

GUNMAN KILLS FOUR AND SELF IN KENTUCKY

HARRODSBURG, KY., NOV. 10 -- A man followed his estranged wife as she rode to a restaurant with acquaintances and killed her and three others before committing suicide.

Tina Keck, whose father was killed Saturday, said the gunman, Robert Daigneau, was consumed by jealousy. "He was very jealous and she had left him and he thought she had a date," Keck said today.

Donna Daigneau, 33, had noticed Daigneau following the car in which she was a passenger. So the car's driver, who also was killed, drove to where the police station had been and honked the horn, but the station had been moved.

Daigneau drove up beside them, jumped from his pickup truck and shot at the car's occupants, said Keck, whose mother, Ann, was in the car but was not injured.

Police Chief Tim Bryant said Daigneau fired six shots into the car with his .357 magnum.

In addition to Donna Daigneau, killed were Tina Keck's father, Palmer Rousey, 48, of Danville; Fred Alsman Jr., 48, of Webster Grove, Mo.; and Thomas Bannister, 38, of Cahokia, Ill., Fayette County deputy coroner Johnny Leach said.

Daigneau had fled by the time police arrived, Bryant said.

State police said a Lancaster police officer noticed Daigneau's truck in Lancaster and followed it. Before the officer got out of his cruiser, Daigneau shot himself in the head as he sat in his truck, police said.

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◆ Crime

Man released from Maine vets' hospital often abused wife

HARRODSBURG, Ky. (AP)—A woman slain by her estranged husband, who fatally shot three others before killing himself, was often beaten by him and he had threatened her and her family, a sister in New Hampshire said.

Robert Daigneau, 45, a Vietnam veteran, was released a little more than three weeks ago from Togus Veterans Hospital in Togus, Maine because he might have done something irrational there.

Donna Daigneau would threaten to leave him, then he'd beg her to stay, said Karen Fitzgerald of Portsmouth, N.H., Donna's sister. He would then attack her, and she would often have to be hospitalized, Fitzgerald said.

"What she was trying to do was help him get the help he needed," Fitzgerald said. "Things would be OK for a while, and then it would start up again," she said.

Another sister, Debbie Swanson of North Berwick, Maine, also said Donna stayed with her husband because she hoped she could help him overcome psychological problems.

"We all knew it was going to come.... We all said, 'He's going to kill you,' but she wouldn't listen," Swanson told WCSH-TV in Portland, Maine.

The family recognized the relationship was bad almost immediately after the couple married, Fitzgerald said. But when they warned her to leave her husband, he would threaten to kill them, she said.

Herb Clegg, of Skowhegan, Maine, a friend of Daigneau, said he wasn't surprised Daigneau took his own life.

It was something Daigneau had mentioned before at the hospital as a way to escape his back pain and post-traumatic stress syndrome, a disorder that affects many Vietnam-era veterans.

"I'm surprised that he took his wife with him and the other people," Clegg said. "He mentioned sometimes just taking his own life...so he could be at peace and get out of pain."

The Daigneaus moved to Kentucky within the last couple of years, Gardner said she

Gardner said. "He had threatened to kill us...."

A hospital spokesman, Jim Simpson, confirmed that Daigneau had been at the hospital and was released Oct. 18. But Simpson refused to provide information about Daigneau's treatment.

WCSH quoted an unidentified veteran who said Daigneau was discharged from the hospital against his will for striking a female nurse.

But Simpson denied the report. He said the case was being reviewed to ensure proper procedures were followed, but added the staff felt it was time for Daigneau to be released.

"There's no 100 percent predictability in clinical evaluations," Simpson said.

Simpson also said there is a danger that Daigneau's actions might attach a stigma to all Vietnam veterans.

Authorities in Kentucky said Daigneau, angered that his estranged wife might be on a date, fatally shot her and three others Saturday night after following them to what the victims mistakenly thought was the local police department.

Daigneau fled but fatally shot himself in the head less than two hours later in Lancaster after being stopped by a police officer.

