

**ATTORNEY GENERAL'S REPORT ON MURDER/SUICIDE IN WEARE, N.H. ON  
JULY 10, 2011**

**November 5, 2012**

**I. INTRODUCTION**

The Office of the Attorney General, the New Hampshire State Police Major Crime Unit, and the Weare Police Department have concluded their investigation into an incident which occurred on July 10, 2011, in Weare, New Hampshire. The incident involved Cheryl Maher and Jacob Geiser and resulted in both their deaths. The purpose of this final report is to summarize the findings of the investigation and to confirm that their deaths were due to a murder-suicide incident which was also connected to an armed home invasion in Weare on the same day.

**II. FACTUAL FINDINGS**

On Sunday, July 10, 2011, at approximately 5:00 a.m., a 911 call was received from a female subject reporting that a home invasion had taken place at 477 Concord Stage Road, Apt 1, in Weare, NH. The female caller, who was later identified as Dena Ventiere (43), of 477 Concord Stage Road, Apt. 1, Weare, NH, stated that an intruder entered the home and pointed a shot gun at her husband and her son. She then stated that her husband had chased the intruder out of the house. The suspect was described as skinny with short black hair and wearing a cut off t-shirt and left the scene in a white SUV.

When police arrived on scene the homeowner, John Ventiere, (48), advised officers that the intruder had initially made contact with his minor son identifying himself as "Ryan" and requesting to speak with his father about a tool that needed to be returned. When Mr. Ventiere appeared the intruder asked him if he had ever done construction in Weare. After he entered the house he drew a shotgun and pointed it at Mr. Ventiere. Mr. Ventiere stated that he heard the gun click and the intruder rack the shotgun ejecting the un-spent round. The intruder then pointed the gun at Mr. Ventiere's son, again pulling the trigger with no result. He fled from the house when Mr. Ventiere armed himself with a fire extinguisher.

On Sunday, July 10, 2011, at approximately 6:30 a.m., a 911 call was received from a male subject reporting a suspicious death had taken place at 1724 River Road in Weare, NH, and reported that two were dead in the home. The male caller, who was later identified as Joseph Geiser (52), of 1724 River Road, Weare, stated he had returned home and found his girlfriend, Cheryl Maher (41), and son Jacob Geiser (18) dead from visible gunshot wounds.

When interviewed at the police department, Mr. Geiser advised police that he had arrived home at approximately 6:30 a.m. with his brother from being out at a party all night. Mr. Geiser reported that his girlfriend, Cheryl Maher, had gone with him and his brother to the party in the early afternoon, but he took her home around 5:30 p.m. and he returned to the party. Mr. Geiser produced his cell phone and gave police permission to search through his text messages and phone logs. The police documented a text message from Cheryl at 9:30 p.m. saying the key was under the mat and a text message from Jacob at 12:15 a.m. that asked if he wanted Jacob to come pick him up.

Mr. Geiser told police that the morning of the 10<sup>th</sup> he and his brother returned home and while parking their motorcycles in the driveway, they heard a loud noise that they could not immediately identify, but in hindsight believe the noise could have been a gunshot. Mr. Geiser entered the residence and noticed that his girlfriend was not in bed. He then looked out the window to see if she was on the back porch, but she was not there. He then proceeded down the hallway to his son's room where the door was slightly ajar. This was unusual as the door was most often shut completely. He called out for his son and opened the door with his foot when he noticed his son on the bed. He called for his son again and approached the bed. It was then that Mr. Geiser noticed the gun next to his son's body and first noticed Cheryl Maher's body on the floor. Mr. Geiser observed Cheryl's body was face down on the floor and covered with a blanket. When he checked Cheryl's body he determined that she was deceased, there was blood on the carpet underneath her head, her body was mostly naked and her hands were bound with zip-ties. He picked the handgun up from the bed by one finger, removed it from the room, immediately called 911 and exited the house.

When the police responded to the residence they identified a white GMC Yukon in the driveway matching the description of the suspect vehicle involved in the reported armed home invasion at 477 Concord Stage Road, Apt. 1. Officers noticed a shot gun with a pistol grip and wooden handle on the front passengers' side of the vehicle and a large knife on the drivers' seat.

Medical personnel arrived at the residence and pronounced both individuals dead. The body of Jacob Geiser was located on his bed with a single gunshot wound to the head. The body of Cheryl Maher was found on the floor of Jacob Geiser's bedroom covered by a blanket. Under the blanket Ms. Maher was found mostly naked with her hands bound behind her back with zip ties, and she appeared to have multiple blunt force trauma wounds to her head.

