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Facebook post presages murder-suicide in N.H.

Man shoots wife and self in hospital room

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FACEBOOK PHOTO

Mark Lavoie and his wife, Kathy, died in an apparent murder-suicide Tuesday in a Dover, N.H., hospital, friends and a relative confirmed.

By Mark Arsenault, Matt Rocheleau and Jim Kimble

GLOBE STAFF AND GLOBE CORRESPONDENTS DECEMBER 30, 2014

DOVER, N.H. — Mark Lavoie’s final Facebook post read like a last will and testament, a suicide note, and an admission to a murder that had not yet happened.

“Please don’t mourn for me,” he wrote early Tuesday, in a post that suggested his wife wanted to die and that he was going to help her. “My spirit will be in a much better place with my soul mate.”

Desperate friends who saw the post phoned the police. They typed plaintive pleas on Lavoie’s Facebook page.

“Mark please don’t.”

“Call me!”

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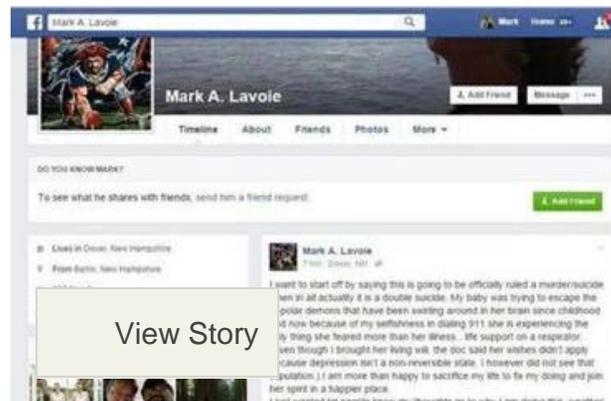
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Lavoie's Facebook message

A man identifying himself as Mark A. Lavoie posted a message on Facebook Tuesday morning.

"I'm on my way to his house!!! 20 minutes away," posted Lavoie's longtime friend Charlene Wood.

Minutes later, Wood learned from one of Lavoie's relatives: It was too late.

Lavoie, 50, a parts manager at Portsmouth Ford Lincoln, had allegedly shot dead his wife, a patient in the critical care unit at Wentworth-Douglass Hospital in Dover, at about 6 a.m. Tuesday.

Then, he apparently took his own life. "It was positively horrific to

“

'I want to start off saying this is going to be officially ruled a murder/suicide when in all actuality it is a double suicide.' --

realize he had actually done it,” Wood said in a Globe interview.

Mark A. Lavoie, in a Facebook posting

New Hampshire Attorney General Joseph A. Foster confirmed Tuesday afternoon that police had responded to a report of gunshots in the hospital, and that a husband and wife had died in what appeared “to be the result of a murder-suicide.”

It was exactly as Lavoie had predicted in the opening of his post: “I want to start off by saying this is going to be officially ruled a murder/suicide,” he wrote, “when in all actuality it is a double suicide.”

Assistant Attorney General Jay McCormack declined at a news conference Tuesday to name the people killed at the hospital, but two friends told the Globe it was Lavoie and his wife, Kathy.

Lavoie’s sister Dorcas Lavoie confirmed to the Associated Press that her brother had shot his wife and himself, and said he did it “out of love.” A woman who answered a phone registered to another close relative told the Globe that the family had no comment.

In the posting on what appears to be his Facebook page, Lavoie claimed his wife wanted to “escape the bipolar demons that have been swirling around in her brain since childhood.” It was unclear why Kathy Lavoie had been hospitalized.

Lavoie suggested that because he had called 911, “she is experiencing the only thing she feared more than her illness . . . life support on a respirator.” He did not elaborate on the 911 call; neighbors said an ambulance visited the Lavoie home Monday.

“I am more than happy to sacrifice my life to fix my doing and join her spirit in a happier place,” Lavoie wrote.

The couple had lived in a Cape-style home on Tennyson Avenue, a quiet residential neighborhood lined with modest one- and two-story houses.

Scott Ablett lived two doors away. He said Lavoie and his wife have two daughters, one of whom is about the same age as Ablett’s daughter, who is 21. The family also had a dog, he said.

“They were nice people from what I knew,” he said. “It’s sad. It’s tragic.”

Lavoie’s Facebook post matter-of-factly directed how he wanted his property distributed, and asked that his pets be cared for. He didn’t care what happened to his ashes, he wrote, “but I know Kathy loves Damariscotta Lake,” a state park in Maine.

Lavoie’s friend Casey Mitchell was left struggling Tuesday with the death of friend — a death he tried desperately to prevent.

“I knew it was no joke,” he said of Lavoie’s Facebook post. “He doesn’t pull any punches.”

Just 45 minutes after Lavoie had posted, Mitchell said, he was in his car heading for Dover, hoping he wasn't too late to stop his friend of 27 years. Mitchell had known Mark Lavoie from their time in Berlin, a city known for its history of paper and pulp mills along the Androscoggin River in northern New Hampshire. They worked for the same car dealership in Berlin and moved to the Seacoast region around the same time in the mid-1990s to work for Portsmouth Ford.

Lavoie's car was not at his house. Mitchell next headed to Wentworth-Douglass Hospital 2 miles north. He recognized Lavoie's car outside the emergency room.

"I went right up to the reception desk and told them, 'I'm a close friend of Mark,' " Mitchell said. He then told them to call security.

Hospital staff was calm. Someone asked him to take a seat. Eventually, a police detective stepped forward to speak with him. His friend was already dead.

Hospital spokeswoman Dawn Fernald said the facility was never on lockdown because the shooting was isolated to a patient's room.

Candy Coy, of Berlin, said she once was a neighbor of Lavoie, and had kept in touch.

"He was one of the most kind-hearted men I ever met in my life," Coy said. "He would do anything for his wife and kids and friends, family. He would have done this because he loved her so much and respected her."

Mitchell said Mark and Kathy were deeply in love, and spent nearly every spare moment doing things together: riding motorcycles, hiking, and biking.

Lavoie had recently mentioned his wife's ongoing medical issues, but never in specifics, Mitchell said. He said his golf buddy was unable to join him on the links as often as he used to because Lavoie wanted to spend more time with his wife. But Mitchell said he had no indication that the marriage would end in violence.

"They never had any domestic issues at all. There was no drug use. They went to church," he said. "They were an iconic couple."

Just before the shooting, Mark Lavoie signed off from social media, forever:

"Well in all the years I've been on [Facebook] I never was one for posting any drama," he wrote. "I was due one."

"Love you all, peace out!"

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