

# Carroll...from Page 1A

in November, said on Friday that he's got plenty to keep him busy in retirement, though he'll definitely miss the job.

"I'm going to miss my guys – I've been around them, and they're like family," said Carroll. "But I'm looking

forward to retirement because I haven't gotten to spend a whole lot of time with my family."

He also plans to resume fixing up classic cars and drag racing, and he'll be traveling quite a bit this summer with his popular gospel singing group

called By His Grace.

"The community has backed me all the way," said Carroll, reflecting on his career. "I couldn't ask for a better place to work than over here. I'm going to miss it, but it's time for me to go."

Regarding his successor at the Police Department, assistant chief turned Police Chief Michael Baxter, Carroll said that "he's a great guy – they're getting a good one. It'll go on just like it is now."

A specially dedicated cake and other refreshments were served at the retirement reception, and Blairsville Mayor Jim Conley shared a few words about Carroll and offered a prayer before everyone started eating.

"He's going to be missed a lot by me," said Conley. "He's more than a chief to me and always has been for the last 14 years. He's a true friend, and Joan, his wife, is also.

"I'm going to miss them but thank God they live right here close to town and we'll be seeing them."

For her part, Joan said she and Johnny will have been married for 51 years this March, and that she enjoyed seeing so many people attend that day.

"He's going to have more time to do some of the things



A classic photo of the Union County Sheriff's Office from back in the day.

that he's always wanted to do," said Joan. "I'm happy for him that he'll have time to do that and that we'll have more time to spend together. That's great, too."

Continued Joan, "It's just been unreal, all the people that have called and come by, and all these people here – this is just wonderful."

Their son, Shannon, retired from his career with the Georgia State Patrol last April, so in a way, the father and son duo started their law enforcement careers together and finished close to the same time.

"He's loved around here," said Shannon. "He's loved and respected. I wish I could have been more like him in that sense. You don't see anybody around here that doesn't like him.

"He's a good man, always has been, and a good father. I couldn't be any prouder."

Added Shannon, "I've seen people over the years that he's locked up that think the world of him, that come and shake his hand. I've seen them thank him for locking them up. It's like he hasn't got any enemies, even the people that he's put behind bars over the years."

Right alongside Carroll for many of those arrests was his assistant chief Michael Baxter, who realizes he's got big shoes to fill in the years ahead as the new chief.

"He's been a good boss to us, a good leader and a good friend," said Baxter, who has been with Blairsville PD for 18 and a half years. "I hope he enjoys his retirement, but on the other hand, we hate to see him go."

Shawn Dyer will be filling the assistant chief position vacated by Baxter, and he, too, has enjoyed serving under Johnny Carroll for so many years.

"He made the Police Department a success, from going with no Police Department back to a Police Department – he's done really well with it," said Dyer.

Blairsville Municipal Court Clerk Cindy Neely has been with the city for going on 18 years, so she has served with Carroll since about the time the department re-formed.

Neely and the rest of the Blairsville Police Department were instrumental in setting up the Jan. 11 retirement reception, and she said it was hard being there that day because it signified the end of an era.

"He's a good man," Neely



Johnny and Joan Carroll, right, with their son, Shannon Carroll. Photo by Shawn Jarrard



Johnny Carroll opening a card from friends Earl and Lynn Swinehart at the chief's Jan. 11 retirement reception. Photo by Shawn Jarrard

said of Carroll. "He'll never be replaced. He's kindhearted, he's done so much for people behind the scenes that they'll never know.

"He is a great leader. He led with a gentle but firm hand, and it's just a great place to work. When people come to work here, they don't want to leave."

Union County Sheriff Mack Mason also attended the retirement reception, and he newly deputized the Blairsville Police Officers into the county while he was there.

"I've known him for many, many years and respect him," said Sheriff Mason of Carroll. "Several of my deputies work for the Police Department. The city has three or four officers that work with the Sheriff's office part-time.

"So, I'm real pleased that we have that relationship. I don't know of any other place that it exists to where the sheriff allows his deputies to work part-time for the police department and vice-versa.

"It's all about cooperation and doing the very best we can to serve and protect our citizens.

I'm very, very fortunate that we have this relationship, and I'm sure that it's going to continue now that Michael Baxter has become the chief."

Lynn Swinehart, like so many others who attended Carroll's public retirement reception, said she was proud of him for the job he's done over the years.

Carroll thinks of Swinehart like a sister – the two struck up a friendship when Carroll's mother, Opal, was at the Union County Nursing Home. Swinehart took good care of his mother there, and they've been close ever since.

"He's an amazing man with a huge heart," said Swinehart. "He loves to help people. He has been one of the best friends I've ever had in my life. He's been there when I've needed him."

In fact, Chief Carroll has always been there whenever Blairsville needed him, and the North Georgia News – headquartered in the city of Blairsville – thanks him and congratulates the retired chief on a job well done.

# Holcomb...from Page 1A

his truck, and it pinned young Easton against the backside of another vehicle, crushing the boy as his mother, loading groceries at the time, held onto his hand.

Witnesses at the scene described Holcomb as having been slumped in the driver seat of his vehicle, as if sleeping.

Due to the tragic nature

of the situation and the fact that Holcomb is the son of a White County commissioner, the case garnered much media attention in Cleveland, so Holcomb's trial was to have been held here in Union County this year.

For his crimes, Holcomb received a sentence of 20 years in prison, of which he will have to serve at least 14 years behind bars.

Holcomb had an extensive criminal record involving drugs and alcohol at the time of his arrest for the death of Easton Cain.



James Holcomb

## Bell Ringing Union County Old Courthouse



January 2, 2019

In memory of Virginia B. Meeks Birthday

by Ginger and Terry Meeks

January 21, 2019

In memory of Dollie C. Meeks Anniversary

by Ginger and Terry Meeks

Bell ringing information at 706-745-5493