

Realtor killed in apparent murder-suicide in Elmhurst

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By Emma Graves Fitzsimmons and Monique Garcia
Tribune reporters

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After she broke up with her boyfriend last year, things got bad for Cindy L. Bischof. She was forced to file restraining orders against him and was so scared she had to temporarily move out of her home, according to records and family members.

As Bischof was about to leave her Elmhurst office Friday, police said she was shot to death by her ex-boyfriend before he shot himself in the head.

Michael L. Giroux, 60, whose last known address was in Palatine, died at the scene while Bischof, 43, of Arlington Heights died at an area hospital.

After a preliminary investigation, police called it a domestic issue and a murder-suicide.

Family and friends say, and records show, that a once-strong relationship began to deteriorate when he began to struggle with work, then descended into terror as he refused to accept the breakup.

“When you say domestic issue, it’s downplayed,” said Bischof’s brother, Mike of Barrington. “People think it’s just something that happens in our society. They don’t take into account the significance of the fear and horror she lived.”

Friends, family and neighbors said that the relationship between Bischof and Giroux lasted about three years, and that they lived in a two-story Colonial brick home she owned in the 700 block of South Dunton Avenue in Arlington Heights.

During that time, he started to falter in his job as a manufacturing representative for a furniture company, Mike Bischof said. He said Cindy Bischof, who was a successful commercial Realtor, supported him financially, but they broke up in May.

About two weeks later, Cindy Bischof’s home was broken into and vandalized, said neighbor Laura Magnuson, 41.

Arlington Police could not provide details of the incident Saturday.

Bischof was so scared about the incident, she didn’t return to the home for about three months, her brother said.

Records show Bischof received an order of protection in Cook County against Giroux in May. Records also show Giroux was arrested at least three times in Cook County for violating an order of protection.

“He kept harassing her, showing up everywhere. She even had cameras installed at her house,” the brother said. She continued to get restraining orders, he said.

John and Faith Wooden, the parents of Bischof’s ex-husband, said they remained close with Bischof after her amicable divorce from their son. They planned to have dinner with her Sunday at the Wellington Restaurant in Arlington Heights.

They said Bischof told them how Giroux was harassing her and would not accept the end of the relationship.

“He was off his rocker,” John Wooden said of Giroux. “He used to pester her a lot.”

A person reached by phone in Maryland who identified himself as a relative of Giroux declined to comment.

Mike Bischof said Giroux was in a court-ordered psychiatric unit for a few months before being released around Thanksgiving.

“I haven’t seen his presence around here in a long time; I kind of thought everything had blown over,” said Rod Magnuson, 44, Bischof’s neighbor.

Cindy Bischof grew up in Prospect Heights and attended Prospect High School, where she was homecoming queen, a member of the the National Honor Society and student council president, her brother said.

She attended Indiana University in Bloomington and DePaul University. She worked at Darwin Realty & Development Corp., where she was named one of the Midwest’s most powerful women in real estate in 2006, according to Darwin’s Web site.

She was just leaving her office Friday afternoon when Giroux showed up, police said.

“The law gave him too many chances,” Mike Bischof said.

efitzsimmons@tribune.com

mcgarcia@tribune.com

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