



LANCASTER CITY POLICE DEPARTMENT

NEWS RELEASE

City of Lancaster

Bureau of Police, 39 West Chestnut Street, Lancaster, Pa. 17603

www.lancasterpolice.com

Author: Cpt. Pete Anders

Contact Number: 735-3300

Date: May 11, 2009

Homicide - Lancaster Township

Deceased: POTTER, Robert 48 years of age
1240 E. Orange St.
Lancaster Township

On Saturday, May 9th 2009 at 0749 hours, Robert Potter called into Lancaster County Radio that he was being assaulted by his wife, Tonya Potter, who is 41 years of age, at their residence. Their residence is 1240 E. Orange St., and this is a single family ranch style home located in a residential area of Lancaster Township.

Potter related that Tonya has a mental health disorder, and was not taking her medicine. Potter related that Tonya was being violent, wrecking the house and coming at him with a cooking fork, and a baseball bat, and at the time of the call his wife was kicking and scratching him. Potter stated that his wife was throwing things around, talking suicidal, was a substance abuser and was not taking her prescribed medication. Potter related that his wife needed to be committed to the hospital.

Lancaster City Police Officers and EMS arrived at the home. Sgt. Robert Means and Officer Todd Dickinson observed that Robert Potter, had received freshly, new scratch marks on his hands, arms, and body. None of these wounds appeared to be serious in nature. Sgt. Means also observed that Tanya Potter was not clothed, was incoherent in speech and manic in behavior. Sgt. Means also observed the interior of the house to be in total disarray with obvious recent damage to property. As a result of their observations, the Officers took Tonya Potter into custody for an evaluation toward a psychiatric commitment. She was taken to Lancaster General Hospital for this evaluation.

Prior to leaving the residence, Officers and EMTs asked if Robert Potter wished to have treatment for his wounds, but Potter related that he did not wish to have any treatment that if he needed to he would see a personal physician later. Officers and medics left the home at 0812 Hrs. Tanya Potter was admitted to LGH on the commitment.

Seven minutes later, at 0819 hours, 09 May 2009, LCWC received a phone call from a neighbor relating that a distraught boy came to her house stating that his father was on the floor dead inside of 1240 East Orange Street. An ambulance and police were re-dispatched.

Lancaster City Police Officers arrived on the scene at 0827 Hrs. and observed Robert Potter lying on the floor unresponsive. Sgt. Means attempted CPR, and officers were assisted by medics who attempted to revive Potter. Potter was rushed to Lancaster General Hospital. While at the residence, Officers observed a long pronged cooking fork, with bent prongs on the kitchen counter. Officers also noticed an open bottle of Clorox bleach next to Potter's body, which was crumbled as if something had fallen on it.



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At LGH, after Potter was declared deceased by a physician after Potter did not respond to continued CPR and treatment. The physician also observed a couple of superficial appearing wounds to the chest area of Potter that would be consistent with pokes made by a two-prong fork. The physician also stated that there was a small amount of blood about Potter's ear, which would be consistent with a head trauma. The physician related that it appeared preliminarily that Potter had suffered a heart attack and that Potter may have hit his head from falling when he had a heart attack. The physician contacted the Lancaster County Coroner's Office to take custody of the body, and perform an autopsy.

The Lancaster Police conducted a death investigation, and requested that an autopsy be performed as soon as possible. The Lancaster Police also obtained a search warrant to process the residence and seize potential evidence including the cooking fork, bat, all medicine and bleach bottle.

On May 10th 2009, Dr. Wayne Ross performed an autopsy and Dr. Steven Diamantoni ruled Potter's death a homicide. Dr. Diamantoni determined that Potter died of cardiac dysrhythmia caused by a complication from multiple traumatic injuries received during the initial disturbance on May 9th. There were also cuts and surface wounds observed to Potter's back during the autopsy.

The Lancaster Police continue to investigate this death, with further interviews of family members and friends, search warrants and processes continuing today through the week. The investigation will be reviewed by the District Attorneys Office prior to any charges being filed. "Special" ADA Kelly Sekula has provided guidance to the investigation since early Saturday morning. The investigation is in the early stages, and will continue.

Tonya Potter and a person suspected or charged with a crime are considered innocent until proven guilty in a court of law.

Anyone with information regarding this incident in Lancaster Township are asked to call Detective James Fatta of the Lancaster City Police at (717) 735-3359. Callers do not have to provide their name to give information, callers may remain anonymous.

End Release.

(end of release)