

Dave Godfrey took great pride in 'protecting the flock'

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There's a saying among police officers, suggesting there are three different types of people in the world — sheep, wolves and sheepdogs.

Sheep are the trusting sort, wolves the predators who prey on others and sheepdogs help protect the flock.

Of the three, former Det.-Sgt. Dave Godfrey was a sheepdog through-and-through, according to his friend, Staff-Sgt. Peter Button.

"Dave was a strong charismatic man. He spent his life taking care of and helping others," he said, referring to his old friend from the Toronto police.

Godfrey died in April after suffering a massive heart attack in the middle of the night at his Keswick home.

He had been enduring back pain for months prior to that night, the doctors not realizing that three out of his four heart arteries had become blocked.

Thankfully for his entire family, only a few months previous, he experienced what his wife, Nancy, would call one of the proudest moments of his 62 years — the moment he walked his daughter down the aisle.

It was that day he gave Nicole away to her husband and his new son-in-law, Tyler McAuley.

"He was so proud to be her father," Nancy recalled, becoming choked up as she reminisced about the man she loved for so long. "He's left a huge hole in our lives."

Thirty-three years earlier, the pair met in Toronto. They started dating and got married a few short months later.

Two years after that, their only child, Nicole, was born.

It was on the opening day of bass fishing season that they'd welcome their bundle of joy, who would revel in her father's attention, eventually becoming a lawyer.

"When I was young, my dad was my first teacher," she said. "I remember learning how to add and subtract and tell time with him before it was taught in school. My dad taught me how to swim, skate, ride a bike, drive a car and a boat and, most importantly, how to fish, shoot a shotgun and a rifle and use a bow and arrow."

Nicole recalled following years when she would accompany her dad as his new bass fishing sidekick in and around her birthday.

He didn't only spend his time teaching his daughter, but many others around him, acting as a firearms instructor with the Toronto Police College, where he helped shift the police force from the old .38 calibre revolver to the modern semi-automatic pistol and, eventually, work with Button.

The pair would develop a long and cherished

relationship, that saw Button and Godfrey spend their free time together, fishing, skeet shooting, eating porterhouse steaks and even skinny dipping on New Year's in freezing Lake Simcoe, near Godfrey's home.

"We were enjoying an adult beverage in the (hot) tub when, all of a sudden, Dave yelled, 'It's time boys,' he said, before the three ran down to the lake with the moon shining off their bare backsides.

"After I got over my initial surprise, it occurred to me that maybe there was something to what people said about folks who live in Keswick," he added.

He recounted stories about just how rare Godfrey used to enjoy his steaks and also reminisced about the time he and Godfrey went fishing with former York Regional Police chief Julian Fantino, with Godfrey wryly telling him he'd "fish" his cellphone out of the water when the chief threatened to throw it into the lake should he receive "one more call".

But most of all, Godfrey was a family man, Button said, remarking how proud he was of his wife and daughter.

"He was very proud of them both — I know because he told me so," he said.

Nicole might have said it best when she recounted how she dealt with the heartache left where her "daddy" used to stand.

"My dad was the strongest person I know and



Dave Godfrey

what he would want most is for us all to take a deep breath, have a drink, plan our next step and Git'R'Done," the lawyer said. "And, so, we will, and we will take all that he taught us and the amazing impression he made on all of our lives with us. And we will all be better and stronger people for having had him in our lives."

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