

## RESMURS

*The Murders of Special Agent Jack Coler &  
Special Agent Ron Williams*

by Ed Woods (1972-2001)

“In the Spirit of Coler and Williams”

[www.noparolepeltier.com](http://www.noparolepeltier.com)

Thursday, June 26, 1975  
Pine Ridge Indian Reservation  
South Dakota

trained heavily the night before.

The farm owned by the Jumping Bull family is bordered to the west by rolling hills and wooded ravines, through which runs White Clay Creek. Highway 18, connecting the interstate from Rapid City to the north, borders the western edge of the Reservation, passing the hamlet of Oglala, the Jumping Bull farm and ending at the largest but still small town of Pine Ridge. To the east are the historic site of Wounded Knee, and the Badlands and grass prairies of the Great Plains.

American Indian Movement presence on the Reservation was evident. However, unknown to Rapid City Resident Agency Agents, an encampment was set up along White Clay Creek. The self-proclaimed leader of this group, Leonard Peltier (who had joined the movement only two years earlier and was well known as a thug and body-guard for AIM leadership), was also wanted for the attempted murder of a Milwaukee police officer.

Although claiming to fight for Native rights, it seemed that everywhere AIM appeared there was trouble. Its history is evident and well documented — the 71-day ransack and destruction of Wounded Knee in 1973 and the murder of AIM member Anna Mae Aquash in 1975 among noted low points. AIM's alleged nobility for recognition and Native American rights was overshadowed by lawlessness, while its leadership mined the fertile ground for the sympathies and money of the limousine-rich, the uninformed and gullible, and those who were not supportive of their own country and government. AIM's sordid history is like opening the wrong door in a hotel and seeing something shameful.

Tensions on Pine Ridge were high as the strife continued, pitting *traditionals* against *non-traditionals*, tribal government, vigilante groups and AIM's incessant and often criminal agitation.

Four days earlier there was an incident on the Schwarting ranch that led to arrest warrants for four locals — one was arrested and the others, including Jimmy Eagle, were sought by Agents Coler and Williams. Information indicated that Eagle was seen recently in the Oglala area, driving a red vehicle.

The day prior, Coler and Williams stopped three Indian youths along Highway 18 believing that one may have been their fugitive. They were taken to the Tribal Police in Pine Ridge for identification and confirmed that none was Jimmy Eagle. One of the three, Norman Charles, and the other two were taken by a tribal police officer and dropped off on Highway 18 near a dirt road leading to the Jumping Bull farm.

When Peltier learned of the incident that evening — that the teenagers went with the Agents and even talked to the FBI — he berated them.

