
On December 23, 2009, Henderson County Sheriff's Deputy Steve Ridgeway was off duty, Christmas shopping with his son at the Blue Ridge Mall when he noticed a suspicious looking individual walking among the cars parked near K-Mart at the Blue Ridge Mall. He also spotted a GEO Tracker that seemed to be moving in concert with the individual on foot. As Ridgeway maintained surveillance on the suspicious individual, he lost sight of him for a moment. A vehicle theft alarm seemed to startle the suspect who then reappeared to Ridgeway's view, and walked quickly toward the mall, away from the parking area. He then entered the mall near K-Mart and then proceeded directly out the back door into the rear parking lot of the mall. The Deputy told his son to standby at K-Mart while he went out to see what the individual was up to. Again he noticed the Geo Tracker vehicle and witnessed conversation between the suspect on foot and the suspect driving the vehicle. It was clear to Deputy Ridgeway that the one individual on foot was casing vehicles, looking for valuables, while the other was providing lookout and security. The Deputy then observed the tracker stop near a Ford Mustang parked in the parking lot. The individual on foot got into the Mustang and appeared to be looking for something. At this time, the Deputy called for back up and approached both of the individuals. He identified himself as a Deputy Sheriff and held them until help arrived. The suspect, Samuel Taylor, was in the process of rifling through the glove compartment of the vehicle when the Deputy confronted him.

The NC State Highway Patrol had a unit close by and that officer was first to arrive on the scene. Very quickly, police officers from Hendersonville Police Department arrived on the scene to take control of the suspects and the investigation.

"HPD and SHP were there fast said Ridgeway. Police detectives found other evidence linking the two to other crimes".

Sheriff Davis was quick to praise Ridgeway for "being alert and involved, even while trying to spend quality family time shopping with his son. I know I say it all the time; but we are blessed to have the officers that we have in this community. All of them! Hendersonville Police, our State Troopers. It's a great feeling to work together with the caliber of law enforcement we have in this area."

Capt Charles McDonald
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