Damon Geiser (42) ('Damon'), Joseph Geiser's brother, informed investigators that he was in Weare for an overnight visit with his brother. He arrived at his brother's around noon on July 9, about the same time that Jacob left the residence in his father's white Yukon. Damon states that around 2 p.m. he, Joe and Cheryl went to an annual gathering at Milford and Company. Around 5:30 p.m. Joe left the party with Cheryl to bring her home and then returned to the party approximately one half hour later. The brothers stayed at the gathering all night into the early hours of the morning. Damon states that he returned to his brother's home around 6 a.m. with his brother. While pulling into the driveway they heard a noise that sounded like someone throwing a rock and hitting the house. Upon hearing this noise, they looked at each other and questioned what the noise could have been. Once they entered the residence Joe went to look in on Cheryl. Damon observed Joe came back to the living room and made a comment the no one was home and he didn't think that was right. Damon then observed Joe take off down that hall again while Damon went to the couch to lie down. Moments later, Damon heard Joe make a funny noise and went to see what had happened. Joe came out of Jake's room and told Damon they were dead. They then left the residence together.

In an interview with H.V., (12), of the Ventiere residence of 477 Concord Stage Road, Apt. 1, he describes being awake at 4:40 a.m. when an unknown male (the perpetrator) arrived at his family's residence. He spoke to the perpetrator out his bedroom window and asked him if he was "Ryan" (the new neighbor downstairs). The perpetrator then stated he was friends with John and wanted to return a tool that he had of his. At one point while John was being summoned to

answer the door, the perpetrator returned to the passenger side of his vehicle and retrieved something. On the walk back to the residence H.V. noticed the perpetrator had his arm tucked behind his back. H.V. went to his mother's room and then heard the commotion coming from the downstairs of their residence. His older brother Vinny came running into their mother's room and stated he had just had a gun pointed in his face. H.V. described the vehicle that the perpetrator was driving as a white SUV with no sunroof.

In a later recorded interview with John Ventiere (46), resident of 477 Concord Stage Road, Apt. 1, he reported being woken up by his son and being told that there was someone at the door named "Ryan" for him, and he was there to return a tool. Mr. Ventiere went to the door and yelled "hello" a couple of times before the perpetrator came to the door. Once the perpetrator started to raise the gun to Mr. Ventiere, he asked if he was John, he entered the residence and then fired the gun at Mr. Ventiere. The gun, however, misfired and Mr. Ventiere had an opportunity to arm himself with the fire extinguisher. Mr. Ventiere then chased the perpetrator from the residence. Mr. Ventiere stated that the perpetrator was driving a white SUV.

In an interview with Vincent Ventiere (22), a resident of 477 Concord Stage Road, Apt. 1, he reported waking up around 4:50 a.m. to see his father running away and up the stairs. He saw a man dressed in a white tank top, jeans and work boots going after his father with a gun. He heard the click and nothing happened, the man cocked the gun and a shell ejected. The man cocked the gun again and pointed the gun at Vincent. The perpetrator again pulled the trigger, but the gun did not fire. By this point Vincent's father, John, came running back down the stairs armed with a fire extinguisher and chased the intruder out of the residence. Vincent then ran upstairs to be with his siblings and mother. Soon after Vincent looked out the window and saw that his dad was in the driveway looking in his vehicle for his firearm. At this point, Vincent felt it was safe to return downstairs and he locked the door.

In an interview with S.M. (17), Jacob Gieser's girlfriend, S.M. reported that around 5:30 a.m. on July 10, 2012, Jake called her. He told S.M. that he had "fucked up" and kept apologizing to her. He stated that he had killed Cheryl by strangling her. Jake said the reason he killed Cheryl was because she had been arguing with him about adopting him and wanted to be his new mom. Jake was also upset about Cheryl not cleaning up after herself. Jake said that he just snapped and killed her. Jake told S.M. that after strangling Cheryl he went over to John Ventiere's residence to kill him, but that the gun had jammed. He stated that he kept pulling the trigger but the gun did not go off. He described how he left the Ventiere's residence and went home. Jake said he had gone to the Ventiere's residence to kill John to avenge his girlfriend's allegations that John Ventiere had sexually assaulted her<sup>1</sup>. Jake then told S.M. that there was no way that he was going to jail and that he was going to commit suicide before the cops could find him. Jake described to S.M. in great detail where in his bedroom and the positions in which he and Cheryl would be found when his father returned home. Their bodies were in fact found as he had described to S.M. The phone conversation ended abruptly with Jake stating his father was home and he had to go.

