History of violence with the Ventana Lakes HOA

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A look back at the shooting that claimed two lives at a Ventana Lakes homeowners association meeting in 2000.

Tragedy at Ventana Lakes

Hal Mattern
The Arizona Republic
04/20/2000

They tell you what color to paint your house, what kinds of trees you can plant, and even whether you can fly the American flag in your yard.

If you don't comply, they have the power to fine you or place liens on your property.

In extreme cases, they have been known to rig elections, assess bogus fines, harass residents they don't like or peek over backyard fences to look for violations.

Homeowners associations, the first level of government many people encounter, have become the bane of property owners throughout the Valley.

"Some of them can be good, but some are running wild," said Sen. Tom Freestone, R-Mesa, who hopes to chair a committee this summer to develop possible legislation to rein in homeowners associations.

"We don't want to disturb good homeowners associations, but we need to look at legislation to protect homeowners. We don't want these associations to become mini-governments run amok."

Disputes between homeowners and their associations are common, and sometimes they can result in shouting, fighting and legal action.

But it is rare for such disputes to erupt in violence.

On Wednesday, former Ventana Lakes development resident Richard Glassel reportedly opened fire on a homeowners association meeting.

"I think it was an isolated incident, but there are some disgruntled homeowners out there who are unhappy with their associations," said Beth Mulcahy, a Phoenix attorney who represents 250 associations throughout the Valley.
She said the shooting will rock homeowners association board members, property management companies and attorneys who represent associations, who "are going to have to take precautions if there are disgruntled homeowners who you think might have violent tendencies or erratic behavior."

Curtis Ekmark, a Scottsdale lawyer who represents several homeowners associations, including the one at Ventana Lakes, agrees.

"Every association has people who want to argue all the time," Ekmark said. "They just can't get over it. They yell and scream at board members, and it can become a nasty mess."

Ekmark disagreed that legislation is necessary to regulate associations. Instead, homeowners need to carefully read the bylaws before deciding to move into a development.

"Some associations have stringent rules, and some don't," he said. "Legislators hear about 10 bad situations a year, but what they don't consider is the fact that there are 12,000 associations in Maricopa County. I can guarantee you that people are going to see this as a homeowners association picking on this guy until he snaps, which is not the case."

Republic writer Chris Fiscus contributed to this article.

**SUSPECT KNOWN IN NEIGHBORHOOD FOR BAD TEMPER**

**Pat Flannery**  
The Arizona Republic  
04/20/2000

Richard Jock Glassel threatened the local gardeners. He cursed at neighbors. He blocked the community mailboxes with his car.

Neighbors who knew him didn't know Glassel well, but they all remembered one thing: his razor-edged anger.

If neighbors' pets urinated in his yard, "he said he was going to kill those people," recalled Dottie Coleman, 65, who lived around the corner from Glassel's former home in the 20600 block of North 104th Avenue.

What is remarkable is how little else anyone seemed to remember about Glassel and his wife, Susan, even though they lived in the Gardens at Ventana Lakes, a tidy Peoria retirement community, for nearly five years.

Neighbors remembered Susan Glassel as a polite and gracious woman. But they said they kept their distance because her husband was overtly hostile to nearly everyone he came in contact with.
"He was disgruntled, very much so," said Mike McCarthy, who lived about a block away. "He had been disgruntled with our community for a while. We don't know the reasons why, but he was disgruntled, probably, within his own mind."

Neighbors last remembered seeing Glassel before Wednesday's murderous rampage when he drove a rental truck up to his home last fall to empty its contents. The house had been repossessed in a foreclosure, and neighbors later discovered the inside had been vandalized.

Until Wednesday, it had been months since neighbors saw Glassel. Once cleanshaven, they did not recognize the bearded gunman.

It is unclear if Glassel, 61, is from Arizona. His Social Security number was issued in Arizona, but he lived in the small Oklahoma town of Grove in the early 1990s. He and his wife bought their Peoria home in December 1994.