Casey County Sheriff Carl Meece said he had tried to keep in contact with Daigneau since his wife filed for divorce a few months ago because he was a afraid something might happen.

Besides Donna Daigneau, 33, of Danville, the others killed were Palmer Rousey, 48, of Danville; Fred Alsmen Jr., 48, of Webster Grove, Mo., a suburb of St. Louis; and Thomas Bannister, 38, of Cahokia, Ill., near St. Louis.

Willa Mae Shoemaker also said her husband, H.M. "Junior" Shoemaker, had lunch Thursday with Daigneau and his estranged wife. She said her husband reported that Robert Daigneau had asked Donna out for a date during the lunch, but she made no decision.

Mrs. Shoemaker said the couple moved to Casey County from New Hampshire a few years ago because Daigneau thought the warmer weather might make him feel better.

Daigneau was upset that his wife left him four months ago, she added, and said he seemed quite jealous.

The gunman was no stranger to the law.

Meece said Donna Daigneau filed for an emergency protective order against her estranged husband six months ago. In February, Daigneau pleaded guilty to fourth-degree assault for hitting a Stanford doctor.

The sheriff recalled times when Daigneau had cried as he talked about his war days. Although Daigneau always treated Meece kindly, the sheriff would send out several deputies anytime he was called to Daigneau's house.

A week ago, Donna Daigneau asked police to visit her estranged husband's house because she thought he had committed suicide.

"What she was trying to do was help him get the help he needed. Things would be OK for awhile, and then it would start up again."
—Karen Fitzgerald, sister of Karen Daigneau

believed her sister went with him to protect her family.
"I think that she went down there to protect us from him. That's what she told me,"

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The Advocate-Messenger (Danville, Kentucky) 12 Nov 1991, Tue Page 1

Victim's family hopes fund helps battered women

By Amy Wolford
Staff Writer
HARRODSBURG — A fund to benefit battered women has been established in memory of Donna Fitzgerald Daigneau, who was murdered along with three friends Saturday in front of the Harrodsburg Fire Department by her estranged husband.

"We hope it will turn something horrible into something good," Daigneau's sister, Karen Fitzgerald of Portsmouth, N.H., said in a telephone interview this morning.

The family will decide what to do with the money once it sees how much comes in. "Basically, what we want to do is set up some kind of shelter for battered women in New Hampshire and Kentucky, maybe some kind of legal assistance," said Fitzgerald, who visited Danville in September.

Daigneau's estranged husband, Robert, followed a carload of people on their way to dinner Saturday night in Lexington. After the driver stopped at the former city police headquarters to get help, Robert Daigneau of Kings Mountain in Casey County fatally shot four inside the car, then fled to Garrard County where he committed suicide. Two passengers survived.

"We kind of did think something like this would happen," said Fitzgerald, adding that Donna had been hospitalized on occasion because of spouse abuse. "This has been going on for years."

In addition to the memorial fund, Donna Daigneau's employer, Wal-Mart of Danville, will be collecting money during the Christmas season to help a Lexington spouse abuse center. It was an activity

planned before the murder, store manager Harlan Bozarth said.

"She's just a mighty fine Christian person," Bozarth said Monday of his assistant

(Continued on Page A7.)

War injury frustrated Daigneau, family says

By Amy Wolford
Staff Writer
KINGS MOUNTAIN — Robert Daigneau was upset the Vietnam War took away his ability to work, family and friends say.

Never one to be lazy, he sometimes chopped wood while standing on his knees to lessen the intense pain that ran up and down his back, said H.M. "Junior" Shoemaker, a neighbor in this eastern Casey County community. The two men's work last week left a stack of firewood almost seven feet high on Daigneau's back porch.

But agony made it almost impossible for Daigneau, 45, to tend regularly to his 60-acre farm. "That's what frustrated him so," Shoemaker said.

The physical pain apparently fused with mental anguish after Daigneau's wife, Donna, left him and their 7-year-old marriage in May.

(Continued on Page A7.)

