

Continued from previous page

## Periods of normal behavior

Between the frequent episodes when Raleigh's behavior confused and frightened her, Koplein said he could act like a normal, loving son and father to his four children.

She said Raleigh's two oldest sons are both adults.

He and his wife, who separated but never divorced, have a daughter who is 18, and he has another daughter, by a different mother, who is 7.

Koplein said that although Raleigh was not always able to pay all the child support he owed, she said he had, not long before he died, started chipping away at his obligations. After he died she found among his possessions two receipts for money orders, dated April 8, 2021, one for \$300 and one for \$500, that were made out to two of the women with which he had children.

"Does this tell me that Raleigh was trying to get right with the world and live a good life, or does it tell me he was going to get right with the world and kill himself?" Koplein said. "I truly think that Raleigh was consciously trying to do the right thing and wanted to live a good life."

He was a musician who played in a rock band when he was younger and particularly enjoyed piano and keyboards.

In 2020 he sent her a recording he had made.

"Hi, mom," Raleigh said. "I just wanted to send you a recording because I know I'm a jerk on the phone, and I love you and thank you so much for all you do. I just wanted to play the piano for you."

Raleigh played for a couple minutes, including a passage from Beethoven's "Für Elise." "Sorry, I'm a little frazzled after our phone call," Raleigh said in concluding the recording. "Not my best pianoing, but I'll be recording some things for you."

Police were called to Koplein's home on Dec. 1, 2020, Jan. 30, 2021, and Jan. 31, 2021.

In the December incident, Koplein said, "Raleigh was clearly very psychotic that morning, talking to people who were not there, hallucinating."

Baker City Police arrested Raleigh on Feb. 6, 2021, for first-degree burglary and second-degree criminal mischief. Police found him inside an empty home that was for sale, near his mother's home. The charges were still pending when Raleigh went missing on May 14.

On Feb. 11, 2021, Koplein and her brother filed to have Raleigh civilly committed for mental health treatment.

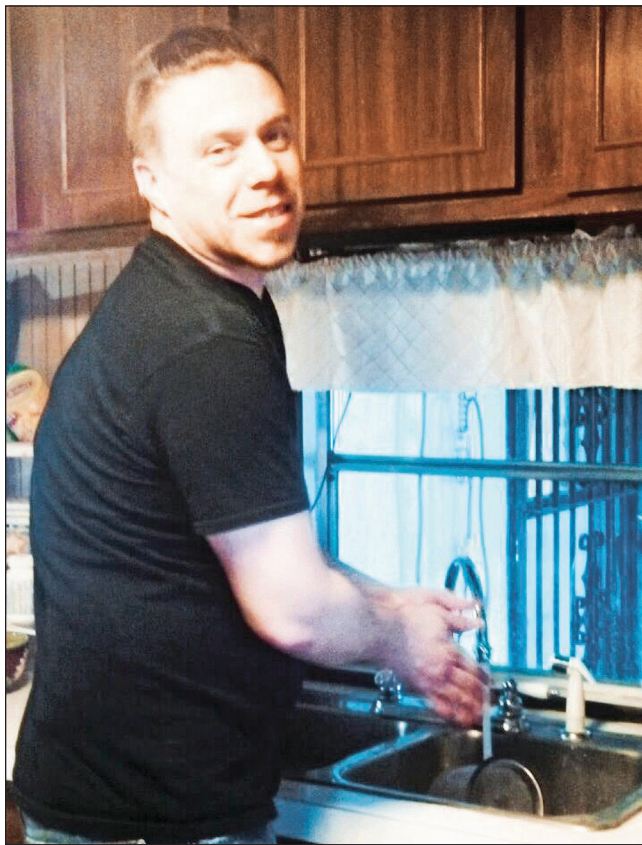
"Every time I called the police to the house, because Raleigh was out of control, and we felt threatened, I was told by police that there is nothing they can do because it is not against the law to be crazy, and that I should file a restraining order," Koplein said.

Eight days later, on Feb. 19, 2021, Raleigh voluntarily checked into the psychiatric hospital in Idaho.

Koplein said her civil commitment request was denied by a New Directions Northwest employee later in February 2021. The employee wrote in a court document, which Circuit Court Judge Matt Shirliff signed on Feb. 25, 2021, that Raleigh "does have a mental disorder but that he is not dangerous to himself or others, and that he is able to provide for his basic needs. Furthermore, he has reported a willingness to participate in outpatient treatment services for mental health and substance abuse."

But that treatment never happened, Koplein said.

