

The couple's 15-year-old daughter calls 911 after witnessing the shootings.

By IKIMULISA SOCKWELL
REGISTER STAFF WRITER

Indianola, Ia. — An Indianola man killed his wife and then turned the gun on himself in front of their children in an apparent murder-suicide at their home Thursday, police said.

Christopher Todd, 41, and Elizabeth Todd, 35, were arguing when he pulled out a gun, the Division of Criminal Investigation believes.

Their children, Annette, 15, and Eric, 11, ran downstairs at the home at 509 E. Third Ave. when they heard the fight, said Police Chief Paul Scranton.

Several shots were fired just before 3:15 p.m., when Annette Todd called 911, Scranton said.

Trying To Shield Mother

"The girl was trying to shield her mother," he said. "She got in the line of fire, but nothing leads us to believe he was trying to shoot the kids."

The children were not injured, Scranton said. "Physically they're OK. Emotionally they're very distraught," he said. The children were interviewed by police and were taken to stay with relatives, he said.

Police had made several trips to the house in the past for domestic troubles, Scranton said.

In the close-knit neighborhood south of Iowa Highway 92, residents said they knew one another and got along well — except with Todd.

"Everybody in this area has fought with him," said Craig Roberts, who lives next door. "He always thought he was somebody."

"Nobody really cared for him," said Roberts' wife, Darla. "He wasn't really a nice guy and he seemed hot-tempered."

Todd worked at Bridgestone-Firestone in Des Moines. He crossed the picket lines and usually worked the night shift, neighbors said. His wife, Elizabeth, was from Mexico. She was a homemaker, and neighbors said they rarely saw her outside the cream-colored house at the end of a dead-end street.

Brother Died

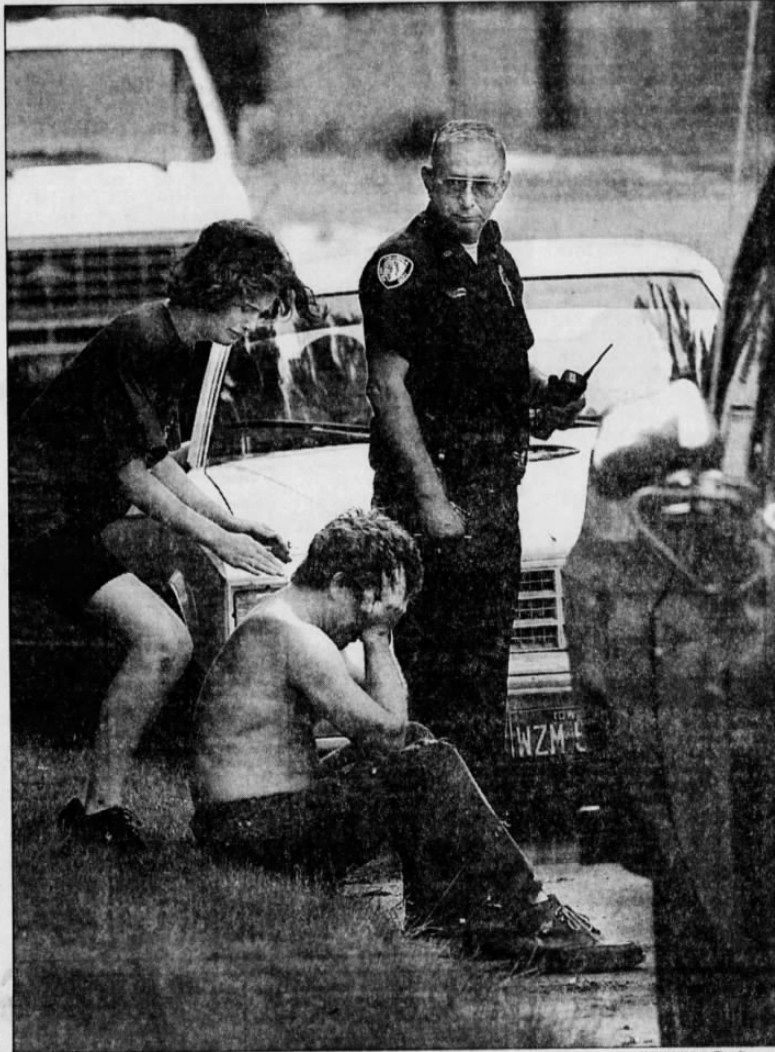
Todd's troubles appeared to worsen after the death of his younger brother, neighbors said. Joel Todd of Carlisle died last December after falling from a tree he was trimming.

"He's been a little irritated, especially since his brother died," said Harold Williams, who lives two doors down.

Williams and others had heard the couple arguing in the street early one morning. Christopher Todd told him they were going through counseling, he said.

"This shocked me," Williams said. "I didn't know they were having trouble to this extent."

On Thursday, Russell Cross, who lives behind the Todd home, was



KEVIN WOLF/THE REGISTER

Jon Todd, seated, is consoled by a friend. Todd's wife, then himself at their Indianola home brother, Christopher Todd, apparently shot his Thursday, officials say.

doing a little weeding in his yard when he heard the loud pops.

"There were multiple shots, probably four or five," Cross said.

Pistol Found

Scranton could not say how many shots were fired. Police found a small-caliber automatic pistol at the scene, he said.

Police are investigating every angle, but it appears to be a murder-suicide, Scranton said. Autopsies are scheduled for today.

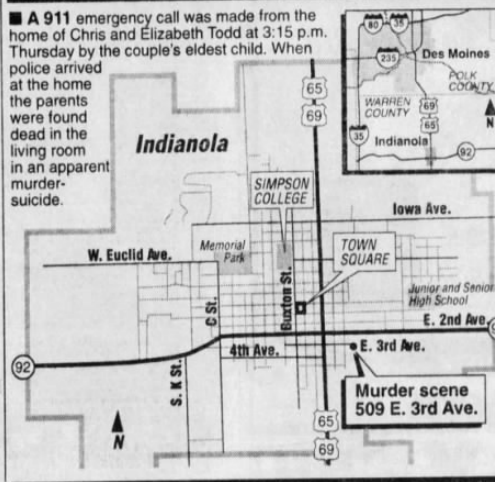
When officers arrived at the two-story home, they said Annette Todd ran to them, yelling.

She screamed as tears streamed down her face and directed the police to the bodies of her parents, who lay on the floor of the room near the front door.

"I feel sorry for Annette. She was just in hysterics," Williams said.

INDIANOLA SHOOTINGS

■ A 911 emergency call was made from the home of Chris and Elizabeth Todd at 3:15 p.m. Thursday by the couple's eldest child. When police arrived at the home the parents were found dead in the living room in an apparent murder-suicide.



PAUL STIGERS/THE REGISTER