

Firefighter rescues baby shot in motel room

Written by By Cody Begaye Sun Correspondent
Friday, 11 January 2019 08:10



Shares his experience ‘running toward danger’

Leaving a restaurant after dinner one December evening, the instincts instilled through years in the United States Army and working as a firefighter kicked into full gear for Casey Franchot.

Franchot, 43, of the east side of Gallup, and formerly of New York, said he was leaving Taco Bell, 914 E. Hwy 66, the evening of Dec. 8, when he heard shouting across the street.

Franchot said someone was yelling that her baby was shot.

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“I just took off across the street,” he said. “It was an inherent response.”

That evening just after 6:30 pm, according to a police report, Gallup Police Department Officer Darius Johnson was dispatched to Zia Motel, 915 E. Highway 66, in reference to shots fired.

At the scene, Johnson met GPD Officer Douglas Hoffman, who had arrived before him and picked up Franchot, who was carrying an 8-month-old child who had been shot in the face.

The child’s mother, Shyanne Nelson, 18, and her boyfriend, Tyrell Bitsilly, 21, told police they were in the bathroom while the children were alone in the motel room. They claimed the 3-year-old got ahold of a gun and shot the baby.

Franchot said when he entered the room at the Zia Motel after hearing the shouts, he took the baby from the mother’s arms, and positioned the child so he could shield her in case Bitsilly, who he said was holding the gun, opened fire.

Once he did what he could to protect the baby, Franchot said he assessed her condition, doing what he could to control the bleeding and her breathing.

Franchot’s ability to respond in such a situation resulted from his three years serving as a combat infantryman in the military. He was inspired to join the armed forces by his father, who served in the Marine Corps.

After his service, Franchot spent five years as an EMT and firefighter in New York and worked as a firefighter in Gallup for two years.

“[The military] trains you to go towards danger,” he said. “That stuff never leaves you, the training, the experience. Everything kicks back in.”

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The survival skills one learns in the military become second nature, Franchot said.

“Most people run away from danger, and it’s instilled in you to run towards danger and help out,” he said.

Hoffman was the first officer on scene within about two minutes of the discovery, Franchot said.

“I scooped the baby up and told [him], ‘We have to get out of here now because she’s not going to make it if we don’t,’” he said.

Franchot sat with the baby in the back of Hoffman’s vehicle as Hoffman drove to Gallup Indian Medical Center. He tended to the child as Hoffman drove.

Franchot said he spoke to the child while they were transporting her.

He told her, “Keep fighting, little girl.”

When Hoffman and Franchot arrived at GIMC and turned the baby over to the emergency room staff, they finally had a moment to process what had happened.

While Franchot was the first to arrive on scene and tended to the baby’s wounds, he believes Hoffman played the most important role in getting her to the hospital.

“If it wasn’t for him showing up as quick as he did, getting us up there as quickly as he did, I don’t think she would have made it,” Franchot said.

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Franchot said Hoffman deserves credit for his actions; he thinks the officer is worthy of a commendation for his role that night.

“I just did what I was trained to do. When I joined the military and the fire department, I took an oath,” Franchot said. “I just think as long as I have the skills and the knowledge to help people, I feel obligated to do that.”

But ultimately, he said, the hero in this story is the baby. Franchot called her a tough little kid — and inspiring.

“I can’t imagine how she’s feeling,” he said. “I was just amazed at how hard she fought, how tough she was to make it through that situation.”

Franchot said as of Dec. 19, the child had been put into a medically induced coma, and the situation has been tough for him as an observer.

He said it’s unfair a child so young has to fight for a second chance to live.

“I would trade her life for mine,” he said. “She hasn’t had a chance to live yet.”

Following their arrest for abuse of a child, a preliminary hearing for both Nelson and Bitsilly has been set for Jan. 9 at Gallup Magistrate Court.

By Cody Begaye
Sun Correspondent