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Those familiar with Jacksonville murder-suicide victims struggle to make sense of tragedy



Elias Joubran





Sheila Clay Joubran

By Seth Boster, Star Staff Writer, sboster@annistonstar.com Dec 31, 2015

A day later, the people who knew Elias and Sheila Joubran were coming to terms with the shock left by the married couple’s death, which Jacksonville police have called a murder-suicide.

Sandra Cheatwood, Sheila’s older sister, spoke through tears from her White Plains home Thursday.

“We knew it was unstable,” Cheatwood, 61, said. “It was nothing we could’ve expected.”

Jacksonville police Assistant Chief Bill Williams said he saw himself with a handgun Wednesday shortly after 10 p.m.

Sheila Clay Joubran, 50, was leaving her home in White Plains, Fla., on Wednesday afternoon for a house closer to their parents in White Plains.

Sheila said, when dispatch was called by Elias’ teenaged son from an earlier marriage.

“He shot! He shot! He shot!” the boy said.

“The movers were in the other room, literally one wall away,” Wineman said Thursday. “They ran in there. It was too late. It was over.”

Wineman was a neighbor of the Joubrans.

“I’d wave to them, that was about it,” he said. “From what I had seen, they appeared to be happy. Obviously, there was more going on.”

Elias Joubran is well known in Jacksonville for his years in charge at the Village Inn, the restaurant near the town’s square that was popular before it closed three years ago, not long after Joubran sold it. He began working at the down-home eatery in the 1970s while a student at Jacksonville State University and took ownership of it in the late ’80s. He ran the place alongside his brother.

Attempts to reach Simon Joubran were unsuccessful Thursday.

“He was always coming around and speaking to everyone. He was always nice and wanted to make sure everything was going OK.” said Martha Dobson, the former president of the Jacksonville Exchange Club who had met with the group at the restaurant twice a month through the 90s and 2000s. “The Round Table,” as the spot by the restaurant’s front window was known, was a regular meeting place in town for churches and local dignitaries.

“I would never have guessed this would have happened,” Dobson said of Wednesday’s news. “I was just as shocked as most other people in town.”

Sheila Clay had also been working in a restaurant. All her life she had helped at the family-owned Big Daddy’s in White Plains. She and her sister had been operating the place since their parents retired.

Cheatwood said Sheila’s life had been devoted to the restaurant. Cheatwood said was now living with his father in Jacksonville.

“She was just the sweetest person ever, no one could ever be more loving, so fun to be around, always kept you laughing.”



She said her sister met Joubran at a gym. He later took her to his birthplace in Israel, Cheatwood said, to be baptized in the Jordan River and to be married. He bought her a canary yellow diamond ring and a yellow silk dress.

“They had beautiful pictures,” Cheatwood said.



Things had gone well for a while, she said. But recently, the relationship crumbled, she and those familiar with the couple said.

Throughout the week, Elias Joubran had been going to work “frantic,” said his boss, Bessie Limberis, part owner of Roma’s, the eatery on Jacksonville’s square close to where the Village Inn used to be. Limberis, having known Joubran all her life, knew him to show his temper on occasion; others in town, including longtime police Chief Tommy Thompson, also noted this side of Joubran, who had no trouble with the law, according to state court records.

“His temper had always been there,” Limberis, 41, said. But murder, she said, was not in his nature.

Into his first month cooking lunch at Roma’s, he had been going table-to-table, chatting with customers he

This week, “he was not the same person,” Limberis said. Since Monday, she said, he had been outsp. Limberis had told him to take some time o

“He kept saying, ‘Please have patience with me,’” Limberis said. “I felt so bad for him.”



At 9:55 a.m. on Wednesday, she saw him peel out of Roma's in his silver Mercedes. He returned around 11:20 a.m. to find that a replacement cook had been called in.

"He got mad," Limberis said. "That's when he left."

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Seth Boster

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