

DOUGLAS BUDGET

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DOUGLAS CHURCH SHOOTING

‘THAT WAS MY DAD’

Wanted man gunned down by feds outside of father’s funeral
Wyoming Highway patrolman crashes on way to shooting scene



Friends and family console each other Thursday afternoon after Jasen Scott Ramirez was gunned down by U.S. marshals outside of St. James Catholic Church in Douglas.

At a funeral, a family’s grief doubles over

By NICK BALATSOS
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with Jen Kocher and Cody Tucker

U.S. marshals shot and killed a Colorado man outside his father’s funeral last Thursday, rocking the community and leaving friends and family stunned as their place of mourning that warm afternoon was transformed into a scene of fresh torment.

Outside of Douglas’ St. James Catholic Church, dozens watched as Jasen Scott Ramirez, 44, took his final breaths in the parking lot. He was later pronounced dead at Memorial Hospital of Converse County.

As others went to the basement of the

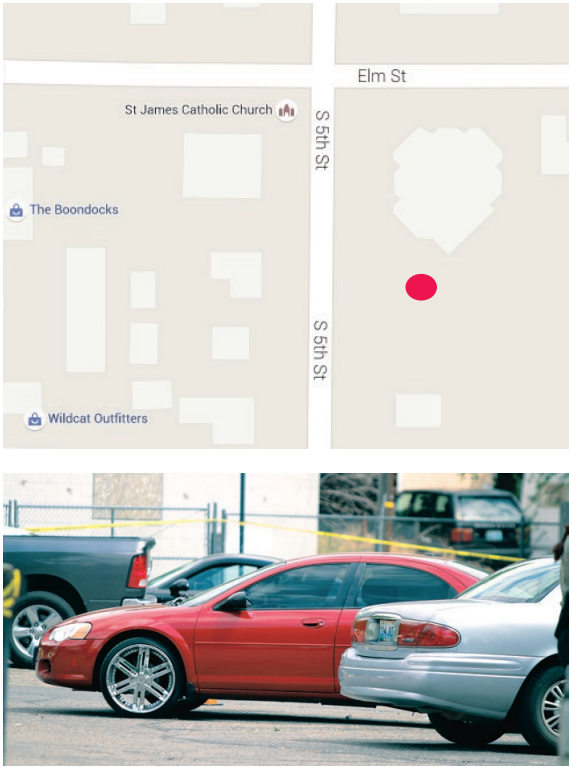
church for a reception, friends and family say that a distraught Ramirez left the funeral and was headed to his car when he was approached by undercover law enforcement and shot.

It was around 3 p.m. when the shooting occurred, officials say.

Friends and family say that Ramirez was unarmed. For unknown reasons, they say he was shot multiple times by law enforcement wearing plain clothes as Ramirez was getting into a red sedan.

The U.S. Marshal Service released a

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Jasen Scott Ramirez, 44, was shot multiple times Thursday afternoon while entering his red Dodge car in the parking lot at St. James Catholic Church in Douglas. Authorities confirmed that a U.S. marshal opened fire on Ramirez while serving a warrant outside of his father’s funeral.

Trooper, driver both released from hospital



Courtesy photo
Wyoming Highway Patrolman Joel Eldred rolled “at least four times” on his way to Douglas last Thursday.

By NICK BALATSOS
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A state trooper and a 49-year-old Louisiana woman are recovering after a two-vehicle crash east of Glenrock last Thursday sent them both to the hospital.

Sgt. David Waggener, a Wyoming Highway Patrol spokesman, identified the trooper as Joel Eldred, a 12-year veteran of the WHP who is stationed out of Glenrock.

The woman was identified as Robin Belgard, 49, of Louisiana.

According to WHP, Eldred received a “shots fired” call around 3 p.m. and was heading toward the Douglas scene, where U.S. marshals had just shot and killed 44-year-old Jasen Scott Ramirez outside of a church while serving him with an arrest warrant at his father’s funeral.



JOEL ELDRED

Eldred’s lights and siren were activated on his Dodge Charger as he sped toward the scene, where multiple other agencies, both federal and local, had responded.

Officials say Eldred was passing eastbound traffic on US 20/26, near mile marker 163, when he hit Belgard, who was driving a 2002 Jeep SUV and turning in front of him into the parking lot of a business.

WHP officials say Eldred hit his emergency brake and turned his vehicle toward the north ditch in an attempt to avoid hitting Belgard, but the two vehicles nonetheless crashed into each other as Eldred entered the ditch.

The impact caused Eldred’s patrol car to roll “a minimum of four times” and spun Belgard’s Jeep until it came to a rest in the westbound lane of US 20/26. Belgard’s Jeep was facing west, according to officials.