Superior Court records say Richard Glassel has children living in California, but it is unclear how many or where. Oklahoma police said he was a law-abiding citizen during the time he lived there.

According to court records, problems began almost as soon as the Glassels moved in to their duplex, a one-story tan patio home purchased for $84,127.

"The Glassels did not have an entirely smooth relationship with either the developer or the Ventana Lakes Property Association after they moved into their new home," attorney Kathleen Coughenour wrote in a document filed in a subsequent lawsuit.

The Glassels wanted an awning added to the four-room home, but the association disallowed it because it was not from an approved vendor. Their air-conditioner "continually froze up during the summer, and they were advised by repairmen that it did so because it was too small for the home, but they were unsuccessful in getting the developer to replace it with a larger unit, despite numerous requests," Coughenour wrote.

Then Glassel witnessed what he thought was a double standard. The association denied a variance sought by a property owner in another complex, but later granted that individual a variance over Glassel's protests "as soon as that property owner was elected to the (association) board," Coughenour wrote.

The biggest tiff was over landscaping. According to Glassel's version of events, spelled out in court documents, he was allowed to assume most of the responsibility for landscaping his lot even though the association was legally charged with landscaping for the entire community. Under that agreement, Coughenour claimed, no work could be done by others without Glassel's approval.

The dispute came to a head in June 1998, when new property managers and landscapers
were hired by the association. Coughenour said the neighborhood "began to appear more like a barren wilderness" as all the neighborhood greenery was cut back.

"When the landscapers attempted to scalp Richard and Susan's home as they had done to others, Richard refused to permit it," Coughenour said.

In an October 1998 affidavit, Elaine Petrosino, former property manager for the association, denied Glassel was ever given permission to care for his own property.

"I know that the landscapers would perform maintenance, care, repair and trimming of the bushes, plants and trees on Lot 47 (Glassel's), as well as mow the lawn," Petrosino said.

"However, because Mr. Glassel always yelled at and threatened the landscapers when they came upon his lot, the landscape crew would wait until Mr. Glassel was not home to perform the maintenance and landscaping of trees, bushes and other foliage on Lot 47."

Faced with Glassel's refusal to let the maintenance workers on his property, the association went to court. Susan Glassel went to California to stay with the couple's children while Richard "regularly picketed the developer's sales office," court documents state.

The association got a Superior Court order preventing Glassel from hindering landscapers on his property again. When a process server tried to serve him the papers, he ran the server off with hostile words. Attorneys for the association claim Glassel also tried to run the server down with his car.

Later, Glassel was asked under oath in court to recall the episode. Association attorney Penny L. Koepke said she asked him if he would have done the same to her, even though she is only 5 feet 5 and 120 pounds.

"He said, 'I certainly would,' " Koepke recalled late Wednesday. "At that point, I thought the judge had heard enough."

That behavior fit a pattern described by those who saw him daily. His dislike for his neighbors was palpable, they said. Lynda Kolb, 62, remembered him sitting in his yard taking pictures of residents as they picked up their mail from the community mailboxes in front of his place.

Though Susan was once the president of the Garden Club, Kolb recalled that Richard would attend and prevent his wife from speaking.

"It would make us all real mad," Kolb said.

Joyce McGuiness, whose house shared a common area with the Glassels', said she went inside her home every time he stepped outdoors.
Eventually, the court ordered Glassel to pay the association $1,081 in legal fees and interest. But when the association tried to garnishee his bank account, it had a balance of only $39. Court records show financial problems had occasionally hounded the couple, but that was apparently the last straw. By November 1999, the Glassels' mortgage lender had begun foreclosure proceedings.

**GUNMAN ALONE, REPORT SAYS POLICE RELEASE INFORMATION ON VENTANA LAKES FATAL SHOOTINGS**

*Brent Whiting*
The Arizona Republic
8/4/2000

Police believe that Richard Glassel acted alone in a murderous rampage in Peoria that claimed two lives.

No evidence has been uncovered showing that anybody else was involved.

