

News

Three dead in Swayzee

Police say husband shot wife, then her friend. Witness hears two shots, then sees man's suicide.

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SWAYZEE — A domestic dispute ended with the shooting deaths of three people Friday morning when a man killed his wife and her close friend before turning the gun on himself, investigators say.

Grant County sheriff's Sgt. Mike Moore said police believe William T. McKinney shot his wife, Heidi M. McKinney, and her companion, Shannon Michael Lowe, at the home of John and Nicole Biggs, friends of Heidi's, at 507 S. Washington St. He then shot himself.

"We're looking at a possible murder-suicide," he said.

Grant County Coroner Stephen Dorsey said Heidi, 40, and William, 46, were found shot dead at 507 S. Washington St., Swayzee. Heidi was pronounced dead at 7:19 a.m., and her husband was pronounced dead at 7:20 a.m. Lowe, 30, was pronounced dead at 7:30 a.m. Dorsey said Lowe suffered a gunshot wound but was still breathing when investigators arrived at the scene.

"They began resuscitation efforts, got him to the ambulance, and he died there in the ambulance," Dorsey said.

Moore said the department received a call at 7:05 a.m. in reference to shots fired. When deputies arrived at the scene, they found all three victims inside a fenced-in back yard.

Moore said none of the victims lived at the house. According to a news release from the Grant County Sheriff's Department, all three victims lived in Marion.

"They were acquaintances of the homeowner," Moore said.

Dorsey said the McKinneys were separated, and Heidi went to the residence in Swayzee — where John and Nicole Biggs live with their child — at 8 p.m. Thursday to get away from her husband. Heidi McKinney and Biggs were friends. Lowe showed up at the house later Thursday. Both stayed all night with the Biggs family.

Moore said the original phone call to dispatch came from Nicole Biggs, who reported to police she heard gunshots and then looked outside and witnessed a suicide.

"The homeowner here watched (William McKinney) shoot himself on the back porch," Moore said.

Dorsey said the gunshots were consecutive. Heidi McKinney and Lowe had just walked out of the house

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Investigation — Law enforcement officials investigate the scene of a murder-suicide Friday at 507 S. Washington Street, Swayzee. JEFF MOREHEAD / jmorehead@chronicle-tribune.com

when they were shot, he said. Police are still investigating whether they knew William McKinney was outside or if he'd been waiting for them to come out of the house.

Dorsey said William McKinney suffered one gunshot wound to the right temple. The bullet exited through the left side of his head. Heidi McKinney also died from a single gunshot wound to the head. Lowe suffered one gunshot wound to the left side of his neck and one gunshot wound to the left side of his arm, Dorsey said. He wasn't sure who McKinney shot first.

Police located the gun at the scene.

"It was nearby all three of them, closer to (William McKinney)," Dorsey said.

Preliminary tests showed gun residue on William McKinney's hand.

"The other two were negative," Dorsey said.

The bodies were removed from the scene at about 10:20 a.m. and sent to St. Joseph Hospital in Fort Wayne for autopsies. The coroner ruled William McKinney's death a suicide and the other two as homicides. Dorsey said toxicology tests are pending for all three victims. He said some alcoholic beverages were located on the back patio, as if someone had been drinking the night before.

"These wounds were all fatal," Dorsey said.

This may have not been the first time the McKinney's relationship has turned violent. Dorsey said interviews indicated that the couple got into a verbal dispute Saturday night, and McKinney struck his wife. The crime wasn't reported to police.

"We verified that she did have a black eye she sustained Saturday night when the two of them were together," Dorsey said.

Though Heidi and William McKinney do not have any children together, Dorsey said all three victims have children from previous relationships.

The Grant County Sheriff's Department is still investigating the case, pending interviews and autopsy results, according to a news release.