

Injured Henry deputy shares life lessons with 2018 - Newton Citizen, The (GA) - May 27, 2018

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STOCKBRIDGE — As he lay there on the floor of the house that day — in and out of consciousness, blood draining from his body where the bullet tore through him — in those moments hovering between life and death, he clearly remembers telling God, "I'm good either way."

Henry County Deputy Ralph Sidwell "Sid" Callaway and his partner Deputy Michael D. Corley were just doing their duty Feb. 9, serving an arrest warrant to a man who had failed to appear in court on traffic violations. The man had reportedly been cited for illegally parking a commercial vehicle, and photos of his house on Feb. 9 show a big rig truck parked in the driveway.

Soon after they arrived, the deputies suspected trouble, according to Callaway. They quickly realized the man was not going to cooperate. Callaway said the perpetrator was becoming verbally combative and his behavior was escalating toward a confrontation. The deputies called for back-up.

Locust Grove Police Officer Chase Maddox responded, and within minutes arrived on the scene.

The deputies were at the house on St. Francis Court in the Hawthorne at Linden Park subdivision in Locust Grove to arrest **Tierre Guthrie**, who was charged with not showing up in court.

In earlier published reports, Henry County Sheriff Keith McBrayer said the deputies were there with a warrant involving city citations that Guthrie could have cleared up by paying a fine. The deputies stood in Guthrie's doorway trying to reason with him, but he refused to cooperate. The sheriff said Guthrie made it clear he was not going anywhere with anybody.

Neighbors said it sounded like firecrackers going off in the house on St. Francis Court.

"There was a lot that happened in a short period of time," Callaway remembers. "It was a physical fight, a gun fight and so forth."

Reports state Guthrie retreated up some stairs in the house, produced a gun and fired it. Corley was hit in the vest. Callaway was hit just below his vest in his stomach. Maddox was struck three times, according to GBI reports. The 26-year-old officer was killed by a gunshot to the head. Guthrie was also killed.

Callaway, who is still recovering from his injuries, recently spoke at the baccalaureate service for the 2018 graduating class at Community Christian School on Jodeco Road in Stockbridge. He shared with them a little about what happened that day and encouraged the young men and women to be prepared for the future, have a relationship with Jesus Christ and to make their lives

count for something.

"On Feb. 9, in just a few seconds, my life came to a sudden halt," he told the students. "Everything would change. Everything would be different. My whole perspective on things would be different. When the shooting was over, all of a sudden I realized I was hurt pretty bad. I was laying on the floor. I couldn't breathe. I couldn't open my eyes anymore. Without being told, I knew I was pretty bad off."

Callaway said that as a long time member of law enforcement, he had experienced trouble before, but nothing like what happened that day on St. Francis Court. He had experienced sports injuries time and again and had even fought cancer, but he said this was much more serious.

"I was laying there and I told God, I said, 'God, I'm good either way because I know where I'm going. I know where I'm going.' I knew if that would have been it, that time, that day, I would be all right. So it pays to be ready because you don't ever know. A few seconds is a short period of time. It blows my mind how short a period of time that is."

A long-time Christian and serious athlete, Callaway told the graduates it pays to be ready spiritually, mentally, emotionally and physically.

"Eat right, sleep right, exercise, play, stay on top of things," he told them. "You've got to keep yourselves ready. Your body's got to carry you a long way, hopefully. The doctors told my family and me that if I had not been in the physical condition I was in, I would not have made it."

Callaway said he was in "very, very good shape" on Feb. 9. He loved to exercise and regularly wrote out daily exercise plans for himself, but said that morning, an interesting thing happened.

"When my clock went off like it does every day at 4:00, I got up," he said. "I don't hesitate about it, I don't think about it, I just get up. But I did start thinking about the workout I had written for that morning. I said — and I don't know why I said this — but said, 'If for some reason I was told this morning that I wouldn't get to work out for a long time and I was going to get way out of shape, would I still do this workout today?' My answer to myself was 'Yes,' so I did it and didn't think about it anymore."

Another interesting thing happened that morning for Callaway, who said his routine when he was on duty was always the same. After getting up and exercising, he would shower, get dressed and unload his weapon before practicing drawing his gun a few times. He would load it back up and leave for work. That is what he always did. But on Feb. 9, he did everything as usual, got dressed and was almost out the door before he realized he had forgotten to practice drawing his weapon.

"I thought to myself that I don't have to do this every day and I don't need to practice today," he said. "But then all of a sudden I thought today might be the day. I don't know why. God was so gracious to help me get ready. I unloaded my weapon, practiced and went on about my business."

He used that experience to tell the students they need to have some "non-negotiables" in life.

"You have to make decisions," he said. "You can't give excuses. I try to live with purpose on

purpose. John Piper (a Christian author) said, 'We live in a dream world of insignificance expanding into nothingness.' And that's because we don't make decisions. We don't do things. We just want to sit around and play games all the time. You've got to sit around and play games some of the time, but not all the time. You've got to be strong to the finish. There's a whole world out there needing you, wanting you and got to have you. I've got to have you out there making a difference."

Callaway has sought to make a difference since he was a senior at Stockbridge High School and decided to become a Christian. He went to the University of Georgia where he majored in criminal justice and played football for the legendary coach Vince Dooley.

After college, Callaway worked as a police officer for Athens-Clarke County before moving back to Henry County and becoming a reserve deputy for the sheriff's department. For the past 25 years, Callaway has been in full-time ministry with the Fellowship of Christian Athletes where he works with coaches and athletes, hires and trains chaplains and works with college athletic programs. He said working as a reserve deputy is also part of his ministry and service to the community where he and his family live. The former Sunday School teacher and his wife, LuAnn, are members of Eagle's Landing First Baptist Church.

Callaway is proud of his son Jacob, a combat veteran of Afghanistan and a police officer for another local Georgia city. He is also a new grandfather with the birth of his granddaughter nine months ago. Callaway's wife and son stayed by his side throughout his hospital stay. He was taken from the scene by helicopter to Atlanta Medical Center. Callaway praises the doctors and hospital staff and said he wants to thank his fellow members of law enforcement, emergency personnel, the EMTs and firefighters for their care, support and presence throughout this ordeal. He said he is trying to track them all down to thank them. He also wants to thank members of the community for their phone calls, gifts and other expressions of concern and support.

He said God is using this experience to open some new doors for him and giving him an opportunity to talk to people about his faith.

The deputy becomes emotional talking about Maddox and Corley. He did not know Maddox prior to that day. The young man was a husband and father of a son with another child on the way when he was killed.

"He was a true warrior," Callaway said. "We couldn't have asked for better help, and I don't even like to talk about it sometimes, but it was such a tragedy that a young man lost his life. I have a son in his age range. He was a true warrior, very brave, a true hero."

Callaway was determined to attend the funeral for Maddox and convinced doctors to let him leave the hospital early. He was taken by ambulance and law enforcement escort to the funeral and then escorted to his Henry County home where he continues to recuperate and regain his strength.

As for Corley, Callaway remembers that even after his partner was shot and wounded, he tried to pull Callaway out of the house to safety. When Callaway said he couldn't move any more, Corley stood over him, protecting him.

"I am very thankful for him," Callaway said. "He's my true partner, my true brother forever."

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