

California gunman who killed 4, wounded 10 was out on bail

By **DON THOMPSON**
and **PAUL ELIAS**
Associated Press

RANCHO TEHAMA RESERVE, Calif. — The gunman behind a rampage in Northern California was out on bail charged with stabbing a neighbor, others had complained about him firing hundreds of rounds from his house, and he had been the subject of a domestic violence call the day before the attack.

Yet Kevin Neal was free and able to use a semi-automatic rifle and two handguns Tuesday to shoot 14 people, killing four, in seven different locations across his rural community, including an elementary school, before he died in a shootout with police.

It's not yet clear what the terms of Neal's bail were, and whether he would have been allowed to possess and fire the weapons on his property at the end of a dirt road in Rancho Tehama Reserve. Nor did sheriff's officials give details on the domestic violence call.

But his many contacts with authorities raised questions of why he was out of custody and able to go on the 45-minute rampage that began with the killing of two neighbors in an apparent act of revenge before he went looking for random victims.

Cristal Caravez and her father live across a ravine from the roadway where the gunman and his first victims lived.

She said they and others heard constant gunfire from the area of the gunman's house, but couldn't say for sure it was him firing.



A California Highway patrol officer photographs a vehicle involved in a deadly shooting rampage at the Rancho Tehama Reserve, near Corning, Calif.

"You could hear the yelling. He'd go off the hinges," she said. The shooting, "it would be during the day, during the night, I mean, it didn't matter."

She and her father, who is president of the homeowners association, said neighbors would complain to the sheriff's department, which referred the complaints back to the homeowners association.

"The sheriff wouldn't do anything about it," said Juan Caravez.

The gunman's sister, Sheridan Orr, said her brother had struggled with mental illness throughout his life and at times had a violent temper.

She said Neal had "no business" owning firearms.

Tehama County Assistant Sheriff Phil Johnston said

the shooter was facing charges of assaulting one of the feuding neighbors in January and that she had a restraining order against him.

Johnston did not comment on the shooter's access to firearms.

Johnston declined to identify the shooter until his relatives were notified, but he confirmed the gunman was charged with assault in January and had a restraining order placed against him. The district attorney, Gregg Cohen, told the Sacramento Bee he is prosecuting a man named Kevin Neal in that case.

Neal's mother told The Associated Press her son, who was a marijuana grower, was in a long-running dispute with neighbors he believed were

cooking methamphetamine.

The mother, who spoke on condition she be named only as Anne because she fears for her safety, lives in Raleigh, North Carolina, where she raised Neal. She said she posted his \$160,000 bail and spent \$10,000 on a lawyer after he was arrested in January for stabbing a neighbor. Neal's mother said the neighbor was slightly cut after Neal grabbed a steak knife out of the hand of the neighbor who was threatening him with it.

She wept as she told The Associated Press she spoke to Neal on the phone on Monday.

"Mom it's all over now," she said he told her. "I have done everything I could do and I am fighting against everyone who lives in this area."



Two women embrace outside Rancho Tehama Elementary School, where a gunman opened fire.

She said Neal apologized to her during their brief conversation, she thought for all the money she had spent on him, saying he was "on a cliff" and the people around him were trying to "execute" him.

"I think the motive of getting even with his neighbors and when it went that far — he just went on a rampage," Johnston said.

Police said surveillance video shows the shooter unsuccessfully trying to enter a nearby elementary school after quick-thinking staff members locked the outside doors and barricaded themselves inside when they heard gunshots.

Johnston said the gunman spent about six minutes shooting into Rancho Tehama Elementary School before driving off to continue shooting elsewhere. Johnston said one student was shot but is expected to survive.

He said the 45-minute rampage ended when a patrol car rammed the stolen vehicle the shooter was driving and killed

him in a shootout.

Johnston said officials received multiple 911 calls about gunfire at an intersection of two dirt roads. Minutes later, more calls reporting shots flooded in from different locations, including the school.

Witnesses reported hearing gunshots and children screaming at the school, which has one class of students from kindergarten through fifth grade.

The shootings occurred in the rural community of Rancho Tehama Reserve, a homeowners association in a sparsely populated area of rolling oak woodlands dotted with grazing cattle about 130 miles north of Sacramento.

Many there live in poverty, but others are better off.

"It's not a bad community at all," said Harry Garcia, who was minding his parents' convenience store La Fortuna Market. "Some people keep their properties nice— some don't. They rough it out here. Some go with minimum stuff. Some don't even have power out here."

Property: Out of 37 spaces, 34 chose to join the cooperative

Continued from Page 1A

"The Warrenton group was the quickest we've ever done," Massa said. "The owner wanted the money immediately, Nov. 1, so we did the best that we could."

As a community development financial institution, the nonprofit can access funds to finance projects with underserved populations. Since 2008, the group has helped buy 13 parks, including four this year.

