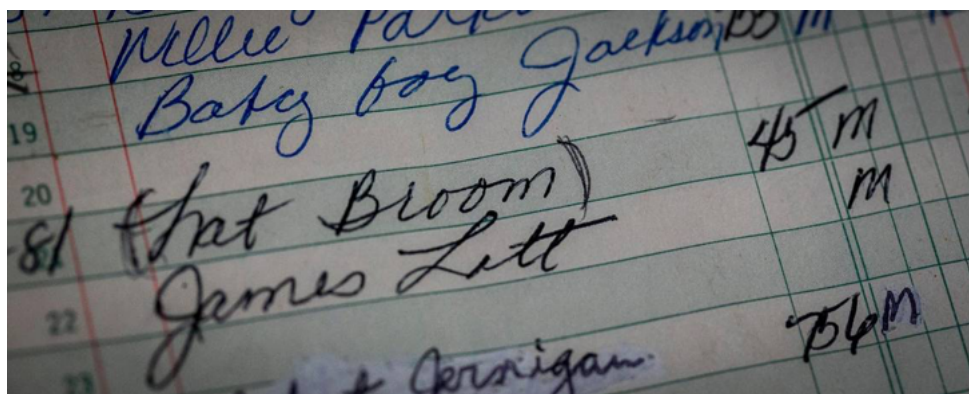
“I bought it just to clean it up because I was upset my mom was here,” he said.



Miami, Florida, May 7 2021 - The entrance to Lincoln Memorial Cemetery, 3001 NW 46th St., Miami, on a stormy evening in May. Jose A. Iglesias [JIGLESIAS@ELNUEVOHERALD.COM](mailto:JIGLESIAS@ELNUEVOHERALD.COM)



It turns out Broom's grave was discovered without the aid of modern technology. Good old-fashioned, leather-shoe investigating led to the find. After years of getting nowhere, the cemetery's new owner gave Dellamico a hand-written notebook. Inside it was the name Nate Broom. Next to the name was a marking that led the detective to a plot identified as A1 in Row 5.



Miami, Florida, May 7 2021 - The name Nat Broom appears in a handwritten ledger that was given to retired detective Jerry Lynn Dellamico by the new owner of Lincoln Memorial Park. This led to the finding of the grave that is believed to be that of officer Nathaniel Broom. Jose A. Iglesias [JIGLESIAS@ELNUEVOHERALD.COM](mailto:JIGLESIAS@ELNUEVOHERALD.COM)

Though the aisles of the cemetery aren't clearly marked, just this week Dellamico was able to match the listing in Wooden's notebook with a decade-old photo of two Miami cops, retired Detective John Buhrmaster and current Assistant Police Chief Armando Aguilar Jr., standing next to where they believed Broom was laid to rest. That, however, was never confirmed. Then, combining the picture with the hand-written notes and Google Maps, Dellamico said she found the site, grew silent and

choked up.

“I was crying,” she said.

Dellamico, who said she'd been searching for Broom's grave for years, said investigators met with some family members about a decade ago. The meeting, however, didn't lead to any breakthroughs. And, until a few days ago, Broom's crypt was sun-washed and unadorned.

Now, it stands out from those around it with a fresh coat of white paint and a newly-painted gold cross on it. Its wooden handles have also been repainted gold. And each corner of the concrete casket has a small bouquet of roses and a small American flag on it.

