In many situations, it comes down to one person to save the day. The American Revolution is no exception. Whether it’s a midnight ride to cast a tie-breaking vote or personally funding troops with needed equipment, one’s character and work ethic will show through the centuries. One such influential, yet unsung, Patriot was Caesar Rodney.

Rodney was born near Dover, Del., on Oct. 7, 1728. Throughout his life, he held many positions as a public servant, including soldier, general, judge, sheriff and captain in the militia. He was a member of the First and Second Continental Congresses, the Committee of Correspondence, the Stamp Act Congress, the Council of Safety and Delaware’s supreme court. He signed the Articles of Association and the Declaration of Independence and helped draft the Articles of Confederation. He was also governor of Delaware. Any one of these positions could have been a full-time job. Rodney is said to have held, at one point or another, almost every significant public office. His dedication and unwavering work ethic are great examples to us all.

Rodney would have already made his mark on America, but his greatest legacy was his midnight ride for independence. In June of 1776, the discussion of independence was well under way. The decision had to be unanimous, but Delaware was divided on the issue. Thomas McKean was for independence, and George Read was against it; that left the deciding vote up to Rodney, who was, at the time, in Delaware, dealing with the militia and his frail health. After receiving word from McKean on July 1, he traveled more than 80 miles to Philadelphia, through terrible thundershows. The trip could have easily been fatal for Rodney due to his severe asthma and cancer. Thankfully, he arrived at Independence Hall just in time to cast his vote for independence. If it wasn’t for Rodney, the declaration wouldn’t have been accepted at that meeting. If our independence hadn’t been declared at that point, it is fair to ask if it ever would have been.

How much easier would it have been for Rodney to have stayed in Delaware and miss the vote? Or for him to say, “They don’t need me; they’ll figure it out”? If he had even waited till the morning to leave, he would have missed the vote by a day, and we could be paying the consequences 242 years later. Instead, without regard to personal health and safety, he put his country—our country—first.

Rodney had suffered from disfiguring facial cancer and severe asthma. The cancer could have been removed in England, but because he had devoted his life to the new nation, they would have sooner removed his head than removed the cancer. Sadly, he never saw the end of the war for which he sacrificed so much. Rodney died in June 1782.

Rodney was able to make a huge impact on Delaware and this country despite many obstacles. Like Thomas Jefferson said, “nothing can stop the man with the right mental attitude from achieving his goal; nothing on earth can help the man with the wrong mental attitude.” Maybe that is one of the problems today; people have the wrong