Marji Lind, clinical director at New Directions, said that although she can't comment specifically about Raleigh or anyone else, the civil commitment process has a "very high threshold" to convince a circuit court judge, who ultimately decides



Carla Koplein/Contributed Photo

**Raleigh Rust, about 2012, getting ready to cook dinner at his mother Carla Koplein's home in Baker City. He had finished a rehabilitation program in Pendleton and was "hopeful and happy," his mom said.**

whether to compel someone to be confined at the Oregon State Hospital.

The judge must conclude, at the time of a court hearing, that the person is either an imminent danger to himself or herself, or to others, Lind said.

She said it's very common, in her experience, for relatives to believe a person should be civilly committed even though the person's actions don't meet that legal requirement involving a danger to himself or to others.

Lind also said that counselors and others who work with mentally ill people are occasionally frustrated by Oregon's civil commitment law, because they believe that people who could benefit greatly from mandatory treatment don't have that chance because they aren't civilly committed.

Shari Selander, New Directions CEO, said the organization always encourages people to seek treatment, but she noted that except in civil commitments, such treatment isn't compulsory.

## Restraining order

On March 1, 2021, Koplein, having been unsuccessful at having Raleigh civilly committed, took out a restraining order on her son.

When a sheriff's deputy gave Raleigh the order, at Koplein's home, he told the deputy that his name was Trinity and that he owned the home. When the deputy asked Raleigh whether he understood the document, Raleigh said he did because he was a paralegal.

The next day, March 2, 2021, police arrested Raleigh after he kicked open the front door of Koplein's home and then the door leading to her bedroom, where she had sheltered out of fear.

She said he didn't harm her, although he threw a dishcloth at her. He was yelling "where's my cat?" repeatedly.

Koplein called 911. "It hurts to watch your child, who you know loves you very much, to act so crazy," she said. "It is shocking."

Raleigh spent a little more than a month in the Baker County Jail. He was released April 7, 2021.

Raleigh was arrested again on April 14, 2021, for violating the restraining order. He was taken to the Baker County Jail, where he remained until April 29.

He was arrested on May 6 for probation violation, and released on May 10.

Koplein has a video showing Raleigh on May 12, two days before he died, at the storage unit she had rented for him. He is on the video for 22 minutes, from 4:26 p.m. to 4:48 p.m.

"He looks very confused," Koplein said. "He is talking to the security camera."

On the video Raleigh displays what looks to Koplein like a "fist bump" gesture.

"He appeared to be so confused at one point, shrug-

ging his shoulders with his hands out to his sides, looking up at the camera, halfway through the video at the storage sheds," Koplein said. "It looked like he mouthed the word 'mom.' You know, like what happened? What am I supposed to do? Or what did I do wrong?"

## Police perspective

Baker City Police Chief Ty Duby, and Officer Rand Weaver — Weaver is one of the two officers who saw Raleigh just before he ended up the river — both said police officers are limited in what they can do with people like Raleigh who struggle with mental health problems. "Our hands are pretty much tied," Duby said.

Weaver said he and other officers can detain a person, and bring them to the hospital, on what's known as a "mental health hold" or "police officers hold," but generally only in cases when the officer believes the person is a danger to himself or to others.

That's what happened with Raleigh when he was jumping in the Powder River near D Street in August 2020.

The Oregon Administrative Rule that deals with mental health holds — OAR 309-033-0230 — states that a police officer can detain a person when the officer "has probable cause to believe that the person is dangerous to self or others, and is in need of immediate care, custody or treatment for a mental illness."

Weaver said he sometimes asks people if they are suicidal.

If a person answers no, and Weaver can't otherwise "articulate the danger," that the person poses to himself or to others, then there is no legal authority for the officer to detain the person, he said.

Weaver said he had spoken with Raleigh several times before the night of May 13, 2021, when he issued Raleigh the citation for trespassing at the motel.

Weaver said that although "it was apparent he had mental issues," Raleigh never said directly, or gave the impression, that he intended to harm himself or anyone else.

Weaver said he called officials from New Directions Northwest, the county's mental health provider, to talk with Raleigh on some occasions.

But Weaver noted that Raleigh, and others, can't be compelled to talk with counselors.

Both Weaver and Duby said it is frustrating to respond to multiple calls from the public about a person such as Raleigh and not be able to get any help for the person.

But they noted that acting strangely, including talking to yourself or gesticulating, as Koplein said Raleigh sometimes did, is not only insufficient reason for a mental health hold, but it's also not illegal.

Weaver said the initial 911 call early on the morning of May 14, 2021, was about a person, possibly a female or juvenile, who was wailing.

Weaver said he had no reason to think Raleigh was involved.