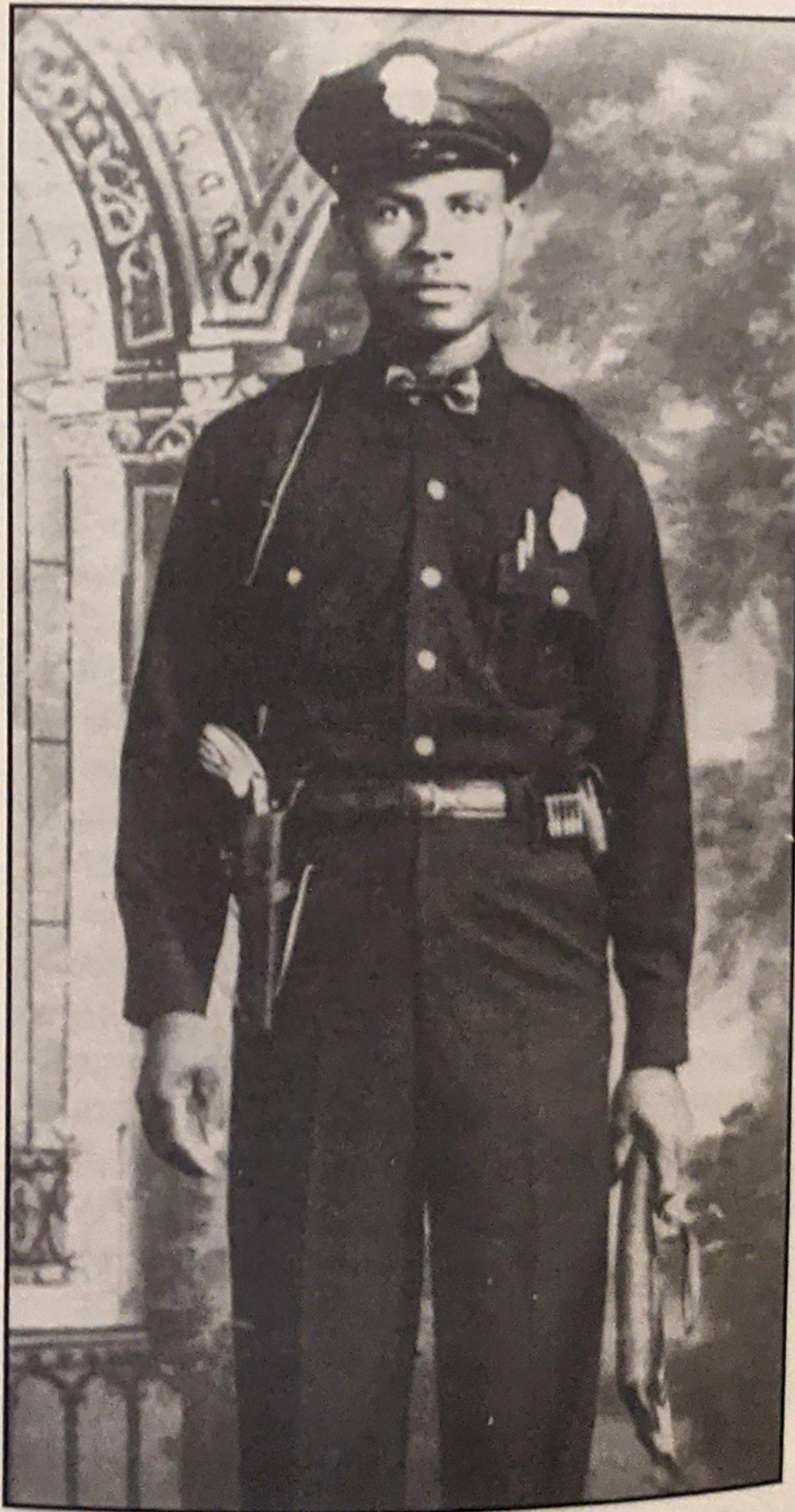


Miami, Florida, May 7 2021 - Commander Dan Kerr, left and retired Miami Detective Jerry Lynn Dellamico stand over what they believe to be Nathaniel Broom's grave at Lincoln Memorial Park in Allapatah. Kerr is currently looking into scanning the grave so they can confirm the identity of the remains inside Jose A. Iglesias  
[JJIGLESIAS@ELNUEVOHERALD.COM](mailto:JJIGLESIAS@ELNUEVOHERALD.COM)

### **OFFICER JOHNNIE YOUNG, STILL MISSING**

The discovery of Broom's final resting place means there is only one other Miami police officer killed in the line of duty and buried in Miami, yet to be accounted for.





*Johnnie Young, City of Miami, 1947.*

Miami, Florida, May 7 2021 - File photo of Officer Johnnie Young who was 33 and one of Miami's first Black sworn police officers when he was killed in the line of duty on May 7, 1947. Jose A. Iglesias  
MIAMI HERALD FILE PHOTO

Johnnie Young was 33 and one of Miami's first Black sworn police officers when he was killed in the line of duty on May 7, 1947. At the time, Black officers were only permitted to wear their uniforms while at work and only worked the city's "negro districts." Black officers could only arrest Black suspects. Taking whites into custody was prohibited.

Young was killed by a bullet to his back from the gun of his supervisor, R.A. McFarland. According to the book "Forgotten Heroes," a collection of End of Watch stories about Miami officers written by Florida International University professor William Wilbanks, Young and McFarland were chasing two juvenile suspects along the Miami River near what is now Garcia's Seafood Marketplace when McFarland fired at them but struck Young.

Wilbanks cites newspaper accounts of the incident saying there was no mention of the coroner's inquest or of the disposition of the two youths the officers were allegedly chasing at the time. Wilbanks said officers who knew McFarland claimed he was "devastated" and that he tried to commit suicide before he retired.

Kerr and Dellamico believe Young is buried two blocks from Lincoln Memorial at another, similar Allapattah cemetery called Evergreen Memorial Park that serves as the final resting place for veterans and some other South Florida cops. But finding Young is likely to be a daunting task, as the property is filled with hundreds, perhaps thousands of above-ground stones, many of them without identification.



Miami, Florida, May 7 2021 - Retired Miami Detective Jerry Lynn Dellamico stands over makeshift memorials for City of Miami Officer Johnnie Young (right) and Metro Dade Officer Simmons Arrington at Evergreen Memorial Park in Allapattah. Jose A. Iglesias [JIGLESIAS@ELNUEVOHERALD.COM](mailto:JIGLESIAS@ELNUEVOHERALD.COM)



The plan to identify Young leads back to Brooms, Kerr said. The commander hopes to confirm Broom's identity using a high-tech sonar scanning device with the ability to see clearly through concrete, rebar and metal, that he believes he can get from either the FBI or a local construction firm.

Kerr believes if the device can identify Brooms, who was buried in uniform, with an identifiable badge on his jacket and another on the hat he would likely be holding in his folded right arm, it could also help find Young in one of the unmarked graves at the Evergreen cemetery a few blocks away.

Now, a small badge and flag in remembrance of Young's sit in a rare, barren spot at Evergreen. Next to it is a small sign with the fallen officer's name.

"That's Johnnie Young's plaque," says Kerr, pointing at it while standing under a nearby oak to avoid the blistering May sun. "We just don't know where he is right now."



Miami, Florida, May 7 2021 - The sun shines on the grave that is believed to be that of slain Miami Police Officer Nathaniel Broom, bottom right, at Lincoln Memorial Park in Allapatah. JOSE A. IGLESIAS  
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Chuck Rabin, writing news stories for the Miami Herald for the past three decades, covers cops and crime. Before that he covered the halls of government for Miami-Dade and the city of Miami. He's covered hurricanes, the 2000 presidential election and the Marjory Stoneman Douglas mass shooting. On a random note: Long before those assignments, Chuck was pepper-sprayed covering the disturbances in Miami the morning Elián Gonzalez was whisked away by federal authorities.