Those are a few of the findings in a 4-inch-thick report that the Peoria police released July 21 under the Arizona Public Records Law.

The sometimes heavily edited documents answer some questions surrounding the shooting, but not all of them.

For example, the reports show where Glassel, 61, legally purchased three of four weapons that figure in the April 19 attack at the Yacht Club at Ventana Lakes.

They don't show where he obtained the fourth, an AR-15 assault-style rifle. That detail remains under investigation, said Sgt. Russ Scarborough, a Peoria police spokesman.

The report does document a running feud that Glassel, a former Peoria resident, had with the Ventana Lakes Property Owners Association.

It also contains the accounts of many eyewitnesses who say Glassel walked into the club and began blasting away.

Based on the reports, here is a summary of some of the key events in the case:

1994

Nov. 23: A deed of trust is filed with the Maricopa County Recorder's Office for a home purchased by Richard Jock Glassel and his wife, Susan Lucille Glassel. The home is in the 20600 block of North 104th Avenue in the Ventana Lakes retirement community in Peoria.
July 31: The Ventana Lakes Property Owners Association sues the Glassels in Maricopa County Superior Court, accusing them of harassing maintenance crews.

Sept. 14: The association wins a permanent injunction against the Glassels after they fail to appear in court and challenge the lawsuit.

1999

May 29: Richard Glassel purchases a Ruger 9mm semiautomatic pistol at Pollack Custom Works in St. Johns in northern Arizona.

June 9: Glassel purchases a Ruger .22-caliber semiautomatic pistol at Lone Wolf Trading Co., 4977 W. Peoria Ave., Glendale.

June 23: The Ventana Lakes association wins a judgment against the Glassels for $1,054 in attorneys' fees stemming from the lawsuit.

June 28: Richard Glassel purchases a Ruger 9mm semiautomatic pistol at Dealers Outlet, 5414 W. Glendale Ave., Glendale.

July 17: The homeowners association files a notice of lien with the Recorder's Office, claiming $507 for maintenance assessments.

Nov. 9: A notice of trustee's sale is filed with the Recorder's Office, confirming that the Glassel home has been placed in foreclosure.

Glassel and his wife move to Canyon Country, Calif., about 40 miles northeast of Los Angeles, where they move in with Renee Darleen Cullen, Susan Glassel's daughter from a previous marriage.

2000

April 4: On a trip from California to Arizona, Richard Glassel rents a storage locker at the U-Haul outlet, 8746 W. Bell Road, Peoria, and makes a reservation for a 14-foot-long rental truck.

April 18: Glassel is driven by Cullen, his stepdaughter, to the Hollywood-Burbank Airport. He boards Southwest Airlines Flight 1339 on a one-way ticket to Phoenix. The plane departs at 9:25 a.m. and arrives in Phoenix at 10:35 a.m.

About 4:40 p.m., Glassel returns to the U-Haul outlet and closes out the storage locker. He also rents a U-Haul truck with a Massachusetts license plate.

Glassel spends $71.94 and checks in for a night at the La Quinta Inn & Suites, 2510 W.
Greenway Road, Phoenix.

April 19: Shortly before 2:14 p.m., Glassel arrives in the rental truck at the Yacht Club at Ventana Lakes, 20015 N. 108th Ave., Peoria. He makes two trips around the building, then stops in front of it on the third pass. He enters the front door armed with the three pistols and an Olympic Arms AR-15, which is a .223-caliber assault-style rifle.

At 2:14 p.m., Glassel opens fire with the .22-caliber pistol, getting off 10 rounds in the direction of a group of people at his left. Nila Ruth Lynn, 69, and Esther Lourdes LaPlante, 58, are fatally shot. Lynn dies of a gunshot wound to the thorax. LaPlante dies of a wound to the head.

Two more people are shot. Charles Ken Yankowski, 69, receives a gunshot wound to the left thigh, and Edward Paul Ettinger, 69, is shot in the chest. After firing the last round from the .22-caliber pistol, Glassel grabs the AR-15 and starts aiming it at other people.

