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David Perry

Gunman, two victims killed

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Article Text:

Police kill ex-husband after Kingston woman's husband, mom shot

By CORINA CURRY

Rockford Register Star

KINGSTON - Debbie Sisk thought her days of being awakened by the sound of gunshots were over when she moved from the Chicago suburb of Carpentersville to Kingston, a tiny DeKalb County village of about 1,000 residents.

Early Wednesday morning, Sisk found out she was wrong.

In her quiet subdivision of newly constructed homes and friendly neighbors, Sisk heard three gunshots at 12:40 a.m. The 44-year-old customer service representative ran to her garage where she watched in terror as a neighbor, Melodye Grochowski, bolted from the front door of her home. Dressed only in her pajamas, Grochowski ran across snow-covered lawns to a house across the street.

Moments later, police arrived and a man carrying a handgun emerged from Grochowski's home. The man, Grochowski's former husband, David R. Perry, 57, of Naperville exchanged gunfire with a DeKalb County Sheriff's deputy and was killed on Grochowski's lawn, across the cul-de-sac from Sisk's house and just blocks away from Kingston Elementary School.

The sheriff's department would not identify the deputy who shot Perry.

When the gunfire subsided, Sisk saw Grochowski and Perry's 13-year-old son, David, standing in the doorway of their home. Inside, Grochowski's husband, Scott R. Grochowski, 38, and her mother, Janie Sue Harrison, 70, both of Kingston, lay dead.

Police say Perry forced his way into the Grochowski home at 302 Sandra St. in Kingston at about 12:40 a.m.

Harrison placed a 911 call from the home to the DeKalb County Sheriff's office at that time, but the call was incomplete.

Police believe Perry shot and killed Scott Grochowski and Harrison just minutes before he was fatally shot. Scott Grochowski was found on the first floor of the home, Harrison on the second floor.

According to DeKalb County records, the Grochowskis, who previously lived in Mount Morris, purchased their Kingston home in November 1997.

On Wednesday, the beige-colored home was still decorated with Christmas lights and pine trim. Large dogs sat quietly behind a chain-link fence next to the home.

In this tight-knit, bedroom community about 40 miles southeast of Rockford and 15 miles north of DeKalb, news of the triple homicide spread quickly Wednesday morning. Residents said they were shocked and disturbed.

Neighbors recall the family gardening and working on their lawn. They said they often saw Grochowski's son riding his bike and in-line skating through the subdivision of new homes. "They were quite a family," neighbor Joe Willard said. "They were always working outside, planting trees and gardening."

Before moving to DeKalb County, the Grochowskis lived in Mount Morris in Ogle County. Park owner Richard Haan described the Grochowskis as a quiet couple who caused no trouble and lived at Mount Morris Estates from 1994 to 1996.

"They were neat and clean," Haan said. "They paid their rent all the time, and I never had to go over there."

DeKalb County police were called to 302 Sandra St. in July 1999. The call was a civil dispute involving child custody and visitation rights, DeKalb Sheriff Roger Scott said. To his knowledge, he said Grochowski did not have an order of protection against Perry.

Police in Naperville said Perry had had previous run-ins with the law in his DuPage County hometown. A spokesman at the Naperville Police Department said only that none of Perry's prior arrests involved serious violence.

Domestic violence that escalates to homicide is a rarity in DeKalb County, Deputy Coroner Dave Jacobson said. "It's extremely rare," he said. "It's not a problem in this county."

Scott said he couldn't recall the last time there was a homicide in Kingston.

Police Chief Richard Mott said the community is in disbelief.

"This is something that doesn't happen everyday out in a community of this size," Mott said.

"I've been here since 1987. We've never had anything of this magnitude."

Paul Leitsch, a Kingston resident of eight years, said the shootings are troubling to him and his family.

"You're not safe anywhere anymore," Leitsch said. "It's scary. I got a wife and four kids at home, and it makes you wonder what you're supposed to do to protect them."

Mary Rew of Genoa, manager of Billy A's, a Kingston restaurant, said she couldn't believe it.

"People move out here to be safe and secure," Rew said. "This a small community."

Sisk said she, too, was shocked by Wednesday's events.

"I'm just floored. I've been up all night," Sisk said at later Wednesday. "How can you watch something like that and not wonder what is going on? I can't believe it. We came from Carpentersville to get away from the crime."

Kingston Police, Genoa Police, the DeKalb County Coroner's office and Illinois State Police are investigating the deaths.

Rockford Register Star writer Scott Williams contributed to this story.

PHOTO CAPTIONS

Workers from Service Master load equipment back in their truck after cleaning up the shooting

scene Wednesday at 302 Sandra St. in Kingston.

This single bullet hole is a grim reminder of the deaths that took place Wednesday morning at 302 Sandra St. in Kingston. Two people were shot and killed in the house police killed the gunman in the front yard after he fired on them. Gary L. Carlson/Rockford Register Star

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