By LYNSEA GARRISON and MEREDITH MacKENZIE • Columbia Missourian

Police officers salute the casket of Molly Bowden at her funeral on Tuesday. Officers also showed their respect for Bowden by wearing blue ribbons, wearing pins with her face on them, leaving blue carnations on the casket and giving her a 21-gun salute.

Dressed in a suit instead of his Columbia Police uniform, Corey Bowden stood next to his wife's casket as scores of his fellow officers filed by and hugged him or whispered words of support. When that line came to an end, Corey Bowden stood and gazed down at his wife for a few seconds, head bowed.

When he returned to his seat, the casket was closed and a funeral service commemorating his wife's life and public service began. Much was said about the strength of Molly Bowden's faith and the example she set in her daily life.

Michael Burt, the pastor of her church who acted as the family's representative in the four weeks between her shooting and her death, acknowledged those who came bearing anger in their hearts. With Molly, all is forgiven, he said.

Doug Phillips, the pastor of Centerpoint Church and a longtime family friend, spoke of the friendship and similarities between his 26-year-old daughter and Molly Bowden. His daughter died more than a year ago.

The two women shared a love of horses and "an insatiable appetite for life," before they both "found a new address in heaven," he said.

He read aloud Psalm 139, the two women's favorite and the last entry his daughter wrote.

The notes of "Ode to Joy," the heavy steps of friends and family, and muffled whispers and sobs were the only sounds inside Mizzou Arena on Tuesday afternoon. A gym so full of people is rarely so silent. A single-file line wound slowly down from the top of the bleachers, across the gymnasium floor and ended where Columbia police Officer Molly Bowden's body lay in her dress uniform, adorned with a medal.

Before the service began, more than a thousand mourners had stepped to stand before the casket. Some left flowers on the floor beside it.

More than 100 officers from the Columbia Police Department, representatives of the Boone County Sheriff's Department, members of the Columbia and Boone County fire departments, and law enforcement officers from all over the state and as far away as Texas also filed past Bowden's open casket.

More than 2,000 people attended the service, including Gov. Matt Blunt, Rep. Kenny Hulshof and Mayor Darwin Hindman.

As Bowden's parents, David and Beverly Thomas; husband, Corey Bowden; brother, Matt Thomas; and two stepsons entered the arena, the crowd rose.

To our readers: In covering Tuesday's memorials for Officer Molly Bowden, our staff has taken care to fully document this important community event in a professional and considerate manner. The services were emotional, and editors gave careful thought to the sensitivity of the photographs, including one in which Officer Curtis Brown paid his final respects during a public viewing. Other decisions were made with the same thought and conversation. We did not photograph the family, at their specific request. The goal was to balance our role of documenting the event with the need to be respectful.

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