Belgard was transported to Wyoming Medical Center in Casper by ambulance. She was released later that night, according to officials.

Eldred was flown by helicopter to the same hospital. He was released on July 1

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This week’s weather

	Wed.	Thur.	Fri.	Sat.	Sun.
High	89	84	91	96	95
Low	55	52	57	60	53



July 9th to July 12th
Wyoming State 4-H
Shooting Sports Finals



Shooting

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Eye witness Lewis Montoya gives his official statement to Douglas police officers across the street from St. James Catholic Church on Thursday afternoon.

brief statement on Friday.

In it, the federal agency confirmed that they were involved in the shooting and noted that Ramirez was wanted for a drug charge. They didn't say whether Ramirez was armed, nor the reason he was shot, citing an active investigation. But they noted that the Wyoming Division of Criminal Investigation would lead the probe into the shooting. DCI spokesman Frosty Williams said that the agency would release its findings to the Converse County Attorney's Office once the investigation was complete, but he was unsure of a timeline.

According to a federal indictment, Ramirez was wanted for allegedly selling 1.8 ounces of meth and possessing a revolver during a March 13 drug deal. It was illegal for Ramirez to have the gun because of a past felony conviction for drugs.

Life lost

Reneil Cisneros, who has been a friend of the family for almost two decades, said that family members were destroyed by the shooting.

"That was my dad!" Cisneros remembered Ramirez' son, in his 20s, crying outside the funeral after Ramirez had been shot.

Cisneros said she saw the officers who shot him when she entered the church a little after 1 p.m. She was running late, and as she walked in, she said there were people in a vehicle who looked "out of place."

Nonetheless, she took a seat in the back. There were some 100 people inside. She remembers seeing Ramirez in the front of the church, sobbing.

She said he didn't stand up for communion. Although he normally would, on Thursday, she said he was too upset, as he and his father, Joe Ramirez, were close. She said he named his son after him.

When the shooting happened, Cisneros was outside. She said she was about to walk over and give Ramirez a hug when she heard the noise of bullets ripping through the air. She looked over and saw Ramirez leaning from the passenger side of a bullet-riddled car.

He appeared lifeless. She estimated at least six or seven shots fired.

Cisneros said that he wasn't armed, but the marshals shot and tased him.

A cousin, who asked not to be named, said that she watched Ramirez walk to the passenger side of the car and get in. She, too, said his hands were empty and that officers shot and tasered him.

Officials have declined to say whether that's true.

Converse County sheriff deputies and Douglas police officers attempted to revive Ramirez afterward, but it was too late.

According to the sheriff's office, Ramirez was pronounced dead at the hospital a short time later.

Another cousin, who asked not to be named, was outraged. She said it felt like hours before officials began CPR.

"They just let him lie there," she said. "The hospital is right there," she added, pointing down the block. "They should have called for an ambulance sooner. They wanted him to die!" she said, tears rolling down her cheeks.

Cisneros was upset, too. But like many, she was also confused.

"Why did they have to do it there?" she asked herself.

Cisneros said Ramirez was "a good guy, a sweetheart."



Douglas police officers stand outside St. James Catholic Church after taping off the crime scene in the parking lot Thursday afternoon in Douglas.

He had run into trouble with the law, she admitted, but as far as she knew, he was trying to get his life together.

After Ramirez was shot, the quiet residential neighborhood was transformed into a nightmarish scene.

Officers from more than nine federal and state agencies swarmed the church grounds, as family members, already dressed for a funeral, cried out at the scene outside the church.

Rumors of an unconfirmed threat against law enforcement prompted the sheriff's office to place the nearby hospital, courthouse and city hall on lockdown.

A Wyoming highway patrolman speeding to the scene crashed with another vehicle around Glenrock. Both drivers were taken to the hospital and later released. (See related

arrested an activist on an outstanding bench warrant.

Earlier this year, troopers in New Jersey arrested "an apparent mourner on firearm possession charges moments after he left the funeral procession of a Trenton man shot dead recently," according to the local newspaper, The (Trenton) Times.

It's also not the first time that an arrest attempt by marshals ended badly, records show. In November, two marshals in Louisiana fired multiple shots into a car, injuring the man they were attempting to arrest but killing his 6-year-old boy. The officers are facing murder charges, according to NBC News.

Closer to home, members of a U.S. Marshals Service task force in Billings in 2015 killed a man while attempting to serve a warrant as he

sonable" belief of a threat must exist.

So as law enforcement look into the shooting, these principles will in part guide their investigation.

Looking forward

Twenty-four hours after the shooting, it was another warm day and the neighborhood around the church had returned to quiet.

