

Subject: Common-law husband kills wife, himself in her workplace

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Common-law husband kills wife, himself

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El Paso Times

Maria Victoria Martinez lived the last dozen years of her life with a man who terrorized her constantly, her family said Tuesday.

On Monday, her common-law husband, Rodolfo Candelaria Jr., went looking for her one more time, but this time he took a gun.

Martinez, 40, died Monday afternoon of two gunshot wounds she received before Candelaria, 46, took two hostages and barricaded himself inside her workplace in a standoff with police. He then shot himself late that evening, ending an eight-hour ordeal, and was pronounced dead when he arrived at Thomason Hospital just before midnight.

Their lives, which ended in an office in the 9400 block of Carnegie, were filled with violence that resulted in claims and counterclaims about domestic abuse

Martinez's family said her turbulent relationship with Candelaria began about 13 years ago when he moved into the home next door to her parents. The couple soon moved in together.

Martinez's family said Candelaria, an inspector for the U.S. Customs and Border Protection, exploded many times, but Martinez never sought help.

"He was always pulling the gun on her, saying if she reported him to the police, he'd pull the gun on her parents," said Martinez's sister, Veronica de la Rosa. Candelaria's family could not be reached for this story.

Martinez, who had two children with Candelaria, filed a protective order against him earlier this year. She claimed in court documents that he beat her and threatened to kill one of the children while the family was in San Antonio. He in turn filed a claim that she assaulted him

Court documents described incidents of violence between the couple, but no action was taken.

"She never filed any complaints, (because) she was afraid," said Humberto Camacho, Martinez's brother-in-law.

In fact, when Martinez read about Border Patrol Field Operations Supervisor Rodolfo Greene killing his wife before committing suicide in August, she told her family something that haunts them.

"She said she wouldn't be surprised if it would happen to her," said Elizabeth Muela, a family friend who was in the offices where Candelaria killed Martinez.

Despite a fear of Candelaria, Martinez recently separated from him and tried to get a protective order against him. "He also told her if she ever filed a protective order he would kill her," said Martinez's sister, Lupe Camacho, who is married to Humberto Camacho.

Candelaria, a 1982 Ysleta High School graduate, also filed a domestic violence complaint against Martinez, a complaint her family alleges is false.

Martinez filed for a divorce from Candelaria earlier this year, and family members said the first pre-trial hearing was set to begin Saturday.

"When she left him, her whole personality came out and she felt like she could be herself," Muela said.

Martinez's death brought the city's homicide total to 19, compared with 14 at this time last year.

This is the third time this year a man has killed his spouse before committing suicide. In September, Judith Hernandez was shot and killed by her common-law husband, Jose Delgado, who also killed his next-door neighbor, Oscar Miranda, and then himself.

Police spokesman Javier Sambrano said Monday's homicide-suicide is still under investigation.

About 3:30 p.m. Monday, Humberto Camacho heard his sister-in-law's husband enter Saber Sales, the business he owns where Martinez worked as a secretary. Camacho said that after recognizing the voice as Candelaria's, he rushed to intervene but heard two shots before he reached them.

"He rushed at me with a gun and said if I didn't want to end up like her, I'd get on the floor," Camacho said.

He said he thought the gun Candelaria held to his head was Candelaria's service weapon.

"He lost it," Camacho said. "He was just talking nonsense. ... He would go and see the body and talk to Victoria and tell her look what she made him do."

About 4:45 p.m. a man entered the business and Candelaria shot at him, missing him but leaving a large hole in Camacho's pickup.

Camacho's sister, Muela, was also taken hostage but was released after police began talking to Candelaria.

"I felt helpless," Muela said. "I wanted to see if she was OK, but he wouldn't let me."

Martinez and Candelaria's children, Christopher Candelaria, 9, and Gabriel Candelaria, 12, learned about what happened to their parents from a police officer in the middle of the night, Martinez's sister Veronica de la Rosa said.

"I'm sad and I'm mad," Christopher said from the Lower Valley home where he lived with his mother and grandparents. Candelaria "always threatened my mom and me and Gabriel."

Although the family has not yet made funeral arrangements and does not know what will happen to Martinez's children, they do know there will be a large void in their annual Christmas celebration.

"We all get together on December 25 and we make turkey and open gifts and take a family picture in front of the Christmas tree," de la Rosa said. "I already bought her gift"