

Family wants answers in shooting

Man killed by Crook County sheriff's deputy suffered from mental illness

By JOE SIESS
The Bulletin

PRINEVILLE — The woman on the other end of Lee-Anne Trent's phone was frantic, screaming that Trent's son had just been shot by a Crook County sheriff's deputy. But then it got worse for Trent, who sat in her Oklahoma home as the woman described the final moments for Nick Rodin, who lay dying in a county road.

"She's calling me, and she's screaming because she can hear Nick screaming and I can hear her screaming, and I'm on the other phone while my son is dying," Trent told The Bulletin. "I heard it all."

The shooting Feb. 4 has left Trent and her family searching for answers and trying to reconcile Rodin's troubled life with his violent death.

Trent's son had a long criminal record in Central Oregon, severe mental health issues and had survived a brutal stabbing in March. But he didn't deserve to die the way he did, Trent said.

"I want answers," Trent said, "because it is unfair. They can't just let this happen and then not tell a mother why he was taken."

Rodin, 35, was shot on Feb. 4 at around 1:40 p.m. by a sheriff's deputy who has since been placed on administrative leave. Dan Wendel, the acting Crook County District Attorney, has said little on the investigation now underway, but promised transparency at a later date.

The woman who called Rodin's mother was his long-time friend, Jennifer Hill. She had heard Rodin's name over a police scanner, and called her friend to share the information. They were on the phone during Rodin's entire encounter with the sheriff's deputy, Hill said.

The deputy approached Rodin alone and at some point during the confrontation, drew his weapon and ordered Rodin to show his hands, Hill said.

"I heard one shot. It was a



Nick Rodin poses in this photo submitted by the family.

lethal shot to kill," Hill said. "After the shot was fired, it was within two minutes and he was dead. I heard him scream. I heard him take his last breath and that was that."

Rodin was diagnosed with schizophrenia at the age of 14 and struggled with his mental health for most of his life. His family and friends said it is common knowledge among local law enforcement officers in Prineville that Rodin suffered from mental illness, and the common procedure was to approach him with caution.

Rodin's criminal record goes back to 2008, and includes convictions for driving under the influence, possession of illegal drugs and second-degree assault, court records filed in Crook, Jefferson, Deschutes, and Lincoln counties show.

At one point, while in jail in Crook County in April of 2012, Rodin tried to commit suicide two times. He suffered from crippling depression and hallucinations, prompting his appointed counsel to report to the court that Rodin was unfit to continue with criminal proceedings, court records show.

While in the Jefferson County Jail in November 2014, Rodin was convicted of assaulting his cellmate with a mop ringer and then sentenced to nearly six years in prison.

While in prison, Rodin got a tattoo of a swastika on his hand. The tattoo appeared in one of his Facebook photos that has since been taken down after the Central Oregon Peacekeepers brought it to the public's atten-

tion via social media.

The Peacekeepers have called for an investigation into the shooting but have called off a protest previously scheduled to take place in Prineville.

Both Trent and Rodin's younger half-brother Tommy Lamance said Rodin got the swastika tattoo in prison as a survival mechanism. It kept him from being beaten or stabbed, they said.

"That was an old tattoo. When you are in prison, you are obligated to live a certain way," Trent said of her son's tattoo. "It's a persona."

Trent said after her son got out of prison, he tried to scrub off his swastika tattoo. However, it was somewhat still visible on his hand in his Facebook photo.

Lamance said his half brother was not a racist. And because Rodin was 6-foot-7-inches tall, inmates wanted to fight with him all the time, Lamance said.

"I don't care if he had a swastika tattooed on his forehead, none of this is right," Lamance said. "This has nothing to do with his life. And his personality. Everyone doesn't know Nick like we know Nick, and who he was. They are just looking at what they can see and judging him off of what they can see. They don't know him."

After his release from prison, Rodin was also at the center of an attempted murder case last year after he was stabbed five times by a friend he encountered at Ochoco Plaza while buying a pizza with his fiancé. He would survive but suffered life-threatening inju-

ries that required him being airlifted to St. Charles Bend.

