

## Local man booked for alleged murder staged as suicide

Written by By Babette Herrmann Sun Editor  
Friday, 28 April 2017 03:35

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A Gallup man was booked for first degree murder and tampering with evidence April 20 for the murder of Gallup resident 57-year-old Jami Nechero.

Randolph "Randy" Schmaltz reportedly left plenty of clues for police to arrest him for the murder, as revealed in the arrest warrant.

When Gallup Police Department officers arrived at the 1700 block of South Cliff Drive on Sept. 2, 2014, at 1:22 pm, in response to shots fired, they talked to the caller who said that she heard at least six gunshots in a row, coming from a home north of her residence.

Officer Douglas Hoffman made his way over to that home at 1710 South Cliff Dr., the home of Schmaltz, 64, who greeted the officer at the door with his small dog on a leash. Hoffman eventually handcuffed Schmaltz, and that's when he began to make "spontaneous utterances," saying "she shot herself" and "she killed herself" to the officers present at the scene, the arrest warrant states.

Officers made their way to the bedroom and found Jami Nechero on the bed, deceased. It appeared that she died from a gunshot wound to the face, possibly self-inflicted.

"Officer Douglas Hoffman stated that on Jami Nechero's upper chest was a handgun, the barrel was resting on Jami's neck area, and her left hand was lying on the handgun," the warrant states. "The handgun is described as a semi-automatic pistol silver in color."

As Hoffman began to take a look around the home he noticed some things that struck him as

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odd. Hoffman stated that as he stood near the front door, he noticed a washing machine with its lid open. The washer had clothes in it and was filled with water, but not running. He looked down at the tile and noticed some possible dried drops of blood.

Hoffman stepped out the door to let other officers know to keep an eye on Schmaltz as he may have forensic evidence on his body. As he proceeded to get Schmaltz's dog some water from the kitchen, he noticed drops of blood on the floor. It was at that moment that Hoffman asked for all officers to leave until detectives arrived on scene.

When GPD Detective Neil Yazzie arrived, Hoffman told him about some rugs by the front door that appeared wet, as if recently cleaned.

Meanwhile, Schmaltz was transferred to the police department for questioning by former GPD Capt. Rick White and Det. Steven Collins. Wet swabs were taken of the blood spatter on his arms and legs. During this procedure, Schmaltz made two attempts to wipe the blood off, and each time it came with a warning for him to stop the attempts.

During the interview, Schmaltz said that when he woke up on the fateful morning, Nechero was making statements about wanting to commit suicide. He said that he cut up a sandwich and fed it to her, which she choked on. He said that he had to perform the "Heimlich Maneuver" on her. And he also brought up that he had to call a local plumber to take care of a water leak and had the receipts to prove that he purchased a sandwich and paid the plumber.

Next, Schmaltz cleaned off the rest of the blood, then complained of chest pain. He was taken to a local hospital and later flown to Albuquerque for further treatment. That's all the warrant report reveals about the first interview.

During the crime scene investigation, Office of the Medical Investigator Richard Malone and Yazzie confirmed that Nechero was holding a gun in her hand, but the amount of "blow back blood splatter on the Kimber handgun" didn't match the blood surrounding the victim's face. It also appeared that someone tried to wipe areas of the scene clean. There were also bullet holes in the box springs that penetrated the floorboards, and one in the ceiling panel. This would line up with what the first witness reported – that multiple shots were fired. Another neighbor interviewed also heard multiple shots fired.

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A Smith and Wesson .44 caliber revolver that was found in a bedroom drawer, which reportedly had human blood and tissue on it, was taken into evidence.

After an arduous investigation, and multiple interviews, including Schmaltz's ex-wife, who reported that she was assaulted by him during their marriage, resulted in his arrest.

Schmaltz is currently being held at McKinley County Adult Detention Center on a \$50,000 cash only bond. He's scheduled for a preliminary examination hearing in Magistrate Judge Kenneth Howard's chamber at 1:30 pm on May 3 .

***By Babette Herrmann***

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