

RE: KNUTSON, KARA LOUISE S.A. #03-013
(OFFICER INVOLVED SHOOTING/NON-FATAL/ORANGE
COUNTY SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT)

INTERVIEW OF: ELLERMAN, STEVE, SERGEANT, I.D. #482
ORANGE COUNTY SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT

BY: E. BERAKOVICH, INVESTIGATOR
ORANGE COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE

PRESENT: DAN SALCEDO, INVESTIGATOR
ORANGE COUNTY SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT

DATE AND TIME: MAY 6, 2003 0328-0405 HOURS

LOCATION: ORANGE COUNTY SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT
ALISO VIEJO STATION

On May 6, 2003, at 0328 hours, Orange County Sheriff's Department Investigator DAN SALCEDO and I conducted an audio tape recorded interview with Orange County Sheriff's Department Sergeant STEVE ELLERMAN. Prior to the interview, I ascertained from ELLERMAN that he was not ordered to give a statement and that his statement was free and voluntary. The following is a summary of the interview. For detailed information, refer to the audio cassette recording.

ELLERMAN is a Sergeant assigned to the uniformed patrol division. He supervises deputies assigned to patrol the City of Lake Forest. On May 5, 2003, he started the evening shift at 1700 hours. At 2303 hours, he responded with several other deputies to a 9-1-1 emergency call from a female resident at [REDACTED] Lake Forest. The dispatcher disseminated over the police radio, a female subject had broken into the residence and locked herself in an upstairs bedroom and gunshots were heard.

ELLERMAN arrived at the residence within minutes of the call being dispatched. Patrol Deputies ALEJANDRO SALCEDA, AUBREY CARROLL and his trainee ERIC LARSEN arrived at approximately the same time. ELLERMAN saw a male subject walking out of the open garage. The subject was later identified as [REDACTED] a guest at the house. [REDACTED] was standing in the driveway looking confused. ELLERMAN walked past [REDACTED] entered the garage, and then entered the residence through the garage entry door. Deputies CARROLL and LARSEN, who had entered the residence ahead of ELLERMAN, escorted a female subject from the family room into the garage. The female subject was later identified as the homeowner [REDACTED]

ELLERMAN noticed the front door oval glass pane was demolished. ELLERMAN, CARROLL, BLASZAK, SALCEDA and LARSEN assumed tactical positions near and around the stairway that led up to the second floor of the residence. ELLERMAN and CARROLL assumed a position near the stairway behind the kitchen wall partition. ELLERMAN and CARROLL could clearly see half way up the stairway. LARSEN positioned himself in the south end of the kitchen where he could see the stairway. BLASZAK and SALCEDA were positioned behind ELLERMAN and CARROLL.

ELLERMAN heard the female subject in an upstairs bedroom breaking glass and smashing furniture. The female subject was later identified as KARA KNUTSON. ELLERMAN heard KNUTSON yelling and screaming that she wanted to die, her life was over, and she wanted the deputies to kill her. ELLERMAN and the deputies began yelling upstairs to KNUTSON, identifying themselves as Deputy Sheriff's and for her to put the gun down.

After several minutes of KNUTSON yelling and screaming, she began walking down the stairway to where the deputies were positioned. As KNUTSON reached halfway down the stairway to the landing portion, she stopped. The stairway is divided into two sections, the middle portion is a landing. ELLERMAN noticed KNUTSON had a handgun in her right hand and the barrel was pointed down at her side. KNUTSON then raised her right arm and pointed the handgun pointing the barrel of the gun toward ELLERMAN and CARROLL, who simultaneously and repeatedly yelled at KNUTSON to drop the gun.

As KNUTSON was pointing the gun, she repeated she wanted to die and for the deputies to kill her. CARROLL had his handgun drawn and pointed the barrel at KNUTSON. ELLERMAN could not remove his handgun, because CARROLL was standing in front of him with his handgun pressed up against the door jam and pointed at KNUTSON. ELLERMAN observed KNUTSON because he was slightly taller than CARROLL. KNUTSON appeared very agitated and upset while pointing the barrel of the handgun directly at ELLERMAN and CARROLL.

At this point, ELLERMAN stepped back for a few seconds and slightly out of sight of KNUTSON, when he heard a single gunshot. ELLERMAN believed KNUTSON had just fired a gunshot in their direction. Within seconds, ELLERMAN saw CARROLL fire a single gunshot at KNUTSON. ELLERMAN also heard deputies say that KNUTSON was struck by the bullet, as she fled back up the stairs and into the upstairs bedroom.

Once KNUTSON returned to the bedroom, ELLERMAN heard the sounds of breaking glass. Additional deputies had arrived and took up positions on the outside of the residence. The deputies outside were able to see KNUTSON through the upstairs bedroom window.

They advised ELLERMAN and the deputies inside of KNUTSON's actions over the police radio. ELLERMAN heard the deputies outside ordering KNUTSON to drop the gun. ELLERMAN remained in the house with the other deputies and requested a K-9 unit and the Special Weapons Attack Team (S.W.A.T.) to respond.

ELLERMAN began conversing with KNUTSON who was upset and stating that she wanted to die. ELLERMAN continued communicating with KNUTSON, trying to convince her to throw the gun down to them. As the conversation continued, ELLERMAN could tell KNUTSON's demeanor became calmer. ELLERMAN learned KNUTSON had consumed alcohol and vicodin and believed that or the loss of blood caused the change in her behavior. ELLERMAN began negotiating with KNUTSON to throw the gun down to them. KNUTSON eventually threw the revolver down the stairway onto the landing. Deputy Sheriff ANGALICI, a S.W.A.T. member, who had entered the house after the shooting, retrieved the revolver from the landing.

A short time later, KNUTSON came sliding down the stairway on her buttocks. ELLERMAN approached KNUTSON, who now was on the landing. ELLERMAN grabbed one arm and CARROLL came up to assist and grabbed the other arm. While holding onto KNUTSON's uncuffed arms, they escorted her out of the residence through the garage to the driveway, where Orange County Fire Authority paramedics were waiting. ELLERMAN noticed KNUTSON had blood on her blouse and pants and a large stain of blood on her buttocks.

After Orange County Fire Authority paramedics transported KNUTSON to the hospital, ELLERMAN remained and directed deputies to secure the scene.

We concluded the interview at 0405 hours. The audio tape recording was placed in evidence in the Orange County District Attorney's Office tape file.



E. BERAKOVICH
INVESTIGATOR

DATE OF REPORT: MAY 7, 2003

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