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Sheriff commends deputies, thanks voters for their support



Commander of Sons of Confederate Veterans Camp #2086 ('The Dixie Defenders') Daryl Ratterree reads information as he stands at the podium during the presentation of a plaque and medal to Dixie County Sheriff Dewey Hatcher Sr. on Thursday morning (Aug. 3) in Cross City.

Story and Photos

By Jeff M. Hardison © Aug. 3, 2017 at 4:27 p.m.

CROSS CITY -- Upon his acceptance of a national annual award from an organization on Thursday morning (Aug. 3), the High Sheriff of Dixie County commended all of the deputies of the Dixie County Sheriff's Office for their heroism every day and night.

Sheriff Dewey Hatcher Sr. thanked the Sons of Confederate Veterans for the award presented to him during the regular meeting of the Dixie County Board of County Commissioners. He also thanked all of the voters who put their confidence in his leadership of the Sheriff's Office.

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Observing the action at the podium as they look to the left are (from left) Dixie County Clerk Dana Johnson, County Commissioner Gene Higginbotham, County Commissioner Mark Hatch, County Commission Chairman Jason Holifield, County Commissioner David Osteen, County Commissioner W.C. Mills, County Manager Timothy W. Alexander and County Attorney Rhett Bullard.



Daryl Ratterree (left) and Dixie County Sheriff Dewey Hatcher Sr. pause for a photo opportunity after the plaque presentation.

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Daryl Ratterree (left) shows everyone the medal to be presented to Dixie County Sheriff Dewey Hatcher Sr.

The sheriff's short acceptance speech highlights his feelings about the whole team of law enforcement officers in Dixie County, and reflects his appreciation for the people who put him in office.

Daryl Ratterree, the lieutenant commander of the Florida Division of the Sons of Confederate Veterans, led the program which included the presentation of a plaque and medal to Sheriff Hatcher. Ratterree is also the commander of Sons of Confederate Veterans Camp #2086, "The Dixie Defenders," based in Cross City.

Another presenter on Thursday morning was SCV Florida 7th Brig. Cmdr. Clement Lindsey of the SCV John Hance O'Steen Camp #770 of Trenton. Lindsey also is a past commander of SCV Camp #1424 Madison-Starke-Perry of Gainesville.

The SCV National Awards Banquet was held on July 22. This is an annual event when awards are presented to Sons of Confederate Veterans from around the nation.

One award issued outside the ranks of SCV members, Ratterree said, is the J. Edgar Hoover Memorial Award. It is issued with the Hoover Law and Order Medal, he said.

There is a maximum of two of these prestigious awards issued each year, Ratterree said. This award reflects that the SCV supports the "Blue Lives Matter" campaign, Ratterree said.

It is awarded for "outstanding acts of heroism in the face of extreme danger," Ratterree said.

This award presented to Sheriff Hatcher results from action the sheriff took on July 23, 2014, Ratterree said.

The sheriff ended a chase that began in Ocala, went all the way through Marion County, and then all of the way through Levy County before it was halted on the southern end of Cross City.

A vehicle was reported stolen from Too Your Health Spa, 2841 S.W. 20th St. in Ocala that day, according to Ocala Police Department records.

Law enforcement officers from the OPD, Marion County Sheriff's Office, Williston Police Department, Levy County Sheriff's Office, Chiefland Police Department and the Dixie County Sheriff's Office chased a suspected vehicle thief from Marion County on U.S. Alt. 27 through Williston, Levy County, Bronson, and then onto U.S. Highway 19 through Chiefland, Old Town and Dixie County, before the suspect vehicle crashed on U.S. Highway 19 south of Cross City.

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Sheriff Hatcher is the law enforcement officer who forced the vehicle off the road in a PIT maneuver.

The PIT maneuver, or precision immobilization technique, is a pursuit tactic by which a pursuing car can force a fleeing car to abruptly turn sideways, causing the driver to lose control and stop. It was developed and named by the Fairfax County Police Department of Virginia

The vehicle stopped by the sheriff in July of 2014 was a Dodge Ram 2500 series.

Before this end of that chase, Sheriff Hatcher was in a chair at his dentist's office, Ratterree said, when it became clear the subject was not going to stop; but would be eluding law enforcement officers and going into Dixie County.

"Sheriff Hatcher excused himself from his dental appointment, in an effort to stop and assist in stopping this suspect," Ratterree said.

The sheriff hit the stolen vehicle with his own, which caused it to crash, Ratterree said, "... ending this high speed chase, which endangered many citizens and law enforcement personnel in the Tri-County Area, covering over 100 miles of roadway."

The sheriff conducted the action himself rather than endangering any of his deputies' lives in case the maneuver went wrong, Ratterree said. Sheriff Hatcher chose the area to conduct the action to keep the vehicle out of Cross City, Ratterree said.

This helped reduce the chances for many people being injured or killed by the suspect's blatant disregard for laws, law enforcement and for the suspect's disregard for lives and property, Ratterree said.

Ratterree mentioned the loss of the life of Capt. Chad Allen Reed, Sr.

Capt. Reed had served with the Dixie County Sheriff's Office for 13 years and was a graduate of the 238th session of the FBI National Academy. He was shot and killed on Jan. 14, 2010, after a high speed pursuit and then a shootout in Dixie County.

"Sheriff Hatcher," Ratterree said. "the Sons of Confederate Veterans local, state and national, wish to commend you on your actions on July 23, 2014.

Lindsey read from the plaque, which was signed by the national commander in chief of the SCV.

Ratterree presented the sheriff with a plaque. Then Ratterree presented the 2017 Hoover Law and Order Medal to Sheriff Hatcher, which has his name engraved on the back of the medal.

"I want to accept this on behalf of the whole Sheriff's Office," Sheriff Hatcher said. "This is just something that happened that particular day, that I did.

"I have people on the line every day," Sheriff Hatcher continued, "24-hours-a-day. Every morning, they put on their uniform and go to work. They never know what they are going to be confronted with, what they are going to be having to deal with during that daytime or night."

The sheriff said he appreciates the SCV's presentation of the plaque and medal.

Hatcher said he is thankful to the voters, too, for letting him be the sheriff for as long as he has been sheriff.

"I enjoy the job," Sheriff Hatcher said. "I hate when things like this happen, but I like in this instance here, where this individual is not out on the street..."

This vehicle thief had endangered hundreds of lives along the roads from Marion County, through Levy County and into Dixie County.

Ratterree said this prestigious award went to people in the nation this year.

The other recipient this year was Sheriff Mike Blakely of Limestone County, Alabama.

Also present during the presentation Thursday was SVC Camp #2086 Lt. Cmdr. Joe F. Mikell, SCV Camp #770 member (and past SCV Camp #1424 commander) Shellie Downs, SCV Camp #2086 member Harvey Resnick, SCV Camp #770 member Harvard Burney, 7th Brigade Photographer Heather Burney of Zephyrhills and others.

Following are two archived 2014 photos from the *HardisonInk.com* coverage of that event then.

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Levy County Undersheriff Brett Beauchamp (right) and three other LCSO members walk away from assisting a motorist after they departed from the chase. In this photo taken at 9:16 a.m. on Wednesday (July 23, 2014), the officers are walking northbound on the western shoulder of southbound U.S. Highway 19 in the unincorporated part of Levy County north of Chiefland.



In this photo, a ShandsCair helicopter prepares to launch (July 23, 2014) from just south of the crash site in Dixie County, south of Cross City. Behind the helicopter is a crumpled black truck in the southbound lane of U.S. 19. Dixie County Fire-EMS attended the victims and controlled the landing site for safety.