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SHOOTING

MURDER

MOTHER, TWO SONS KILLED IN SHOOTING

AUTHORITIES SAY HER EX-BOYFRIEND SHOT THEM, THEN HIMSELF

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Article Text:

A man who fatally shot himself yesterday after allegedly killing a former girlfriend and her two children was struggling to recover from the effects of traumatic head injuries suffered in a fall 10 years ago.

Anthony G. Sheppard at one point took a variety of prescription drugs to help him cope with blurred vision, imbalance, anger control, fatigue, memory loss, personality changes and abnormal sensitivity to light and sound, according to court documents filed by Alexandria Haselman, an attorney who represented him in September 2000.

In March 1994, Sheppard sustained multiple skull fractures among other injuries after falling about 15 feet while trimming a tree in his back yard, according to medical records on file in Chesterfield Juvenile and Domestic Relations District Court.

"Mr. Sheppard remained in a coma for six days and stayed in the hospital for three weeks recovering, being taught to eat, walk and to retrain his memory," said Haselman, who represented him in a bid to obtain spousal and health insurance support from his former wife.

About 2:15 a.m. yesterday, police said, Sheppard, 41, shot and killed himself during a police standoff outside the Chesterfield County home of his former girlfriend, Adrienne James.

Police believe Sheppard fatally shot James, 34, and her two sons, Bryan, 14, and Timothy, 10, sometime before officers arrived after being called about 10 p.m. Monday to the home on Dorius Drive. The house is in the Kings Forest subdivision off Cogbill Road.

Investigators believe the killings resulted from Sheppard's failed attempt to reconcile with James, with whom he had once lived on Dorius Drive.

"I think he was coming over more than was welcome, trying to sway her back," Chesterfield police Capt. Paige Foster said.

Investigators are looking into Sheppard's past to see if his injury may have contributed to yesterday's events.

"It's certainly something that we're exploring at this point," Foster said. "Obviously, we knew that he had fallen from a tree ... and suffered a brain injury. But we haven't gotten deep enough into the psychological or physiological ramifications of that."

Foster said police are "still looking at the events and contacts he had leading up to coming to the residence, trying to retrace those things."

Court records indicate Sheppard, who had three children of his own, never was able to completely recover physically or mentally after his 1994 fall. At one point, records show, Sheppard had to use a notebook and tape recorder to retain information he needed to remember.

"The injury to Mr. Sheppard was devastating to his family as he was a workaholic and the major source of support for his family," Haselman wrote in a letter to the court.

Sheppard lost several menial jobs, was accused of making threats against James and his former wife, and was convicted of several minor criminal offenses, including disorderly conduct, driving under the influence of alcohol and petit larceny.

Both James and Sheppard's former wife sought emergency protective orders against him on several occasions after he allegedly hit them or made threats, court records show.

No longer able to work, Sheppard received a \$785 monthly disability stipend from Social Security. An additional \$334 he was eligible to receive was sent to his former wife for child support, court records show. The couple separated in January 1999. They had two girls and a boy, now ages 20, 16 and 7.

The matter began about 10 p.m. Monday when authorities received a 911 call from within the home, apparently from James.

"It was an open line, so dispatchers were attempting to re-establish contact with whoever dialed 911," Foster said. "And they consistently [said], 'Ma'am? Ma'am' - that kind of thing, and we're assuming that it was probably her."

Over the next four hours, police negotiators tried to establish contact with Sheppard. The department's SWAT team was called to the scene, and police instructed neighbors to stay indoors and turn off their lights.

"Our attempts to negotiate with him were met with expletives and agitated behavior, hang-ups and everything else," Foster said. "He wouldn't speak to us. I think the longest conversation we had was probably not even 30 seconds, if you wanted to call it a conversation."

Foster said Sheppard "continually made threats to the police, so he was in a very agitated state."

Then at about 2:15, Sheppard opened the front door and walked out onto the front porch with a large-caliber gun in his hand.

"He looks to the left and the right, and shoots himself in the head," Foster said. "No officers fired. There was extreme discipline with regards to that. Other than verbal threats he made throughout the evening, he didn't make any overt threats once he opened the door."

Foster said police were called to the home Sunday after someone vandalized a car that belonged to a male friend of James'. It wasn't determined who damaged the vehicle.

Lois Withers, who lives two doors away, said James was a devoted mother who kept a tight rein on her children.

"They were really good people, and she was a wonderful mother," Withers said of James.

Her children "did not get into trouble. They were very well-spoken, and you always [saw] them out in the street, playing football, or in the back yard throwing some hoops. I can't say enough about how good those kids [were]. It's really a shame."

Bryan was an eighth-grader at Falling Creek Middle School, and Timothy was a fourth-grader at J.G. Hening Elementary.

Caption:

PHOTO, MAP

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Progress-Index, The (Petersburg, VA)

February 25, 2004

Section: News

Victims identified in Chesterfield murder-suicide

Author: BEN BAGWELL

Article Text:

Anthony Sheppard, 41, is believed to have shot and killed three people at the home and later opened the front door and shot himself in the front doorway, according to Capt. Paige Foster of Chesterfield investigations.

Police arrived outside the residence at about 10 p.m., Monday after receiving reports from neighbors of a domestic dispute.

"We attempted to establish contact with him," Foster said. "But he refused to talk. We dealt with him the best we could. We believe the three victims were dead prior to the time the police arrived."

The three victims were identified as Adrienne James, 34; Bryan James, 14; and Timothy James, 11.

The shooter was identified by police as "a former boyfriend." He shot himself at 2:15 a.m., Foster said.

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