

The Anniston Star

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Jacksonville officers shoot, kill man who killed his ex-wife

Judy Miller had sought court's protection from ex-husband, who'd pleaded guilty to gun charge



Investigators from the JSU Center for Applied Forensics and the Calhoun County Sheriff's Office examine the scene where a man shot and killed his ex-wife and then was shot and killed by Jacksonville police officers. (Kirsten Fiscus/The Anniston Star)

By Kirsten Fiscus, Star Staff Writer, kfiscus@annistonstar.com Aug 29, 2017

Judy Miller did everything right to leave an abusive relationship with her ex-husband, family said.

NEED HELP ESCAPING DOMESTIC OR SEXUAL ABUSE?

If you or someone you know is suffering from domestic violence or sexual abuse, call 2nd Chance at 256-236-SAFE, or 1-800-650-6522. The nonprofit offers a 24-hour emergency shelter in Anniston with 23 beds, and can offer counseling and court advocacy. All services are free.

She sought protection from the courts, filed for divorce and turned to domestic violence advocacy groups. He had a criminal history and was on probation for a firearms charge.

Miller, 72, was shot to death at her home on Cross Street on Tuesday by her 69-year-old ex-husband, Larry Miller, who was then shot to death by police after he threatened to shoot responding officers.

"The system failed her," Susan Shipman, Miller's sister-in-law, said by phone on Tuesday. Shipman is also director of 2nd Chance, a local domestic violence and sexual abuse prevention nonprofit.

"She had escaped on more than one occasion and ended up back in the relationship because he needed her," she said. "She recently left again. That's the most dangerous time for a victim. The batterer is losing control."

Jacksonville police responded to the home after Miller called 911 and said her ex-husband was trying to get into her mobile home around 8:30 a.m., Jacksonville police Chief Tommy Thompson said by phone on Tuesday.

“By the time we got there, he’d shot and killed her,” Thompson said.

Shipman said before Judy Miller was killed, though, she got one shot off at Larry Miller.

“From what I was told, she shot him once in the leg before he killed her,” Shipman said. “I don’t advocate violence, but kudos to her.”

Six Jacksonville police officers and investigators responded to the scene, the chief said.

“The man kept coming in and out of the trailer threatening to shoot himself and the officers,” Thompson said. “I guess he came out one too many times.”

Thompson said he was unsure whether Miller fired any shots but he had a firearm in each hand.

“Three of our officers discharged their weapons,” he said.

An ambulance was called to the home around 8:50 a.m., Thompson said, and Miller was taken to Regional Medical Center Jacksonville, where he died.

Thompson said the investigation had been turned over to Oxford police and that the Jacksonville State University Center for Applied Forensics and Calhoun County Sheriff’s Office were assisting in the investigation.

Marian McCool, who lives across the street said she heard the gunfire.

“At first I heard three pop, pop, pops and I thought ‘well, they’re target shooting,’” she said standing in her front yard.

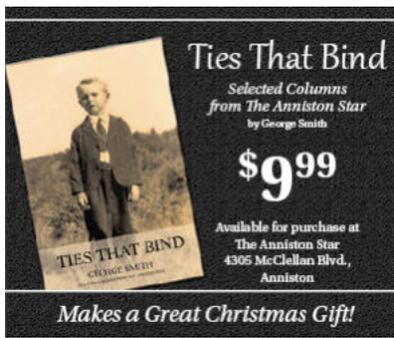
McCool said the guy who cuts her lawn was outside when the gunfire occurred.

“He come running up on my porch because I told him to get out of the line of fire,” she said. “He said he saw a man walking down with ... a gun I guess.”

McCool said Judy Miller had been away taking care of Larry Miller, who had been hospitalized recently, but had come back to stay at the home a couple weeks ago.

“I knew he’s been stalking her,” she said. “They stayed to themselves and when she said they were having problems, I didn’t really want to get involved in that.”

According to court records, Judy Miller applied for a protection from abuse order against her then-husband in 1997. Miller wrote in her request that Larry Miller had beat her, held a gun to her head and threatened to kill her.



Investigator Brent Thomas of the JSU Center for Applied Forensics searches for evidence at the scene where a man shot and killed his ex-wife and then was shot and killed by Jacksonville police. (Kirsten Fiscus/The Anniston Star)

In May 2016, Judy Miller again sought a protection order, citing repeated threats against her life. The same month, she filed for divorce. A month later, Larry Miller was charged with possessing a Charter Arms .38 caliber revolver that had the serial number filed off, according to court records.

Miller's bond was revoked in the firearms case after he violated the protection order, and he later pleaded guilty to the charge in July 2016. He was sentenced to 24 months of supervised probation, according to court records.

In May, after Larry Miller had served nearly a year on supervised probation, the Calhoun County Community Corrections Program recommended he be moved to unsupervised probation. Calhoun County District Judge Chris McIntyre granted that request in June.

Shipman said Judy Miller had spent some time at "a sister shelter" for battered women.

"She'd been so empowered," Shipman said. "She read a lot, learned a lot, and figured out it wasn't her that was causing his behavior. We were so proud of her."

But even with that personal progress, Shipman said her family constantly feared the worst for Judy Miller.

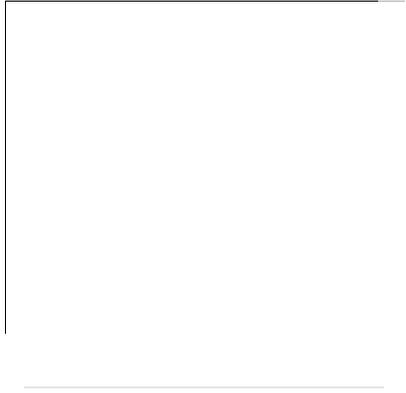
"We had in our minds that a day like this was going to come and today was that day," she said.

Shipman called for stronger laws regarding protection orders and domestic violence situations.

“It’s troublesome to me that our laws are not straightforward enough and stringent enough to allow law enforcement to put these guys in jail,” she said. “Let’s wise up and get some legislation that has teeth in it so law enforcement doesn’t have to dilly dally around this crap.”

Shipman said she was dismayed Miller’s life ended this way.

“We’re at a loss that this is what we do every day and we couldn’t do anything to prevent it,” she said referring to herself and local advocates. “It’s as if we absolutely failed her, but the only blame lies in Larry Miller.”



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