However, while checking on the 911 call, and driving

in the alley between First and Main streets downtown, he saw Raleigh running by.

Weaver said Powell had also seen Raleigh running through the Chevron parking lot, heading east toward the river.

In a recording of police conversations during the incident, Powell says he saw Raleigh Rust, although he also refers to him as a juvenile.

Weaver said he left the alley at Auburn Avenue, and turned east, driving toward Resort Street.

Weaver said he had no reason to connect Raleigh to the 911 call, and that neither he nor Powell was chasing Raleigh.

"There was no reason to stop or detain Raleigh, unless he wanted to talk to us," Weaver said. "The last we saw he was running down the street."

Duby said he understands that Koplein blames Weaver and Powell for failing to follow up, to make a more concerted effort to talk with Raleigh and make sure he was not in danger.

"We explained to her that there's not a lot we can do (in the circumstances of May 14, 2021)," Duby said. "We wish there was."

The police officers and Koplein agree on one point — that Raleigh ought not have been out on the streets in the middle of the night.

But Koplein has a decidedly different opinion about the obligation police officers had in those few minutes between when Raleigh passed in front of the security camera at the Chevron station, and when he was in the river — particularly because Raleigh, who was homeless, didn't have any place to go.

Koplein thinks the officers were negligent, and that they might have seen Raleigh, or at least have found his phone beside the Parkway, had they walked the stretch of path between Bridge Street and Auburn Avenue.

"They didn't ask Raleigh if he was OK," she said. "How would you feel about being chased around town for several blocks without a drop of water to quench your dried

lips and parched throat? Maybe he would be so very tired while attempting to bend over the edge of the river bank to quench your thirst, that he lost his balance and fell in. He was bone tired while he was running. You can see that in the video. Maybe he threw himself down in the nearest grassy spot, and rolled over the edge accidentally."

Yet even as she ponders these unknowable scenes, Koplein's thoughts return to the two stacked cellphones. That doesn't support the theory of Raleigh flopping down and falling down the riverbank.

Duby said Baker City Police investigated after Raleigh's body was found on June 1, 2021.

"There was nothing to indicate foul play," Duby said.

## Lingering questions

Koplein has copies of several incident reports, most written by Baker City Police Detective Shannon Regan. Some dated to late May 2021, while Raleigh was still missing, and others in early June 2021, just after his body was found.

In one report, written by Officer Mark Powell on June 6, 2021, he writes that sometime the previous night someone had left a note on the front window of a police car while it was parked on the north side of the police department. The note listed a name, claiming the person was responsible for selling heroin and meth in Baker City and "he also did in Raleigh Rust."

The next day, June 7, 2021, Regan wrote a report that video camera footage showed that a male left the note. The report includes the name of a person who might have placed the note.

In a June 16, 2021, report, Regan wrote that she and Detective Chris Sells talked to the male on June 10, and he admitted he had left the letter on the police car.

He told the detectives he "had no factual knowledge or basis for saying someone had caused Raleigh's death." The man said he was mad at the person whose name he

wrote on the note, implicating that person in Raleigh's death.

Still, Koplein wonders whether the man the detectives interviewed actually did have legitimate information about a possible suspect in Raleigh's death.

Later, Koplein exchanged a series of online messages with the man who left the note on the police car.

Although the man told Koplein he didn't have any specific information, he wrote that he had heard "about some deal I think went bad with your son" and the man whose name was on the note left on the police car.

## Too many cracks to fall through

Koplein has a three-ring binder crammed with records.

Police reports. Timelines of Raleigh's movements, actions, arrests.

She also has dozens of photos.

Raleigh as a little boy. Raleigh playing in a rock band.

Raleigh pushing a kid in a swing at the park.

And she still has his phone.

But she also has questions — questions she fears won't ever be answered.

And regrets.

She wonders whether she could have done something different, whether anyone could have, to prevent her son from ending up in the swollen Powder River on that chilly May morning.

Ultimately, Koplein laments that Raleigh died before he could conquer the mental health and drug use issues that had plagued him for so long.

"Every crack you can think of, he went through it," she said. "I knew he was going to die if he wasn't detained in some manner. Of course I didn't want to see him locked up, but I felt that he would have a chance to get the counseling, and proper medication, and to be observed by professionals who could help him mentally, and maybe even spiritually."

"The system fails."



**Tires LES SCHWAB**

Celebrating **70** Years!

**GET THERE**  
*Safely*

STOP BY OR SCHEDULE AN APPOINTMENT ONLINE  
[LesSchwab.com](http://LesSchwab.com)



**Lew Brothers Tire Service**

**541-523-3679**

**210 Bridge St. Baker City, OR**