After his most recent release from prison, Rodin's friends and family said he had reformed himself quite a bit. While he remained on a number of medications for his mental health condition, he was largely living a sober, productive lifestyle working for his family's painting company.

And his fiancé was pregnant. The baby is due next month.

Rodin's body remained on Southeast Maphet Road south of Prineville for nearly nine hours, said Lamance, who went to the scene after hearing the news. Lamance said he and his family were not allowed to get close to inspect Rodin's body.

Hill said she went to find Rodin, too, and recognized his white Nike sneakers poking out from under the sheet police used to cover his body. Rodin's feet were sticking out because he was too big, Hill recalled.

The investigation into the police-involved shooting has been turned over to the Central Oregon Major Incident Team, the Crook County Sheriff's Office said in a press release last week. The Crook County District Attorney's office and the Oregon State Police remain the leading agencies taking charge.

"We are in the midst of an investigation of the events of Friday afternoon, and the most important thing at this point is the integrity of this investigation," said Wendel, the acting district attorney. "At some point there will be transparency and the facts will be released, but at this point I have no further comments."

Wendel said he has dealt with police-involved shooting investigations in the past, and that the end goal is always to determine whether or not lethal action was justified. Wendel made it clear that the district attorney's office remains an independent investigatory body that will follow standard procedure.

"The DA is an independently elected official," Wendel added. "The DA doesn't report to the sheriff... the state police does not report to the sheriff."

"Everything is proceeding according to law and policy as it is supposed to."



Crook County Sheriff's Office
Steven Hatcher, left, with Crook County Sheriff John Gaultney.

Deputy in fatal incident ID'ed

By JOE SIESS
The Bulletin

PRINEVILLE — The sheriff's deputy who shot and killed a man outside of Prineville last week was identified by the Crook County District Attorney's Office on Friday, Feb. 11.

The officer involved in the shooting was identified as Steven Hatcher, who has been a deputy with the Crook County Sheriff's Office since 2016.

Nick Rodin was shot by Hatcher on Feb. 4, on a county road south of Prineville after he stopped Rodin as he walked down the road. Rodin was shot and killed moments later.

Rodin's half-brother, Tommy Lamance, said he doesn't know much about Hatcher, but given his status as a law enforcement officer in Crook County, Lamance believes it is unlikely he would have been unaware that Rodin had a mental health condition.

"I just know that he murdered my brother," Lamance said of Hatcher.

"I just know if he (Hatcher) is working in Crook County, he should be aware of my brother and my brother's conditions," Lamance said. "There's no way a sheriff or a police officer could be in this county and not be aware of my brother Nick and how to handle that situation. There is no reason."

Lamance said the family is searching for answers.

"Why did my brother have to die?" he said. "Why did the cop pull the trigger?"

Hatcher was hired as a deputy sheriff by the Crook County Sheriff's Office in April of 2016, state records showed. He graduated his basic police training class in 2017.

In a statement released Friday afternoon, the Crook County District Attorney's Office said Hatcher remains on administrative leave pending the conclusion of an investigation being conducted by the Central Oregon Major Incident Team, led by Oregon State Police in conjunction with the district attorney's office.

The release added that no further information will be released at this time.

Rodin's mother, LeeAnne Trent, accompanied Lamance to the district attorney's office on Thursday afternoon. However, both said they came away with questions unanswered. After their visit, they attended a vigil for Rodin.

Protests were scheduled for last weekend and next weekend at Pioneer Park near the Crook County Sheriff's Office in Prineville.

Oregon has paid out most of its rental assistance

PETER WONG
Oregon Capital Bureau

SALEM — As it gears up to restart payments, Oregon's housing agency reports that slightly more than 39,000 households have benefited from \$278.3 million in federal emergency rental assistance, close to Oregon's total allocation of \$289 million.

The Oregon Housing and Community Services Department is now looking at 4,782 applications submitted before a pause Dec. 1 (4,276 of them will require more information from tenants or landlords before processing can proceed) and will then look at 6,941 applications submitted since

the pause ended Jan. 26.