Still, Ramirez' death hung in the air.

People around town talked about it in hushed tones. Social media exploded with opinions on both sides of .

A news van parked out front of the church for a live broadcast.

A family showed up to be interviewed.

At Sunday morning mass, Bishop Etienne joined Father Bill Hill at St. James to address the shooting directly.

Etienne spoke briefly, reiterating his statement.

He said it's important to respect law enforcement, but he struggled with the way in which the church was targeted and the way other holy places have been targeted in the past. Father Bill also struggled.

He explained to the congregation that he's having a hard time finding the right words. He knows it happened, but he can't accept it.

That it happened in Douglas. That it happened at St. James.

He rubbed his chin, gazed heavenward and then looked his parishioners in the eyes as he detailed the facts of the shooting.

As he spoke, heads bowed and foreheads furrowed. Others stoically stared back with tears glossing their eyes.

It's important to keep the Ramirez family, law enforcement officials and the community of Douglas in our prayers, Father Bill addressed his congregation, adding that there's a lot healing to do.

The effects of this have not fully hit us yet, he said.

He reminded the congregation that, as members of the St. James parish, people will be looking at them and it's important to set an example — now more than ever.

"If you feel tempted to succumb to gossip, division by choosing sides, judgment or blame," he said, "rely on your tools as a Christian to guide you, and fight the temptation with grace, love, forgiveness and faith."

"A man lost his life, and it's not up to us to judge," he said.

More than ever, he reminded them to trust their faith and put their lives in the hands of God.



Beth Wood photos

Kate Dickinson (left) places the Wyoming High School Rodeo Association queen crown on Daycia Kohl, who will serve as the queen for 2016-2017.

Welding, lipstick & rodeo bling

By BETH WOOD
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Just because it's something she's always wanted, doesn't mean it came easily.

The morning Daycia Kohl was crowned the 2016-2017 Miss Wyoming High School Rodeo Association Queen she said her mom and sister were in the bathroom helping her curl her hair and her sister, Jenielle, was playing "pump up" music.

"I had worked hard to get to this point," Daycia said. "Jamming out with my sister was a way to relax and I knew, win or lose, I would smile and stay positive."

Daycia, who is a 17-year-old senior at Douglas High School and the daughter of Adeline Walker Kohl, said although she is extremely blessed to wear the WHSRA crown, "I was the daughter of the one true King, Jesus Christ, before that, and He is where my heart lies."

Daycia loves turquoise and tacos. Her passion lies in the western heritage and agricultural lifestyle. She is the granddaughter of a stock contractor, and before pursuing the PRCA, her grandfather was a three event cowboy in all rough stock events and competed at the high school rodeo nationals in 1959.

When she was 2 years old, she won her first check in the barrel racing that totaled eighty cents and she has been rodeoing ever since.

From a very young age, Daycia looked up to rodeo queens. When she was little, her mother put on a mini rodeo for children with special needs. She recruited help from the Wyoming rodeo queen candidates during the state fair.

Each year, Daycia was able to brush shoulders with the young ladies who were her heroes. Not only was she impressed with their gorgeous crowns and polished boots, but they each were graceful and humble, and she was impressed with that inspiring trait.

For many years on Halloween, her mom pinned a homemade banner to Daycia's button down and added a dollar store crown on her head so she was able to live her dream for just one night.

At the time, Daycia never imagined that in a few short years, her mom would be pinning the WHSRA banner to her shirt, and a real crown would be sitting on her Stetson.

Daycia said, "I am now blessed with the opportunity to live my dream every day."

Daycia said the Miss Wyoming High School Rodeo Queen program is special for many reasons.

"It gives one girl the opportunity to represent our entire organization and the sport of rodeo. Like the queens who were my heroes, the WHSRA queen needs to walk with grace and always remain humble. The program gives many girls the chance to strive to be better. It truly showcases the unique young ladies we have in Wyoming High School Rodeo."

"Many people see rodeo queens as just a pretty face. In reality, queens are the ambassador for the sport of rodeo and have many responsibilities."

During Daycia's year as Miss Wyoming High School Rodeo Queen, she represented Wyoming to the best of her ability, striving to show everyone the passion, hard work and dedication that WHSRA athletes have.

Along with that, she would like to be able to show people the "family" she is blessed to be part of in the rodeo community.

"As many have said before, there is nothing like high school rodeo because it's one of the only sports where the whole family is involved," Daycia explains. "We are a group of young people who are striving for success, but are also willing to stop and help others along the way. That character trait of rodeo is something I would like to showcase as the queen. I also plan to do my best to encourage other young ladies around the state to pursue the title of Miss Wyoming High School Rodeo Queen in future



DAYCIA KOHL

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