Police say that when asked by frightened people why he was firing, Glassel replied that he was paying them back for all of his troubles.

Gilbert Dee McCurdy, 63, and Lyle D. Baade, 66, two of many heroes, take action. McCurdy tries to wrest the rifle away from Glassel. During the struggle, the weapon fires, wounding McCurdy in the left foot. Baade knocks Glassel to the floor and pins him there until three more men rush in and help Baade, who suffers cuts to his right hand and complains of chest pains.

Investigators later determined that the AR-15, which contained 28 cartridges, malfunctioned after McCurdy was wounded due to a shell casing that jammed between the bolt and the ejection port.

At 2:14 p.m., two 911 emergency phone calls are placed to police, alerting them about the shooting.

At 2:17 p.m., Bruce Grady, a Peoria patrolman, is the first police officer to arrive at the scene.

Glassel is arrested. He is wearing black pants, a black T-shirt and two shoulder holsters containing 9mm handguns, both containing 10 cartridges. He also has a belt with numerous spare magazines for the weapons.

Police say Glassel, who stands 6 feet tall and weighs 250 pounds, refuses to talk to investigators, so it is unknown if he was under the influence of illegal drugs or prescribed medication that may have helped trigger the outburst.

At 6:36 p.m., the U-Haul truck is checked for explosives. None are found.

April 20: Glassel is booked into a Maricopa County jail on two counts of first-degree
murder and four counts of attempted murder. He is held without bail. Later in the day, the cabin area of the U-Haul truck is searched by police. Enough ammunition to reload all four weapons several times is recovered.

April 22: The Yacht Club is turned back by the police to the Ventana Lakes Homeowners Association.

April 24: Peoria detectives conduct an interview in Valencia, Calif., with Glassel's wife and stepdaughter. They say the pair believed Richard Glassel had traveled to Phoenix to buy a used car.

April 26: Glassel is indicted by a Maricopa County grand jury on two counts of first-degree murder, three counts of attempted murder and 27 counts of aggravated assault.

April 29: The Yacht Club reopens for use by Ventana Lakes residents.

May 5: Glassel is arraigned in Maricopa County Superior Court on the criminal indictment, and pleas of "not guilty" are entered on his behalf to all of the charges. That same day, police release the rental truck back to U-Haul.

May 11: The Maricopa County Attorney's Office files a notice with the court that it will seek the death penalty if Glassel is convicted at trial.

A status conference in the case is scheduled for Sept. 11 before Judge Pete Reinstein. No trial date has been set.

**MURDER SUSPECT RULED FIT FOR TRIAL**

**Carol Sowers**
The Arizona Republic
08/30/2001

Richard Glassel, accused of killing two people and wounding three others in a Peoria shooting rampage last year, is mentally competent to stand trial, a judge ruled on Wednesday.

Maricopa County Superior Court Judge Peter Reinstein said he is convinced that Glassel "is fully aware of the charges against him" and understands that prosecutors are seeking the death penalty.

Reinstein agreed with a prosecutor that Glassel, 63, understood the gravity of his situation when he asked for a lawyer following the April 19, 2000, shooting at a Ventana Lakes homeowners association meeting.

Glassel is charged with two counts of first-degree murder and 30 counts of attempted first-degree murder.
GLASSEL SENTENCED TO DIE FOR MURDERS

GUNMAN SHOT 2 TO DEATH AT VENTANA LAKES

Dennis Wagner and Carol Sowers
The Arizona Republic
01/11/2003

Richard Glassel, the enraged homeowner who murdered two women in a Peoria retirement community, was sentenced to death Friday and promptly flashed a series of unexplained smiles.

A Maricopa County Superior Court jury deliberated most of two days before handing down the sentence in a 2 1/2-year-old murder case that raised questions about Glassel's sanity and tore through the lives of the victims' families.

Glassel did not attend his trial because of health problems but arrived at Friday's hearing in a wheelchair, wearing a black dress shirt. He listened to proceedings with a hearing aid but never spoke a word.

