

Teacher Fatally Shot on Last Day of School

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SHEPHERD, Texas – A 24-year-old teacher was gunned down in the parking lot of an elementary school Wednesday as students were arriving for their last day of class.

Police say the killer was the woman's ex-boyfriend, who was free on bond after trying to shoot her in the head in January.

Angela Collins of Livingston was pronounced dead at the scene shortly before 8 a.m. after being shot three times at close range as she tried to flee her killer. Most of the students were arriving by bus at the side of the school and did not witness the shooting, school officials said.

The killer shot through the back window of Collins' car with a .30-.30 rifle and then fired at least two more shots into the car, witnesses told sheriff's officials.

Collins' ex-boyfriend, Patrick Dale Walker, was arrested at his home in nearby Goodrich a short time later.

"He didn't say a whole lot. He acted like he expected us to come," said Polk County Sheriff Billy Ray Nelson. "He called his mom out of the house, and I asked her if she knew what was going on, and she said, 'Patrick told me he shot that girl in Shepherd.'

"She was very calm. She was more interested in the car than him," he added. "The car belonged to her, and we were fixing to tow it off, and she wanted to know how she could get it back."

Walker, 25, was charged with capital murder and was being held without bail Wednesday night in San Jacinto County Jail in Coldspring.

Nelson said Walker was first arrested in Polk County on the morning of Jan. 20 after he allegedly broke into Collins' trailer home in Livingston.

"He held a gun to her head and tried to pull the trigger, but it didn't go off," the sheriff said. "She got away and ran next door to get her brother, and he wrestled with him and got the gun away."

Walker then fled and was arrested at his home, Nelson said. He was released four days later on \$25,000 bond. Earlier this month, a Polk County grand jury indicted him for attempted murder in that incident.

Collins grew up in Livingston but attended school in Shepherd, a town of 1,900 where her mother, Nettie Collins, has taught first grade for more than 25 years, school officials said.

After graduating from Shepherd High School in 1989, she went to Sam Houston State University and then returned home in January with her 3-year-old son to accept a job as a pre-kindergarten teacher at Shepherd Elementary.

Ronald W. Corn, who retired from his job as school superintendent last year, said he watched Collins grow up and served as her supervisor when she did her student teaching last fall.

"She was shy, easygoing," he said. "Not one to make waves. She was always very positive, and had an excellent rapport with the younger kids."

Corn said he was unaware of Collins' relationship with Walker and was surprised to learn Wednesday that the suspect in her killing had been arrested before.

"She never said anything," he said. "I never heard anything negative about her or from her. When I heard, it just shocked the living heck out of me."

Principal Cindy Dillon remembered Collins as "a fine young woman" and a "prize for any school to have."

"She was so good with our 3- and 4- and 5-year-olds. She was dependable. She was loyal," Dillon said. "She did everything for those kids – played with them, changed diapers, rode the buses with them."

"This is an extremely close community, and the teachers and students are devastated," added Ben F. Setliff, the current superintendent. "She grew up in this community and comes from a long line of teachers and a family that is well-respected."

Collins' mother, who still teaches at the school, was in her classroom when she learned of the shooting, Setliff said.

Many parents arriving at the school for an awards assembly immediately took their children home. The rest were gathered together, and the school counselors told them what happened, he said.

"This is the last day of school. We were going to have our awards ceremony and then let school out early," he said. "It was supposed to just be a fun day for the kids."

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