

'I can't believe it's real': Father remembers East Petersburg man who died in burning home

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Craig Rice ducked under the police tape and walked through the ruins of his son's home Monday morning.

About 12 hours before, [a fire ripped through the brick rancher at 6294 High St. in East Petersburg Borough](#), leaving only a shell of the structure.

Police say Rice's son, Mark Hackman, 53, set the fire that killed him.

"I can't believe it's real," Rice said.

The house sits on the corner of High Street and Jefferson Drive, and a tree on the corner of the lot holds birdhouses and feeders. Under the tree in the snow-filled yard, someone had stuck a cardboard "50th" sign.

Sunday was the 50th birthday of Mark's wife, Debbie Hackman. The couple had been married 13 years.

Northern Lancaster County Regional Police responded at 8:30 p.m. Sunday to the home for a domestic incident. Officers learned through dispatch that a man in the home, identified as Mark Hackman, had been drinking, was armed with a gun and threatened to burn down the house.

Debbie Hackman was able to escape with the family dog. Police said Debbie told them Mark was “intoxicated, armed and emotionally unstable.”

When officers called Hackman using a cellphone and tried to convince him to leave the home, police said he repeatedly refused. A police negotiator continued to speak with Hackman while firefighters worked to put out the fire. But Hackman eventually stopped talking to the negotiator.

Officers and members of the Lancaster County Special Emergency Response Team provided security for firefighters at the scene. After the fire, emergency responders found Hackman's remains in the residence with two handguns nearby, police said.

Police continue to investigate Hackman's death, and the Lancaster County Coroner's Office has scheduled an autopsy.

“It's unbelievable,” said Rice, who noted Mark had recently lost his job.

Rice got a call about 8 a.m. Monday morning telling him his son had died. He said he didn't know anything beyond that. He was on his way to the police station to learn more but decided to stop at Mark's home first.

He walked through the snow, circling the building and stopping repeatedly to look at the devastation.

“It's my son,” Rice said. “I loved him. He was cool as hell.”