Wife fatally shot, husband then commits suicide

BY PAT MURPHY
STAFF WRITER

A domestic quarrel ended in tragedy last week when a Southfield attorney shot his estranged wife in the couple's West Bloomfield home — as their 3-year-old slept in a nearby bedroom — and then killed himself at the graveside of his mother.

The wife, Linda Binder, 35, was still alive when police arrived at the couple's home about 10 p.m. Wednesday, according to police. But she died within hours at Pontiac General Hospital.

The couple's home was in the 5600 block of Fox Hunt Drive, in a fashionable neighborhood south of Walnut Lake Road, within a mile of the police complex.

"It's a clear case of murder-suicide," said police Chief Ron Cronin, who said Mrs. Binder filed for divorce the day before she was killed.

Officers and EMS units were summoned to the home of Michael and Linda Binder by her mother, Ester Gutman, according to the police report. She was temporarily living at the home to help her daughter with the couple's only child, Justin, who had undergone eye surgery earlier in the day at Detroit Children's Hospital.

"She's dead, my daughter's dead," a distraught Mrs. Gutman reportedly told the first officer at the scene. "He shot her."

Mrs. Binder had been shot at least twice and was lying under a table in the breakfast nook, police said. The smell of gunpowder was still fresh.

Paramedics administered CPR and other first aid measures, then rushed her to Pontiac General.

Justin slept through the entire episode, police said.

As an officer was phoning police headquarters to ask for an all-points bulletin, a telephone operator broke into the conversation, saying she had an emergency call from the woman's husband, police said.

The operator said the caller wanted to talk with his wife. Police did not reveal any other parts of the conversation. The call was subsequently traced to a fast-food restaurant in Clinton Township, police said.

By the time that call came in, police said the victim's brother, Leonard Gutman, had arrived at the home. Police said Gutman told them Michael Binder had come to his office that afternoon.

He told them his brother-in-law, described as normally "aloof and condescending," seemed "edgy and nervous."

Gutman also reportedly told police that Michael Binder's parents are buried in Clinton Township, in Hebrew Memorial Park near Mt. Clemens.

After Clinton Township police were alerted, they found Binder's car, a 1985 blue Volvo, Cronin said.

Binder had apparently shot himself once in the head with the same pistol used to kill his wife, Cronin said.

Michael Binder, 40, had been a special assistant attorney general since 1988, according to Chris DeWitt, a spokesman for Attorney General Frank J. Kelley.

"He was essentially in private practice, but did work for the attorney general on an as-needed basis," said DeWitt.

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