

DEKALB MURDER VICTIMS HAD  
STRONG TIES TO COOKEVILLE  
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By Mary Jo Denton

Alleged killer well known around Putnam's Silver Point area.

The victims of yesterday's murder-suicide in DeKalb County had many connections to Cookeville, and the alleged killer was well known in the Silver Point community.

The murders took place on Aunt Helen Road just inside DeKalb County around 7 a.m. Tuesday.

Authorities said Roy Whitehead, 54, who was probably upset over his recent conviction for vandalism of his neighbor's fence, shot and killed his neighbors, Richard Parker, 36, while their seven-year-old daughter, Madison was present.

Whitehead then drove to a picnic area at Center Hill Lake and killed himself.

The little girl who was a student at Northeast Elementary School in Cookeville, told DeKalb County sheriff Lloyd Emmons she had seen Roy Whitehead come into her house with a gun.

"She said she had just woke up and her mother was in the bathroom drying her hair when she saw Roy Whitehead come into the house with a gun," Sheriff Lloyd Emmons told the Herald-Citizen.

"She ran outside then to check on her daddy and found him lying beside his truck. He had been shot, probably twice in the torso," the sheriff sai.

"Then she saw Roy Whitehead come out of the house, and they locked eyes and she said he gave her a hard look and walked on. She later told me, 'I don't know why he didn't shoot me.'

"After he left, she went back inside and found her mother lying on the bedroom floor. She had been shot too, and the little girl asked her, 'Mommy, should I call 9-1-1?'

"She said her mother just kind of moaned. Then, the little girl called 9-1-1 and told dispatchers her parents had been shot and that Roy did it.

"After that she got into what she calls her safe place – a corner between the bed and the wall in her parents' room – and waited."

When Sheriff Emmons and others arrived, they found the parents dead and the little girl waiting. Emmons said. Both the Parkers had been shot twice at close range, he said.

“She’s a remarkable little girl, very brave,” the sheriff said. “I sat with her in the living room and we talked and talked. She cried, but she was able to give a full statement.”

Roy Whitehead, who had been in a dispute with the Parkers for some time over the boundary line between the properties, had used a shotgun to kill the Parkers.

A short time later, someone at the Center Hill picnic area came across Whitehead’s body there and phoned 9-1-1 to report that.

Investigators later pieced together what had happened.

They said Whitehead, who was to have been sentenced next week for vandalizing Parker’s fence last year, apparently decided yesterday to kill his neighbors and then kill himself.

Richard Parker was the owner of a successful construction company. Express Contractors, and reportedly had provided services in various projects here in Cookeville. His wife Laurie worked at the medical offices of Dr. Steve Flatt here in Cookeville.

He had lived next door to Roy Whitehead for a time, and had erected a fence between their property and his a few years ago, according to Assistant District Attorney Bill Locke, who recently prosecuted Whitehead for vandalism of that fence.

“There had been an old fence there, and they replaced it with a nicer fence about three years ago and believed they had his approval for putting up the new fence,” Locke said.

In March of last year, however, Whitehead “took a hammer to that fence,” causing damage of more than \$500, and Parker filed a charge against Whitehead.

Charged with vandalism over \$500, Whitehead was tried in Criminal Court last month, Locke said.

At the one-day trial, Whitehead said the fence was on his property.

But the jury convicted him of vandalism, and he was coming up for sentencing on that conviction next Monday.

While he could have been sentenced to as much as two years in jail, the more likely sentence would have been some form of probation and an order to pay restitution, officials said.

The vandalism trial took place in Criminal Court in DeKalb County on February 15.

“I am deeply saddened by this tragic event. My heartfelt sympathy is forwarded to the Parker and Whitehead families. The official report of the defendant’s background and history filed the Court provide no indicators or predictors of this tragedy.”

Sheriff Emmons said the Parker child is now with her maternal grandmother, who lives in the area. He said many other relatives are also now with her.

The bodies have been sent to Nashville for an autopsies, the sheriff said.

As for Roy Whitehead the sheriff said, “I’ve heard him described by some as a nice fellow and by others as something I would call the neighborhood grouch.”

“We’d had calls out there before over such things as some teenagers out walking who got onto his property and he cursed them and scared them. Or he would call and report somebody had been on his property.

But no incident in the past had ever given a hint of the extreme violence that occurred there yesterday the sheriff said.

**Laurie Jean (Morando) Parker Obt.**

**COOKEVILLE** -- Funeral services for Laurie Jean Parker, 36, of Silver Point, will be held at 10 a.m. on Fri., April 1, at First United Methodist Church in Cookeville. Burial will be in Crest Lawn Memorial Cemetery.

The family will receive friends from 6-9 p.m. today, Thurs., March 31, at Whitson Funeral Home.

Mrs. Parker died on Tues., March 29, 2005, (along with her husband, Richard Drew Parker) at their home in Silver Point.

She was born on Aug. 9, 1968, in Malden, Mass., to Dominick and Arlene Davis Morando, both of Silver Point.

Mrs. Parker was office manager at Upper Cumberland Physicians Dr. Steven Flatt. She was a Girl Scout leader and attended First United Methodist Church.

In addition to her parents, her family includes a daughter, Madison Parker of Silver Point; two brothers, Salvatore Dominick Morando Jr. of Saughs, Mass., and Christopher Morando of Boynton Beach, Fla.; and a sister, Vicki Ann Howe of Melbourne, Fla.

The Rev. Jon Bell will officiate at the joint services for Richard and Laurie Parker.

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**Richard Drew Parker Obt.**

**COOKEVILLE** -- Funeral services for Richard Drew Parker, 45, of Silver Point, will be held at 10 a.m. on Fri., April 1, at First United Methodist Church in Cookeville. Burial will be in Crest Lawn Memorial Cemetery.

The family will receive friends from 6-9 p.m. today, Thurs., March 31, at Whitson Funeral Home in Cookeville.

Mr. Parker died on Tues., March 29, 2005, (along with his wife, Laurie Jean Parker) at their home in Silver Point.

He was born on Jan. 1, 1960, in Decatur, Ala., to Richard E. and Hazel E. Everett Parker of Hot Springs, Ark.

He was owner of Express General Contractors and a member of the Baptist Faith.

In addition to his parents, his family includes two daughters, Madison Parker of Silver Point, and Melissa Parker of St. Louis, Mo.; two sisters, Donna Parker of New Orleans, La., and Judy Parker of Memphis; and a grandchild, Elijah Parker.

The Rev. Jon Bell will officiate at the joint services for Richard and Laurie Parker.

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