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<sup>1</sup> John Ventiere was later charged with one count of Simple Assault and two counts of Sexual Assault on S.M. in the Goffstown District Court. These charges were dismissed on May 3, 2012.

Phone records obtained from Granite State Communications document three phone calls from the Geiser residence on July 10, 2011, to Jacob's girlfriend, corroborating her statement and documenting the length of their conversation. The first call was at 5:01 a.m. continuing for a duration of .04 seconds. The second call was at 5:02 a.m. continuing for a duration of 41.12 minutes. The third and final call began at 5:43 a.m. that continued for 30.11 minutes, ending at approximately 6:15 a.m.

During the search of the Geiser residence, members of the State Police Major Crime Unit took video and photographed the interior and exterior of the residence. The bodies of Jacob Geiser and Cheryl Maher were found in Jake's room as described by Mr. Geiser. While there were numerous weapons found in the residence, the handgun used by Jacob Geiser to shoot himself was found on the television in the living room. The physical evidence secured from the residence was consistent with Jacob Geiser shooting himself in the head.

Cheryl Maher's body was found on the floor of the bedroom, as described by Mr. Geiser, covered by a blanket with her hands bound with plastic zip-ties. The zip-tie on her right hand was lower down on her hand, rather than around her wrist. It appeared that she had been trying to work her hand out of the tie. Cheryl's body had no other signs of defensive wounds or a struggle. There was a large amount of blood around her head and her face had several obvious contusions. A broken cylindrical piece of plastic that likely came from a window shade was also found on the floor near her body in addition to many other zip-ties. In addition, a piece of wood was found on the floor between her legs. A jar of Vaseline was found next to her right leg.

The police also found a suicide note in Jacob Geiser's bedroom. The note said that it was his last will and testament. In the note Jake apologized to his father for killing Cheryl, explaining that she had upset him by talking to him about his mother.

### **III. AUTOPSY AND FORENSIC FINDINGS**

The State's Deputy Chief Medical Examiner, Dr. Jennie V. Duval, conducted the autopsy on the body of Cheryl Maher. Dr. Duval determined that Ms. Maher's cause of death was strangulation with a contributory cause of death from a stab wound to the neck. The manner of her death was determined to be homicide. Dr. Duval also documented that Ms. Maher's body had 8 zip-ties encircling her hands and wrists. There were sharp force/penetrating injuries as well as non-penetrating blunt force injuries of the head and neck, including facial fractures. One rib fracture was also discovered. Bruises and abrasions were noted to her arms, wrists, hands and legs. There was also evidence of blunt force injuries consistent with a sexual assault. The toxicology report indicates traces of marijuana as well as a low level of Benadryl and a prescription anti-depressant.

The State's Deputy Chief Medical Examiner, Dr. Jennie V. Duval also conducted the autopsy on Jacob Geiser. Dr. Duval determined that Jacob's cause of death was a contact gunshot wound to the head and his manner of death was suicide. The toxicology report indicates traces of marijuana in his blood.

#### **IV. CONCLUSION**

Based on a careful examination of the circumstances surrounding the July 10, 2011 incident, the Attorney General has concluded that the deaths of Cheryl Maher and Jacob Geiser were due to a murder-suicide incident. Jacob Gieser's motive for killing Cheryl Maher appears to be related to a discussion the two had regarding Jacob's mother, at least according to the note Jacob left behind and according to what he told his girlfriend (S.M.) during their phone conversation.

Jacob also believed that his girlfriend at the time (S.M.) had been sexually assaulted by John Ventiere. Jacob took it upon himself to avenge his girlfriend's reported sexual assault by confronting Mr. Ventiere in attempts to harm him. But for the shotgun jamming, Jacob Geiser may have shot and killed both Mr. Ventiere and his son, Vincent, during the home invasion at their Concord Stage Road residence.

After Jacob left the Ventiere residence he returned to his home at 1724 River Road in Weare. When Jacob Geiser heard his father pulling into the driveway around 6:30 p.m., he got off the phone with his girlfriend, with whom he had been speaking for approximately an hour and a half, and he took his own life.