

Neighbors stunned by shooting over property dispute



By Lauren McLane/The Record Herald

This peaceful setting on Blue Spring Road in Mercersburg was the scene of a shooting incident Monday morning that left one man dead and another hospitalized.

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By Lauren McLane
The Record Herald

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Mercersburg, Pa. -

A property feud that left one man dead and another hospitalized has neighbors on Blue Spring Road puzzled.

Police have not officially released the identity of the dead man pending an autopsy scheduled for this morning.

However, multiple neighbors have identified the man as Donald H. Berkebile, 81, of 9399 Blue Spring Road. Police identified the second man involved as Bryan E. Kendall, 40, of 9397 Blue Spring Road.

Kendall remains in an Altoona hospital following a fight Monday at 9399 Blue Spring Road in which Kendall was shot by a pistol loaded with birdshot.

State police are investigating the incident as a homicide, according to Trooper Karl Schmidhamer of Pennsylvania State Police.

One neighbor who knew the two men finds Kendall's account of the incident "hard to believe."

Betty Hardsock of 9413 Blue Spring Road said, "I just can't believe what Kendall's saying," referring to Kendall's account of the incident in another newspaper in which Kendall said Berkebile was unprovoked and shot first. "Don was a very nice man, a quiet man, he didn't bother anyone. He was well-liked around the neighborhood."

Kendall refused to comment on the incident this morning.

A friend of the victim's wife was overheard telling state police that the two men had an ongoing feud about property, but the exact nature is unknown.

Kendall lives on a farm owned by his mother-in-law, Julia Grove, according to Hardsock and two other neighbors, Rick and Melinda Hege.

'Not here'

Rick Hege and his wife, Melinda, said Kendall has a temper. Rick lives on a farm previously owned by his father and has lived on Blue Spring Road all his life.

"Don was a nice old man. He always kept to himself," Rick said.

"We never had any problems with him," added Melinda. "They were at each other 24/7."

Both Heges expressed disbelief that such violence had come so close to home.

"This is something you see in the cities, not in the country," Rick said.

Hardsock also said Kendall had a reputation for always needing to be right.

Well-known

Police have not released a motive for the shooting and have not yet issued an official report.

An autopsy on Berkebile was scheduled for 8 this morning in Lehigh Valley Pathology Associates, Allentown. As of press time, results from the autopsy were not available.

Berkebile was a well-known author and authority on wagons, automobiles, wheels, cycles and early American transportation. He formerly worked at the Smithsonian Institute, Washington, D.C., at the National Museum of American History as an assistant curator from 1973 to 1975 and an associate curator from 1975 to 1980. He was a curator emeritus at the Smithsonian.

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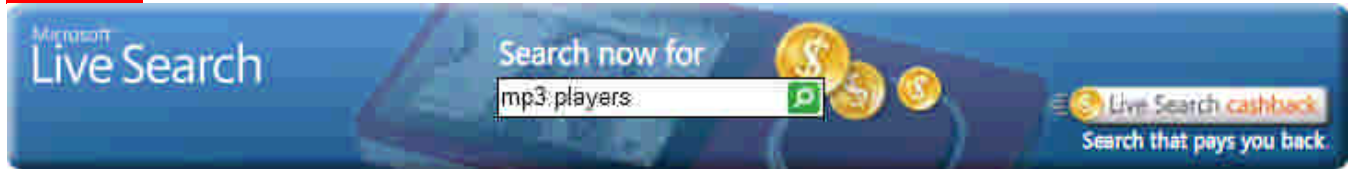
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