On a clear December day five years ago, two men walked into the mostly empty Hudson United Bank in Pemberton, N.J., and changed the life of current Rider senior Randy Townsend forever.

One of the men was large and imposing, the other thin and gangly. Masks concealed their faces and their gloved hands held pistols. Their intent was obvious and terrifying. By the time Townsend, the acting manager of the office, saw them, they already had their guns in the two tellers’ faces.

The large robber came over to Townsend, put one hand around his throat and pressed the barrel of his gun behind his right ear with the other. He proceeded to walk Townsend to the vaults and forced him to open the gates with the gun barrel firmly in place.

“Each second seemed like hours as my life flashed before my eyes countless times,” Townsend said in his testimony at the robbers’ sentencing hearing. “I used my inner-voice to pray to God during the robbery as I literally prepared myself to die at the brutal hands of these terrorists.

“I thought about what would happen if another customer innocently walked into the bank, or if the telephone rang or somebody sneezed. What would it take to startle this brazen cowboy enough to squeeze that trigger and blow half my head off?”

The robbers, however, left Townsend on his knees in the bank’s bathroom along with the other bank employees and one customer. He didn’t have a scratch on him, but the mental scars he received from the ordeal have plagued him to this day.

From March 7 till March 11 Townsend attended and spoke at the Fourth National Symposium on Victims of Federal Crime in Atlanta. The purpose of the symposium was to educate numerous law enforcement personnel from various agencies on how to better handle victims and provide for them the resources and care that they need by hearing accounts of crimes from the victims themselves. Townsend co-facilitated two workshops for representatives of departments.