

A Message from Sheriff Schultz on April 27, 2018:

It is important to the community we serve to provide them some information that the investigation has uncovered so far – it is not an “answer” by any means, but they deserve to know what we know so our healing may begin. I am only going to speak about this person one last time, then send him back into obscurity where he came from and, frankly, belongs.

John Hubert Highnote was a 59 year old white male from Bell, Florida. He was overweight, balding, and had a white beard. He is described as a “recluse” and a “loner” by the few people who knew him. His neighbors did not see him, nor were they even able to describe him. There are a few suggested photos floating around on the internet of men that bear a striking resemblance – none of those found to date are him. There is another man who bears the same name, and a somewhat similar description, offered to law enforcement and members of the media – that is not him. The only photograph we’ve uncovered thus far is his driver’s license photo, and those images are not public record. He had no social media or online presence that unmasks him.

To date, no clear motive has been established. And whatever we ultimately learn, no motive could ever be enough for the families of Noel and Taylor. What we do know is that he left his home on Thursday, April 19, 2018 with the ability and apparent intent to kill people. He was armed with two rifles, a handgun, and ample ammunition for each weapon. When he was finished at the Ace China restaurant, he shot himself in his vehicle in the parking lot, just around the corner from where Taylor and Noel died.

There is information in our community that he went to a former employer’s business before he killed our deputies. We can confirm that he did go to that day to a business in Newberry where was employed roughly two and a half (2 ½) years ago. We do not know what his intent was in going there, but as employees approached him, as a cowards like him will often do, he fled before they reached him.

The investigation has identified but a few contacts with law enforcement over a period of roughly 40 years, most of which are traffic offenses. These incidents were so widely spaced by time, distance, and apparent relevance, that no connections or indications of future violence like this were identified nor could they have been linked together.

The violence he perpetrated on Noel and Taylor can never be explained. They were simply assassinated while having a meal.

In summary, I’d like to share the following: The law enforcement community nationwide answers a call to serve – no matter what the problem. We are tasked now, more than ever, with identifying, intervening, and protecting those who are in crisis.

Law enforcement as a whole is getting better at identifying those who are battling mental health issues. We ask only one, simple thing: PLEASE STOP SHOOTING. Give us, the Deputies, Police Officers and First Responders who arrive a chance to help you. Please don’t shoot us or anyone else. We want to help you. Let us help you. Please don’t shoot us.

And if you know someone who is suffering, or have concerns about their behavior – don’t just write it off as “odd.” Let us know so we can help before it’s too late. We’ll continue to answer the call, to serve our communities, and we sign up knowing there is risk. But we expect to have a chance – please don’t just shoot us before we can make a difference.

Thank you for remembering what Noel and Taylor were here for.