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Augusta, ME Dec, 1991

Lawmakers say VA hospital apparently isn't to blame in slayings in Harrodsburg

Associated Press

AUGUSTA, Maine — A pair of U.S. representatives said yesterday they saw no signs that a Veterans Affairs hospital failed to adequately treat Robert Daigneau before he went on a shooting rampage in Harrodsburg, Ky., that left five people dead.

Less than a month after the Vietnam veteran checked out of the Togus VA hospital in Maine, he shot and killed his estranged wife and three other people before taking his own life in November.

The shootings prompted assertions by friends of Daigneau, 45, that hospital staff members should have realized Daigneau was deeply troubled and capable of such an act.

But Reps. Olympia Snowe, R-Maine, and Bill Zeff, R-N.H., said after interviewing several patients and hospital staff members yesterday that they found nothing to back up such charges.

"No one gave any indication that he in fact did" intend to harm his estranged wife, Donna Daigneau, Snowe said. She added that people interviewed "were very much surprised about what he did."

Zeff said Daigneau, who had been treated for 28 days for post-traumatic stress disorder, left the hospital voluntarily to return home to Casey County, Ky. The hospital could not have held Daigneau against his will unless he had been committed.

But Daigneau's behavior during his latest visit to the VA hospital apparently did not justify commit-

ment, Zeff said. Whether the hospital had asked Daigneau to stay longer was still unanswered, the legislators said.

"Clearly, from what has been given to us today, we haven't detected anything in the treatment that could have prevented the outcome," Snowe said.

Zeff said it was "the judgment of everybody he was safe to be put out on the street and go back to his Kentucky farm."

The pair said they would not draw any final conclusions on the hospital's treatment of Daigneau until the Veterans Affairs Department issues a final report early next year.

Snowe and Zeff had joined Kentucky Rep. Harold "Hal" Rogers, R-5th District, in asking for a House Veterans Affairs Committee investigation of Daigneau's treatment at the hospital after receiving pleas for help from families of the people he killed. Zeff said he plans to meet with the families to tell them what he had learned.

Daigneau had been arrested on charges of assaulting his wife in Northwood, N.H., a few weeks before he was admitted to the Maine hospital, police said. He was released to a friend, John Cameron of Gilmanton, N.H.

Cameron is among those who say the hospital should not have released Daigneau.

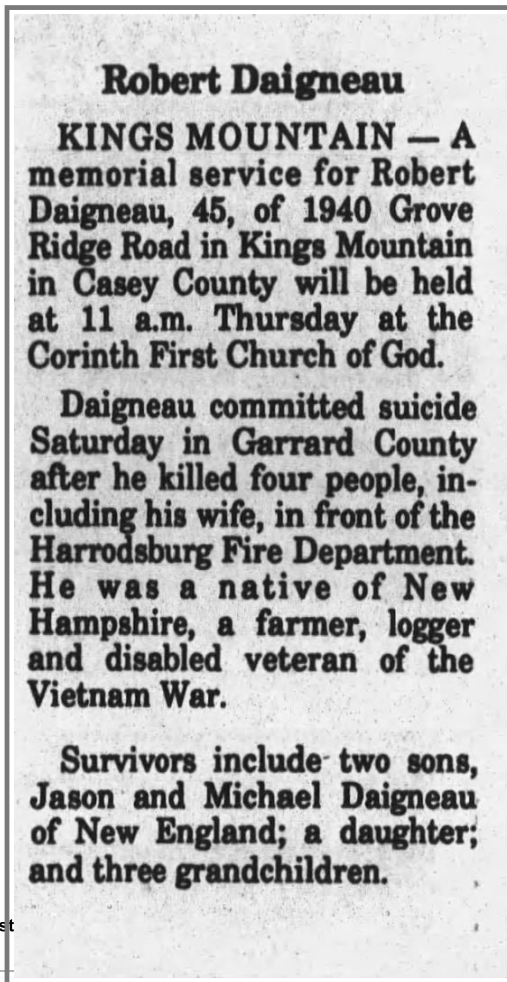
Hospital officials have contended that Daigneau was enrolled in a voluntary program and that staff members didn't think he posed a danger to himself or others.

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