

County Marshal stepping down after 28 years

By Megan Broome
Staff Writer

Roy Lovell served as County Marshal since 1991, and with the end of 2019 also came the end of his time in the position.

"I'm very, very thankful for the job I've had and the opportunity I've had," Lovell said in an interview on December 27, prior to him leaving office. "[I've] been very blessed."

Born and raised in Rabun County, Lovell said that he was always inspired to go into law enforcement because of family members, particularly his father, who was a probation officer for the state of Georgia.

"I already had it in my blood," Lovell said about going into public safety.

Before becoming Marshal, Lovell worked part-time at the Sheriff's Office and also worked at Burlington Industries for 14 years.

He was asked by Tommy Turpin, who was Marshal in 1990, to be Deputy Marshal. Lovell then was appointed Marshal in the fall of 1991.

Lovell said that the Rabun County Board of Commissioners created the office of the County Marshal in 1986, with Truie Miller as the first.

"We are certified peace officers under the state of Georgia," Lovell said of the position of Marshal.

He said that the Marshal has to be sworn in under each new Sheriff who gets elected.

Lovell said that the responsibilities of the Marshal's Office have expanded over the years.

"There's been a lot of growth in this department, which I'm proud of," Lovell said.

He said that departmental job duties can consist of dealing with building and grounds, recycling and county ordinances, as well as the Adopt-A-Highway program.



Megan Broome/The Clayton Tribune

Roy Lovell's last day as Rabun County Marshal was December 31. He had served in the position since 1991.

Lovell said that the Marshals Office also helps issue beer, wine and liquor licenses and collects taxes from public accommodations, which is short-term weekend rentals.

Lovell said that the Marshal has to pass state certifications in order to work in the position.

Maintaining signs and preventing theft of signs around Rabun County was a large part of Lovell's job, he explained, and is something that he is passionate about.

"That's something near and dear to my heart," Lovell said.

He said that groups would often make it a game to see who could collect the most signs and would go around the county stealing them.

Lovell said that he is passionate about stopping sign theft because it is a public safety risk, especially to those not familiar with the area.

The signs distinguish where certain services are, such as hospitals and police departments, and not having them could potentially cost someone their life because they would not know where to go in an emergency.

Lovell said that it's also important for people to have their 911 numbers on their mailboxes as well as their house.

The Marshals Office also oversees probation for misdemeanors as well as traffic court.

"I've got good probation officers who really care about those people," Lovell said about current probation officers Tammy Walker and Shelia Payne.

Lovell said that probation is managed under the guidance of state regulations, so the department has to report everything to the state.

Helping people is Lovell's ultimate goal and he said he prefers to give people second chances rather than always writing citations for violations.

"I like helping people," Lovell said. He said he does give out citations when he has to but prefers to give people the resources to improve and become compliant.

Lovell said that he learned a lot from working with different kinds of people over the years.

"Meeting the people from different walks of life," Lovell said was his favorite part of the job. "You really learn a lot from meeting different people."

Lovell said that he felt it was just time for him to go and passed the reins off to Tony Galloway, who is the new Marshal effective January 1.

"I've been really blessed to have this job," Lovell said. "It's not always been a pleasant job, but it's been a rewarding job."

Lovell said that he will miss it but gained a lot of good memories along the way.

"I'm looking forward to the next chapter in my life," Lovell said.

Although he's not sure exactly what will be written in that chapter, he plans to continue serving the community he has always been a part of.

Lovell was recently appointed to the Board of Elections and Tammy Whitmire, elections supervisor, said she looks forward to having him.

"He's been a real asset to the county all of these years," Whitmire said. "He's got a servant's heart."