Between 2000 and 2007, about 70 parks closed in Oregon, Massa said.

"We'd hear about it after a sale would happen," she said. "Some of the residents weren't even being notified."

In 2007, residents from the Thunderbird Mobile Club in Wilsonville, many of them older and on fixed incomes, were evicted at the height of the housing boom to make way for new development. The closure led to tenant protection laws.

The Opportunity to Purchase Act passed by the state Legislature in 2014 provided residents of the Warrenton Estates the right to organize the purchase of their park.

Self-management

Out of the 37 spaces in the park, 34 chose to join the cooperative. Each now has a share, along with upkeep responsibilities. Fallert is the president of an interim, five-member board of directors. Next month, residents will vote on a permanent board.

The park recently hired a separate property manager to handle collection of rent, part of the third-party oversight required by lenders. Community And Shelter Assistance Corp. will stick around for the life of the loan to make sure the members of Elk Meadows are following the statutes of a cooperative.

The park will no longer have an on-site manager to handle maintenance. Board mem-

ber Doug Lyle, who moved to the park eight years ago after relocating to the region to help take care of his mother, has been surveying the park's utilities and compiling a list of contacts for residents with electrical, plumbing and other issues.

"We're trying to keep (costs) down," Lyle said. "We'll be mowing our own lawns here and all that. Everybody donates their time and effort."

Residents of the park have so far avoided another rent increase in the takeover, aside from a maintenance fee for nonmembers. Out of all the parks the nonprofit has helped purchase, Massa said, only one has faced a rent increase, because of a cable contract.

"Basically what this is about is guaranteeing affordable housing for people," Fallert said. "If the water goes up 50 percent, then we'll have to deal with that, things like that. But we won't have the kind of economic pressures that a private single owner would have."



Doug Lyle and Michael Fallert are members of the Elk Meadows Homeowners Cooperative that recently purchased Warrenton Mobile Home Estates.

Colin Murphey
The Daily Astorian

Bell: 'I hope it will be for all ages'

Continued from Page 1A

railings Bell estimates at about one-fourteenth of a mile. The track winds through distinct sections filled with bright painted blue skies and stylistic elements of Arizona, New Mexico, Route 66 and tropical islands.

Bell is having bathrooms built and plans to add heating, seating and areas for her to teach about diabetes prevention. Near the front will be a case selling some milk products, a nod to the building's past.

Bell started as a nurse in

the 1960s and said that by 10 to 15 years into her career, she was noticing how often diabetes was showing up in patient's charts. She eventually specialized in diabetes education, and was named the National Diabetes Educator of the Year in 1995 by the American Association of Diabetes Educators.

"Everything in the body is affected by diabetes," she said. "And what leads to diabetes? Weight problems."

Living in Astoria, Bell found the roads too dangerous when wet and has taken to doing laps around the first floor

of her house. She plans to regularly walk in the park regardless of who else shows up, but has been recruiting through flyers, physician referrals and word of mouth.

She recommends walking after meals and said the park will open in spurts between 10 a.m. and 9 p.m., with memberships and daylong access for \$5.

"I hope it will be for all ages and all conditions," Bell said. "I've stayed in good condition because of walking, and I know that. I'm now in my eighth decade, and I'm feeling pretty fine."

Gas scare: Traffic backed up for miles

Continued from Page 1A

for a lot of people."

As the odor of gas hung in the air for blocks, a miles-long row of stalled cars headed east waited before the road was reopened. Drivers approaching the city from the east were also stuck.

Matthew White exited the Astoria Bridge at about 5 p.m. as he was driving home to Knappa from his job in Long Beach, Washington. By 6:30 p.m., he was stalled less than a

mile east of Safeway. To pass the time, he munched on tortilla chips and salsa he had purchased at the grocery store.

"I knew there was, like, a wreck or something, so I figured, 'Why not just grab something at Safeway?'"

Justin Schuyler, a manager at Geno's Pizza and Burgers at 37th Street and Lief Erikson, stood outside the restaurant just after 6 p.m. He was awaiting the return of a driver who had delivered food to Emerald

Heights just after 4:30 p.m.

The restaurant was forced to stop delivering until the traffic cleared.

"Even in the snow we'll have an all-wheel drive vehicle and limp along," Schuyler said. "But very seldom do we not deliver."

The scare also affected Tuesday's Warrenton City Commission meeting. Commissioner Rick Newton, stuck in traffic, was unable to attend due to the road congestion.

WITH GRATITUDE AT

Thanksgiving


Giving Thanks

to all who support

Columbia Memorial Hospital—

patients, community members, caregivers,
medical community, donors, and local businesses.

May the good things of life be yours in abundance not
only at Thanksgiving but throughout the coming year.



2111 Exchange Street, Astoria, Oregon 97103
503-325-4321 | columbiamemorial.org