The agency issued an update Wednesday, Feb. 9.

The agency says it and partner organizations, chiefly community action agencies or counties themselves, will continue to accept applications — but time is short. The likely deadline is early March.

The Oregon Legislature added \$100 million to emergency rental assistance from the tax-supported general fund during a Dec. 13 special session, on top of \$200 million in December 2020 that was spent by mid-2021. Gov. Kate Brown has requested \$198 million more from the U.S. Treasury, which has not yet reallocated fed-

eral money that went unspent in other states and communities. Oregon did get an additional \$1.1 million in January.

According to the National Low-Income Housing Coalition, Oregon ranks fifth best in terms of rental assistance payouts, topped in ascending order only by North Carolina, New York, Texas and Connecticut.

Tenants can apply only once for the program. Not every household will qualify.

According to federal guidelines, priority goes to households earning less than 50% of



an area's median income — for Portland, that is around \$40,000 — and one or more adults unemployed for at least 90 days.

According to state guidelines, other eligibility factors are the size of households, months behind on rent, effects of 2020 Labor Day wildfires, and whether the residents are in a census tract deemed to have a high percentage of low-income renters, as measured by the rental assistance priority index of the Urban Institute.

Under a state law revised

during the Dec. 13 special session, tenants can receive legal protection against eviction for nonpayment of rent if they show proof to their landlords they have applied for emergency assistance. The same law also eased the Feb. 28 deadline for payment of past-due rent — owed since the onset of the pandemic on April 1, 2020, through June 2021 — if a tenant has an application pending for emergency assistance. Otherwise the deadline remains Feb. 28.

The law does not forgive any past-due rents.

Becky Straus, an attorney with the Oregon Law Center, said the changes can be confusing.

"It can be hard to keep up with the changes. We want everyone to know that in Oregon, no one should be evicted for nonpayment of rent when there are new safe-harbor extensions and rent assistance available," said Straus, managing attorney for the center's eviction defense project. "Unfortunately, we are seeing many people in court who

shouldn't be there because they didn't know about the protections or how to get help."

Straus said the law gives tenants 10 days to respond to notices of eviction from their landlords. Tenants can get in touch with the eviction defense project, which is funded by the state, Multnomah County, the city of Portland and foundations to provide legal representation. It operates statewide, and provides free services in English and Spanish — translators for other languages are available — without regard to citizenship status.

"As the new COVID variant continues to sweep across our state, people are losing income because of illness or businesses that can't operate. Some people are still struggling to catch up from the economic hit of the past couple of years," Straus said. "We are lucky in Oregon that short-term help is available for people who are still dealing with the economic upheaval of the pandemic and we just need to make sure they know the help is available at every step of the way."

PHOTO CONTEST

Local Photos by Local Folks

WANTED: Local Photos taken by Local Folks

Send in your photos to be showcased in the 2022 Explore Grant County.

Send photos to: office@bmeagle.com & editor@bmeagle.com

Blue Mountain EAGLE

195 N. Canyon Blvd. John Day, OR 97845
541-575-0710



A MAN WAKES UP in the morning after sleeping on... an advertised bed, in advertised pajamas.

He will bathe in an ADVERTISED TUB, shave with an ADVERTISED RAZOR, have a breakfast of ADVERTISED JUICE, cereal and toast, toasted in an ADVERTISED TOASTER, put on ADVERTISED CLOTHES and glance at his ADVERTISED WATCH. He'll ride to work in his ADVERTISED CAR, sit at an ADVERTISED DESK and write with an ADVERTISED PEN. Yet this person hesitates to advertise, saying that advertising doesn't pay. Finally, when his non-advertised business is going under, HE'LL ADVERTISE IT FOR SALE.

Then it's too late.

AND THEY SAY ADVERTISING DOESN'T WORK? DON'T MAKE THIS SAME MISTAKE

Advertising is an investment, not an expense. Think about it!

Blue Mountain Eagle
MyEagleNews.com

Don't get left behind, call today! Kim Kell 541-575-0710