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S.i. Cop Kills Wife, Self

BY JOHN MARZULLI, MARY ENGELS AND AUSTIN FENNER DAILY NEWS WRITERS WITH HENRI E. CAUVIN

Wednesday, October 21, 1998

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A city police detective fatally shot his wife, also a city cop, then turned the gun on himself in their Staten Island home yesterday, police said.

The bodies of Fred and Monica Jesselli were found in the kitchen by their 12-year-old daughter when she returned home from school, police said.

Monica Jesselli, 38, had been shot three times in the body and once in the head; her husband, 47, had one gunshot wound to the head, sources said.

The daughter, Erica, called relatives, then ran screaming into the street in the Arden Heights section at 3:16 p.m., police and witnesses said.

Police said a 9-mm. handgun was found near the bodies. The couple had been married 18 years and also had a son, Derek, 15. The children were staying with relatives last night.

Detectives believe the shooting occurred shortly after Monica Jesselli came home from her 6 a.m. to 2 p.m. shift.

Fred Jesselli was a 19-year veteran of the burglary unit at the 122nd Precinct on Staten Island who sometimes worked 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. and other times 4 p.m. to midnight. He was promoted to detective in 1996. Monica Jesselli, a 17-year police veteran, worked in community affairs in the 123rd Precinct, also on Staten Island.

"They were both excellent officers," said Assistant Chief Eugene Devlin, the Staten Island borough commander.

Some neighbors called Fred Jesselli a tense, argumentative figure in the quiet area.

"He was a time bomb waiting to go off," said Mary Imhof, who lives a few doors away.

"He was a loose cannon," said Trent Perino, who lives around the corner. "It should never have happened."

Glynne Weiner, 31, who has lived around the corner from the Jessellis for two years, said Fred Jesselli would come out of the house and yell profanities at youths congregating at his end of the block.

But Nick Spano, 40, said the death of his neighbors left him in shock and disbelief.

"He seemed like an okay guy. The stress must have got to him," said Spano, who said he knew Fred Jesselli for 12 years. "I'm hurting for the kids most of all, because they don't have a mommy and daddy."

As news of the deaths spread, some neighbors ran in tears toward the house, which was festooned with Halloween decorations. Pumpkins adorned the front lawn.

The family had lived in the wood-and-stucco home for about 15 years. Fred Jesselli was meticulous about the home, neighbors said.

The murder-suicide came less than a month after Police Officer Patrick Fitzgerald killed his wife and two children before killing himself in his Orange County home.

Police later revealed that Fitzgerald, who worked in the 34th Precinct in Washington Heights, had sought counseling for his daughter in 1994.

Jesselli's personnel file contains one complaint made in 1991 and apparently domestic alleging "threats and temper." Internal affairs officers, however, could not substantiate the complaint.

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