



BY ALICIA CRUZ
NEWJERSEYNEWSROOM.COM

James Sanders, husband, father and devout Christian, innocently placed an ad on the Internet site Craigslist to sell his wife's diamond ring. When he received a response from a woman, the last thing he thought would happen would be that he or his family would end up being held at gunpoint, pistol-whipped or murdered.

The woman, claiming to be interested in buying the ring for her mother, was 21-year-old Amanda Knight. She arrived to the Sanders home in Edgewood, Washington a suburb of Pierce County, accompanied by her alleged husband, who showed Sanders the cash for the ring before he let them into his home. Once Sanders displayed the ring, the man stuck a pistol in his chest.

At that point, Sanders, his wife, and their 14 and 10-year-old sons were placed in plastic handcuffs. Within minutes, two other suspects entered the home. When the eldest son witnessed his mother being kicked in the head, he broke free of his restraints and was pistol-whipped by one of the robbers prompting Sanders, 43, to break free of his own restraints and attempt to protect his son. It was then that Sanders was shot three times, once in the knee, in the thigh and in the back of the right shoulder. The shoulder wound was fatal. Sanders died at the scene.

As Sanders lay dying, Knight allegedly ransacked the home taking with her cell phones, a laptop computer, jewelry and other items. Police say they have video footage of Knight pawing

items from the Sanders home robbery.

At one point, the brutal thugs held a gun to the wife's head giving her five seconds to tell where the family's hidden safe was located, then began counting, "five, four, three," but did not shoot. Police said the family had no hidden safe.

Pierce County prosecutor Mark Lindquist told CNN, "this is a cautionary tale. You hate to tell people to be wary of your fellow citizens, but the reality is you've got to be wary when you are doing something when interacting with strangers on Craigslist."

The three men accused of murdering Sanders home were arraigned Monday on first-degree murder, robbery and assault charges. Detectives say they were able to recover items from the Edgewood home invasion and murder that were thrown from a car window off the 277th Street off-ramp of northbound state Route 167.

According to [KIRO 7 Eyewitness News](#), the police manhunt for Knight came to an end when she walked into the Summer Police Department at 5:29 p.m Tuesday and told an officer that she wanted to turn herself in.

[Click Here to Listen to 911 Calls Made by Sanders Son, Wife](#)

The police report stated that Knight, crying uncontrollably, walked up to the officer, put her hands in front of her and said, "You know who I am. You have the pictures of me."

Knight allegedly told the officer that she was "involved in the murder — the one in Edgewood." She was immediately placed into custody and booked while police continued talking to her. A [video](#) shows Knight sipping water from a cup as she was being led to a holding cell until Pierce County officers could arrive to pick her up.

Once inside, the video shows Knight putting her head in her hands and sobbing while leaning against a wall. Within 30 minutes, Knight was removed from her cell and taken to the Pierce County jail by Sheriff's deputies.

[Click Here to view video of suspect in holding cell](#)

Clabon Terrel Bernaird, 23; Kiyoshi A. Higashi, 22; and Joshua N. Reese, 20, remain in the Pierce County jail along with Knight, who pleaded not guilty to the same charges last week. All three have also pleaded not guilty and are being held in lieu of \$2 million bonds. If convicted, all face up to 70 years in prison. Their next court date has been set for June 9.

Edgewood Suspects Believed to Be Responsible for Earlier Craigslist Robbery

The four are also believed to be responsible for another robbery in Lake Stevens a week earlier of a couple who were trying to sell a flat-screen TV on Craigslist. Police say in that robbery, the couple was tied up and their home ransacked by two men brandishing weapons.

In less than 10 minutes, Lake Stevens Police Chief Randy Celori said the robbers took electronics, jewelry, and a large amount of Iraq currency in \$5,000 denominations that the husband brought back from his deployment to the Middle East while he was in the Army, while two people, a man and a woman, sat in a pickup truck outside the Lake Stevens home. The couple's 6-month-old was asleep in his crib.

The trio was arrested May 1 in Daly City, near San Francisco after a Daly City police officer pulled the Ford Crown Victoria over, with Knight driving, for having no front license plate.

Officers say Reese had a weapon within reach under the seat and also gave the officer a false name. Pierce County Sheriff's spokesman Det. Ed Troyer told [KIRO TV](#) that Knight was able to bail out before investigators in Daly City knew they were looking for her.

Which of the four suspects actually shot Sanders remains a mystery to police since all four have given conflicting statements to investigators, but Pierce County Prosecutor Mark Lindquist says it really doesn't matter.

"Under the law, accomplices are as guilty as the principle," said Lindquist and Sander's widow, agreed telling reporters outside the courthouse, "Honestly, I blame them all."

