

Arkansas Democrat-Gazette (Little Rock, AR)

March 2, 2001

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Registered stalker kills himself in police confrontation

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Article Text:

GENTRY -- With police closing in, a convicted stalker shot and killed himself near Gentry on Thursday after being chased off the property of an ex-girlfriend who'd seen him lurking outside her home.

Alan Dean Teller, 36, of Bella Vista shot himself in the head with a .44-caliber black powder handgun, Benton County sheriff's Deputy Tom Brewster said.

Police spotted Teller about 8:45 a.m. lying next to a chain-link fence on rural Winningham Road, about a half mile south of the woman's home. Gentry Police Chief Keith Smith told Teller twice to put his hands up. Instead, Teller shot himself, Brewster said.

Teller, a registered sex offender for a stalking conviction, pleaded guilty in 1997 to stalking a former co-worker at the Benton County circuit clerk's office, court records show. Teller suddenly stopped coming to work in July 1996 -- around the same time he broke into the co-worker's home, scrawled vulgarities on her underpants and loosened the lug nuts on her front car tire, records show.

Then Teller went to work for Wal-Mart, but lost that job because of troubles related to a failed relationship, his attorney Bruce Bennett of Bentonville said Thursday.

"He was really a bright guy who obviously had some demons," Bennett said. "He was hyperactive and had some problems with alcohol, but he was trying get this latest mess taken care of."

The sheriff's office issued him an arrest warrant for harassment on Feb. 18, Brewster said, after a Gentry woman reported to police on Feb. 17 that Teller harassed her with e-mails, phone calls and by parking in her driveway with his headlights on.

The woman said she'd broken off her relationship with Teller -- who she'd initially met in an Internet chat room -- after learning he'd been convicted of stalking, Brewster said.

Teller called Bennett on Feb. 17 and said he'd gotten his blue Dodge Neon stuck in the mud near the woman's home, Bennett said. The car ended up being impounded, but Teller apparently got it back.

About 8 a.m. Wednesday, the woman called police and said Teller was outside her home wearing camouflage, Brewster said. Her relatives confronted Teller, and he fled into woods. Police spotted him lying face-down along a chain-link fence on the property of McKee Foods, Brewster said.

Police later found his car, spray-painted black, near the woman's house, Brewster said. Teller had dyed his blond hair dark.

While police were searching for Teller this week, he left several messages on Bennett's office answering machine.

"He was distraught," Bennett said. "He wanted to take care of the warrant. He knew the police

had been hounding his mother about his whereabouts. But he wasn't going to turn himself in. That just wasn't going to happen."

Probation officers filed a petition to revoke Teller's 8-year probation on the 1997 stalking conviction after the arrest warrant was issued.

Bennett said Teller reported regularly to his parole officer and had paid off his court costs and fines.

Benton County court records show Teller was arrested May 1989 in Sioux Falls, S.D., on a charge of attempted burglary and vehicle tampering; in July 1995 in Benton County on a charge of harassment; and in October 1996 in Benton County on a charge of driving while intoxicated. The disposition of those three cases wasn't known Wednesday.

Many of Teller's troubles centered on failed relationships, Bennett said.

In late 1999, Teller sued an ex-girlfriend in Bentonville Municipal Court to recover the cost of a pack of cigarettes and a rental car fee. Rogers attorney Sean Keith countersued on behalf of the ex-girlfriend, and Teller's case was dismissed.

In the countersuit Teller was ordered to pay the ex-girlfriend's attorneys fees, Keith said.

Teller was hired as a deputy circuit clerk for Benton County in November 1995, personnel records show. Supervisors said in a May 1996 written evaluation that he was a great employee who worked well with the public and other county employees.

Teller missed five straight days of work starting June 23, 1996 without calling, records show. He was fired.

That week, Teller harassed a co-worker, who was also a former girlfriend, by threatening to kill her and her new boyfriend, according to a probable cause affidavit.

Teller broke into the woman's home July 27, 1996, stole a mobile phone and a sentimental figurine and put a cat-scratching board under her bed sheets, the affidavit says.

Teller was arrested in August 1996 on a charge of first-degree stalking. Before he pleaded guilty in April 1997, Teller was evaluated at Ozark Guidance Center in Springdale to determine if he could pursue an insanity defense. Teller was found fit to stand trial but diagnosed with anxiety, depression and alcohol abuse.

Teller was sentenced to eight years of supervised probation and ordered to complete a behavioral treatment program near Hot Springs. He attended the program but didn't complete it, Bennett said.

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