

Man kills four in Louisiana church shooting spree

By Jua Nyla Hutcheson
Special to Sentinel-Voice

GONZALES, La. - An angry husband went on a shooting spree at a Louisiana church killing four people including his baby son and estranged wife, and wounding four others, police said Thursday.

After the shooting Wednesday night, during which he was heard to say "take that," the alleged killer Shon Miller, 22, fled to a nearby shed where he was accidentally shot in the back by a sheriff's deputy and paralyzed from the waist down, Ascension Parish Sheriff Jeff Wiley said.

Witnesses said about 70 people had just begun Bible study in the New St. John Fellowship Baptist Church when Miller came in, armed with a .9 mm pistol.

"We had just sung and...started the Bible study. Then the devil showed himself...and the dying started," Charlie LeDuff, a member

of the study group, said.

Gonzales is a town of 7,000 people, 20 miles (32 km) southeast of Baton Rouge.

Pastor Clarence Stephens said two men ran in ahead of Miller to warn that he was coming. Stephens called the police but was still on the phone when Miller "stormed in the back of the church and began shooting."

Miller's first targets were wife Clara Miller, 25, and son Shon Miller Jr., 2.

"She said 'somebody help me' after the first time he shot her and then he shot her again. And that baby, his son, looked around and said 'Daddy' and then he shot him twice," Stephens said.

Miller then began firing randomly, taking the time to reload his pistol, as people in the church ducked into the wooden pews for cover. One witness said she heard 10 shots.

Miller then ran out of the church as police pulled up, but not before also killing 19-year-

old Vaniaro Jackson, authorities said.

Three teenagers and a 37-year-old woman were wounded, none critically, Gonzales Police Chief Bill Landry said.

Miller also allegedly shot to death his mother-in-law, Mildred Vessel, 53, at her home near the church, they said.

Son Carnell Vessel told reporters he found his mother dying in her van parked in front of the modest frame house. "I told her who I was and that I loved her. I think she knew me and then she was gone," he said, weeping.

After the Church shootings, Miller sought refuge at a nearby shed where police negotiated with him for two hours to surrender.

Wiley said Miller threatened to kill himself and a police marksman shot his .9 mm pistol out of his hand.

In the subsequent scramble, Wiley said a sheriff's deputy accidentally fell and fired his gun into Miller's back. Miller was taken to a

New Orleans hospital where a spokeswoman said he was paralyzed from the waist down.

Police said Miller would be charged with four counts of first degree murder, which is punishable by death in Louisiana, and four counts of attempted murder.

Officials said they did not know what provoked the killings, but that the Millers were in the process of getting a divorce.

Miller was jailed in August for violating a domestic abuse restraining order, but was released in December, Wiley said, adding "Clearly you can tell this is domestic violence at its maximum tragic ending."

Cousin Nadine Wilson told reporters the Millers had separated because of the violence: "He was a person that liked to beat her and that's why she left."

Church member Wilbert Holmes said that as Miller left the church, he uttered: "Now, take that."

Black Press Week activities celebrating longevity

Special to Sentinel-Voice

The Black Press of America is in the midst of celebrating 172 years in existence. Activities began Wednesday and include an enshrinement today of three late publishers into the Black Press Archives and a 1998 Newsmakers of the Year dinner.

The theme of this year's commemoration is: "The Black Press: You Can Count On Us Now.... Forever."

With more than 15 million readers each week and 200-plus members, the National Newspaper Publishers Association is still carrying the message of Black

America, nearly 200 years after the founding of the first newspaper for Africans in America.

"Though the names have changed, our mission remains the same," NNPA President Dorothy R. Leavell said.

"As we enter a new century, the Black Press remains vibrant and strong. And as we usher in a new age, we formally recommit to Black America and proclaim loud and strong, 'You Can Count On Us Now... Forever.'"

The nation's first Black newspaper, Freedom's Journal, was published March 16, 1827 in New York City

by John Russwurm and Samuel Cornish.

Citing the fact that "For too long others have spoken for us," the Journal fought injustice and sought equal rights for Black people in America.

That legacy has continued in the scores of African-American owned newspapers across the country.

"African-American newspapers are rich with first-hand reports of major events and issues that affect our people," said Leavell, publisher of the Crusader Newspaper Group in Chicago, Ill. and Gary, Ind.

"We chronicle the

African-American experience every week in such a positive and progressive way that we remain the most creditable source for African-Americans over and above any other media."

During the four-day event, publishers will meet with members of the Congressional Black Caucus, the White House cabinet, as well as Vice President Al Gore and members of the African diplomatic corps, including officials from the Embassy of Ghana and representatives of the Democratic and Republican National committees.

National, week-long initiative advocating gay rights

Special to Sentinel-Voice

The Gay and Lesbian Community Center of Southern Nevada (The Center) is coordinating the Equality Begins at Home (EBAH) campaign, a national, week-long initiative to advocate gay rights.

EBAH week is nationally sponsored by the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force and organized by the Federation of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Statewide Political Organizations.

From March 21st to the 27th, the Center plans to pressure local lawmakers to support the Employment Non-Discrimination Act (AB 311) currently being debated in the state assembly.

The actual kick-off event for the week will be a rally on Sunday, March 21st at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas from 3 to 4:30 p.m.

Reva Anderson, Executive Director of the Gay and Lesbian Community Center, Assemblyman David Parks, who sponsored AB 311, Jane Heenan, founder of Transgender Support Nevada and National Gay and Lesbian Task Force organizer Alexis Sainz will speak at the event in the courtyard of Moyer Student Union, 4505 S. Maryland Parkway.

Saturday, March 21st, the gay rights organizations will host a Town Hall meeting at 2 p.m. at the Center, 912 E. Sahara.

"Our demands are simple and in line with basic American values," said Federation Co-Chair, Gina Reiss, "the right to be safe, to have a family, to hold a job, and to fully participate as citizens. It's exactly what every American wants and deserves."

The Center requests that people who want to lend their support to AB 311 call the legislature at 384-2225 and voice their opinions.

Also, contact Tasha Hill at the Center at 733-9800 for more information on how you can become involved in the EBAH week of action.

Local IRS office offers assistance

Special to Sentinel-Voice

PHOENIX — The Las Vegas IRS office is hosting a Problem Solving Day on Thursday, March 18, from noon until 8 p.m. at 4750 W. Oakey Blvd.

Problem Solving Day is a special opportunity for taxpayers to meet with IRS officials, face to face, to resolve on-going tax problems. Local IRS people can cut through the red tape and help fix problems, such as payments posted to the wrong account, missing refund checks and other unresolved tax issues.

"Problem Solving Day is a great opportunity for people. Our focus is to resolve on-going tax issues through personal service. We also want the public to become familiar with the Taxpayer Advocate, who can help them with tax issues year-round," said District Director Jack B. Cheskaty.

Scheduling an appointment is recommended. Prior to your appointment, IRS personnel research your account and compile all available information. By the time of your appointment, your problem is already on its way to resolution. To make an appointment, just call (702) 455-1287, Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

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