Outside of the courtroom, Higashi's sister, Jackie Higashi told reporters, "It's not Kiyoshi or Reese. All of the papers are trying to make it look like Kiyoshi was the shooter and he's not."

Father of One Suspect Apologizes to Sanders Family

In an interview Monday, Kiyoski Higashi's father Alan said he wanted to apologize on his son's behalf.

"I know Kiyoshi, he made a big mistake and Jim Sanders, he was a good guy, he didn't deserve to die," Alan Higashi said. "And just wanted to give my sympathetic apology... and wish this never happened."

Alan says he doesn't believe his son was pulled the trigger. [He says](#) his son told his daughter that Bernard was the one who shot Sanders and he was in the garage.

"When all of the commotion started and when he (Kiyoshi) came out of the garage after the gunshot he saw Mr. Sanders obviously dead on the floor," said Alan.

Three Suspects had Extensive Criminal Histories

Higashi's May 1 arrest wasn't the first time he found himself on the wrong side with police. He

has an extensive, disturbing criminal history dating back to 1999, when he was convicted in the theft of a go-cart.

The following year, a police reports shows that Higashi assaulted his father on Christmas Day and at one point, threatened his family by saying, "I'm going to set the house on fire and kill the whole family," according to police.

The officer that responded to the Christmas Day assault call noted that Higashi hadn't attended school for a year, had no respect for authority and had been the subject of complaints that he set things on fire and committed vehicle prowling, malicious mischief, theft, assault and reckless endangerment. He was 12-years-old.

As an adult, Higashi again assaulted his father and was convicted in 2008. The father told police the assault occurred after he told his son that his girlfriend was no longer welcome at their home.

Alan Higashi has also had some run-ins with law enforcement beginning in 2002, when Alan was briefly jailed as a material witness after he refused to cooperate with police in a child-molestation investigation of his son, who was 14, at the time. The father was released after Kiyoshi pleaded guilty to fourth-degree assault of a girl with sexual motivation. In that case, citing an extensive criminal history, prosecutors secured a 52-month sentence against Higashi, who was serving 12 months of community supervision for a theft in King County at the time of his arrest for the murder of Sanders. Department of Corrections spokesman Chad Lewis said Higashi remained in compliance with DOC supervision, but was considered "violent and at high risk of reoffending."

Alan Higashi's second arrest came Tuesday night after he allegedly obstructed police as they attempted to execute a search warrant on his home in relation to the Sanders murder.

Suspect Claims to Have Alibi

In a jailhouse interview with KING-TV after his arrest, Higashi denied any involvement in the

crimes and claimed to have an alibi.

Suspect Reese, who arrived on a flight into Sea-Tac Airport from the San Francisco Friday after waiving extradition, also has a criminal history that includes a stint in prison resulting from a 2008 arrest in which he was charged with second-degree vehicle theft and obstructing justice. According to police reports, Reese was a passenger in a stolen car that fled when a Puyallup tribal officer attempted to pull it over for driving at night without headlights.

The vehicle was chased onto a dead end street, where the three occupants fled. Reese was later found hiding in bushes. In court, he pleaded guilty to felony car theft and was given credit for the 24 days he had served in jail while awaiting trial.

The day after his release from jail, police say he along with Kiyoshi Higashi was at a bus stop in Renton where they approached a young woman who was playing a portable-electronic game. Reports say Reese grabbed the device from the woman and ran.

A police dog found him hiding in bushes. Reese was later found guilty of first-degree theft and sent to prison for eight months. Higashi was never charged. Other court documents show Reese had four previous convictions for protective or no-contact order violations, all involving the same female. In those cases, Reese pleaded guilty to misdemeanor violations.

Berniard, who allegedly moved to Washington State after Hurricane Katrina, has a criminal history that includes convictions for robbery, assault, burglary, theft and criminal trespass. In 2007, the Skyway Fire Department honored Berniard and another person as local heroes for saving two elderly women from a house fire.

It appears Knight had no criminal record other than minor traffic infractions.

Police advise anyone using craigslist to sell or buy items to use extreme caution when meeting potential buyers or sellers.

If You Use Criagslist or any other Internet Site to Buy or Sell Items:

- Meet in public settings
- Do NOT give your home telephone number or address for any reason. If you are buying or selling a large item consider using a thrift store or be prepared to take the item to the buyer or meet in a public place, with a friend(s) in order to exchange the item or any monies.
- Tell someone when and where you are going to meet with a potential buyer or seller.
- Get their names and any other identifying information and try to verify that information prior to the meeting.
- Never, ever let any potential buyer or seller into your home or vehicle.