

Introduction

To serve and protect. Those are the simple words most often attributed to the world of a law enforcement officer. And that is how Corporal Mike Roberts went about his life, serving and protecting the citizens of this community.

Law Enforcement Officers face the unknown out on the streets each and every day. It is our job to question the suspicious, to engage danger, to guard the weak and remove the treacherous. By it's very nature, police work is an inherently dangerous business.

Mike took every precaution to avoid those dangers. He was a tactically sound officer who struck an imposing figure, with a command presence. He trained seriously in every aspect of police work to include officer safety and firearms skills. You would never find him on duty without his bullet resistant vest. He covered all of the bases, even admonishing his wife Cindy to never say 'Goodbye' when he left for work, only 'See you in the morning'.

By everyone's account, Mike was an outstanding police officer who was very cautious. For these and so many other reasons, it is impossible to make sense of the tragic loss of such a fine man. And therein lies the core of our pain. It is our job to solve problems and to right that which is wrong. The stark reality is that we cannot fix this situation, we cannot bring Mike back.

All that is left for us to do is honor his memory and the sacrifice that he and his family have made. Mike touched so many people in countless ways by the life he led. The turnout today is a testimony, not only to the brother and sisterhood of law enforcement, but also to the contribution that he made in the lives of his family, friends and the community in which he served.

Personal

Mike was born in Clearwater, Florida on May 12, 1971. When he was eight he moved to St. John's Newfoundland with his brother and mother. His mother is Canadian and wanted to be near her

parents. Mike attended Memorial University where he earned a Bachelor's Degree. He returned to Tampa after graduation with \$300 dollars in his pocket and a desire to succeed. After a brief career at Western Auto he joined the Tampa Police Department in 1998. Around the same time he signed up for the Army Reserves. He was promptly sent to Bosnia, which delayed his start at TPD. He was also a member of the Air Force Reserves until his military contract was completed.

Mike and Cindy met while both were at work. He was working an extra duty job, for another officer, at the bank where Cindy worked. Cindy was filling in for another co-worker that day, as well. Her brother, who is a Hillsborough County Sheriff's Deputy had educated her on the boring nature of some extra duty jobs. As such Cindy took it upon herself to strike up a conversation with Mike in between the applicants she was dealing with. When Mike left for the day, she watched him walk to his car thinking "He is

such a nice guy, it's a shame I'll never be able to talk to him again". Apparently she made an impression on him, because Mike called the branch several days later to get her office number and they have been together ever since. They were married in May of 2003 and shared their love of travel until the birth of their son Adam, who then became the center of their lives.

Mike had Adam's life planned before he was ever born. He would be a K9 handler just like his Dad. The deal was sealed when Mike and Troy Neal performed a demo for Adam's pre-K class. A demo that Adam still talks about today.

It is easy to see that Mike was a loving and caring husband, a wonderful father and a great son. The seemingly insurmountable sorrow that we in law enforcement feel from this loss is far eclipsed by the devastation of losing a family member. So to Mike's family, I give you our gratitude, unending support and recognition of the sacrifice that you have made. Your strength and

grace sustains us in this time of sorrow.

This tragedy has profoundly affected us all. From Mayor Iorio, who has stood shoulder to shoulder during all of our tragedies, to the most recently hired officer. We offer our deepest sympathy and future support.

Career Highlights

Mike was an officer with exceptional skills. He patrolled the streets, spent time training our recruits as a Field Training Officer and of course performed as a K9 officer. He had been promoted to the rank of corporal and assigned to the Uniform Patrol Division to help supervise a squad. He currently had a pending transfer to the Major Crimes Bureau to assume new duties as a detective.

But if you had to pick the one assignment that was his passion, it would have to be the K9 Squad. Mike loved his job as a K9 officer.

He was very proud of his most recent dog Ruger or Roger, depending on who you talked to. The dog arrived with the name Ruger, but once his certification was complete, the paperwork came back with the name Roger. In keeping with his sense of humor, Mike refused to have it corrected and demanded that everyone start calling his menacing K9 Roger.

Roger actually had one of the highest bite ratios on the K9 Squad. Unfortunately, Mike suffered most of those bites. That dog was one of the meanest we've have ever had or maybe he was just angry about that name change.

Mike was also a problem solver. One evening, while he and his squad mates Chris and Mike were training at the Palma Ceia ballpark, they received a call of a burglary in progress. They all rushed to the call, but Mike never made it. Come to find out he was not very familiar with the South end of town, which is known to be a confusing area to patrol. He had gotten lost. The next day at roll

call, Mike proudly displayed his brand new GPS, vowing never to miss another call.

The commendations are endless, from saving a suicidal man to most recently when Mike received an Excellent Duty Award for an incident involving a lost child. As young children will do, 3 year old Elizabeth Chandler slipped from her mother's watchful eye. Officers searched everywhere for her to no avail. A blood-hound was summoned to the scene. As officers awaited it's arrival, Mike refused to just sit idle. After all it was a child the age of his son. He went through the parking lot one more time and found Elizabeth locked inside a sweltering car. As Captain Marcotrigiano wrote in his commendation "Elizabeth was soaked by her own body sweat and was screaming uncontrollably. You reached for little Elizabeth and she embraced you with open arms". We can take comfort in the knowledge that, despite the best efforts of co-workers, rescue personnel and Tampa General Trauma staff, late Wednesday evening God reached for Mike and embraced him with open arms.

Closing

There is so much to say about Mike. His sense of humor, his love for the Bucs and the Lightning. The loyalty as a friend, the compassion for the victims he encountered. He made such an impact in so many lives. Little Elizabeth Chandler, who in all probability is alive today because of Mike's vigilance, is in the audience today.

Cindy shared with me that she and Mike and Adam spent time together as a family before he went to work last Wednesday. She took comfort in knowing that nothing was left unsaid as he walked out the door for the last time. I believe that Mike would want us all to take time to say what needs to be said and do those things that are important in life, as we are never guaranteed tomorrow.

Today we say goodbye to Corporal Mike Roberts but this is not the last day we will remember his service and sacrifice. His name is

now etched upon the police memorial along with 28 other Tampa Police Officers who died in the line of duty for our city and community. And for many generations to come, after we are all gone, he will be remembered each May at our Memorial Service when we honor those whose names grace our monument. Corporal Roberts is gone from us today, but he will never be forgotten.