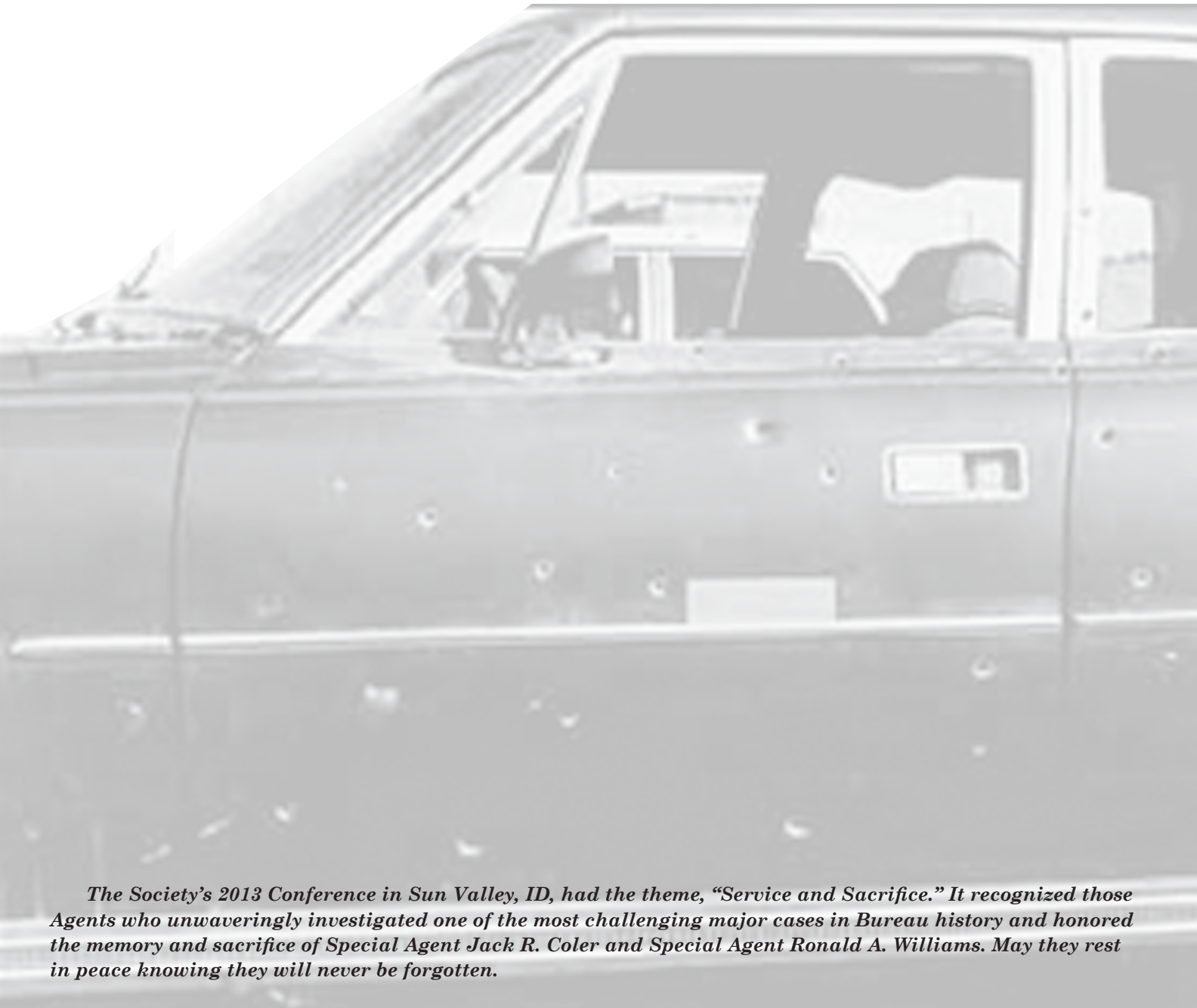
Coler and Williams met the next morning to continue their search in the Oglala area. Just before noon, traveling in separate Bureau vehicles, they spotted and followed a red Suburban turning off Highway 18 onto a muddy road leading to a small farm. In the Suburban were Leonard Peltier and two Indian teenagers, one of whom was Norman Charles.

We know what happened next as the Suburban stopped at a distance and Jack Coler and Ron Williams came under rifle fire. Within minutes, others from the AIM camp joined in, pinning the two Agents in a deadly crossfire in an open field. Ron radioed for help, trying desperately to describe their location. When the initial firing stopped, they were both severely wounded. Ron

took off his shirt and waved it as a sign that they would surrender to their attackers. Although he was wounded three times, he then used the shirt as a tourniquet around Jack's horribly injured arm. Finally, the AIM cowards summarily executed them and escaped into the hills.

Jack and Ron's bravery in the line of duty has been recognized:

- Their names are chiseled in granite at the Law Enforcement Memorial in Washington, DC
- A portion of the Denver Division bears Jack's name
- The newly dedicated Minneapolis Division building bears their names
- Since April 2000 a Web site honors their memory while dismantling the myth and folklore surrounding Leonard Peltier for nearly four decades
- On Dec. 15, 2000, hundreds of FBI and law enforcement personnel — on their own time — made a dignified procession to the White House to deliver more than 10,000 signatures and petitions asking the President not to consider clemency for the murderer of the two Agents. This effort was successful — then.



*The Society's 2013 Conference in Sun Valley, ID, had the theme, "Service and Sacrifice." It recognized those Agents who unwaveringly investigated one of the most challenging major cases in Bureau history and honored the memory and sacrifice of Special Agent Jack R. Coler and Special Agent Ronald A. Williams. May they rest in peace knowing they will never be forgotten.*