Duane Lynn, whose 69-year-old wife, Nila Ruth Lynn, was killed by Glassel, slumped forward as the sentence was announced and wept silently while others in the audience clenched fists or whispered, "Yes!"

The sentencing was confounded by an incident among jurors earlier in the day. According to prosecutor Cathy Hughes, one juror sent a note to Judge Peter Reinstein complaining that fellow panelists had accused him of refusing to deliberate and asking to be removed. That request evidently was denied several hours before the unanimous verdict was issued. But Dennis Jones, Glassel's defense counsel, attempted to make an issue of it while the jury was still empaneled.

According to Hughes, Jones hoped to question jurors about their conflict, presumably planning to file a motion or appeal. But Reinstein gruffly silenced the defense lawyer and released the jury.

Jones declined comment after court was adjourned.

Glassel, 62, received two death sentences for killing Lynn and 58-year-old Esther LaPlante as he swept gunfire along the head table at the Ventana Lakes Homeowners Association meeting on April 19, 2000. Three men were wounded but survived the rampage, which was triggered by a landscaping dispute between Glassel and the association.

Lynn's husband, who attended more than 60 court hearings over 2 1/2 years, said he is relieved at the case's culmination, yet frustrated by a system that gives defendants expansive rights while gagging the victims. "We're more than just a fly on the wall," he sobbed outside the court. "We're human beings. Nila was a human being. She was my
wife."

While the Lynns' children vowed to fight for increased victim rights, they made it clear that neither a death sentence nor life in prison offered any consolation.

"There's really no victory either way," said Cathy Morgan, a daughter. "It's not going to change things or bring back Esther LaPlante or my mom. Justice doesn't really heal; grace does."

Angela Martinez, a LaPlante relative, said she was appalled to see Glassel grinning after the sentence was read. "I just think he's a very evil, sad man," she added. "And I hope God has mercy on his soul."

The jury is the first in Maricopa County to hear trial evidence and then hand down a sentence under new Arizona court rules that require jurors, not judges, to decide punishment in capital cases.

Forewoman Julie Sherwood said she and 11 other panelists made a "very difficult decision" based on the evidence and the law. She declined to comment on disagreements among jurors except to say all had to grapple with personal sentiments and conflicts.

Jones, Glassel's public lawyer, did not cross-examine witnesses during the trial, saying that he had been given the case late and was not prepared to put on a defense.

Jones argued that justice would best be served by sparing Glassel's life. He noted that his client left a suicide note before his rampage and suggested that Glassel's mental health remains in doubt despite the fact that he was ruled competent to stand trial.

Because Glassel suffers from poor health, Jones concluded, life behind bars "would be a death sentence" that would give him time to "to reflect each and every day on the enormous harm that he has done."

SOURCE:

Ventana Lakes shooter dies in hospital

Richard Glassel
By Rusty Bradshaw
Independent Newsmedia, Inc. USA
Updated January 17, 2013

PEORIA, Ariz., 2:45 p.m. Jan. 16, 2013 – The man who shot two people to death during a Ventana Lakes Property Owners Association board meeting in Peoria has died.
Richard Glassel, 74, died at Tempe’s St. Luke’s Hospital today from natural causes. Mr. Glassel was on Arizona’s death row for the April 19, 2000 deaths of Nila Lynn and Esther LaPlante. Three other people were wounded in the shooting before Mr. Glassel was subdued by residents attending the meeting.

Mr. Glassel was taken to St. Luke’s Jan. 9. In 2003 he was the first convicted murderer in Arizona to have his death sentences decided by a jury rather than a judge.

Several months prior to the fatal meeting, Mr. Glassel made several trips to the Phoenix area from California, according to police reports. A former Ventana Lakes resident, Mr. Glassel’s home was repossessed by the builder, Lemar Homes of Arizona, Inc., according to a Peoria Independent story about the attack in April, 2000. Mr. Glassel also had several disputes with the homeowners association.

About 50 people were at the meeting when Mr. Glassel entered the Ventana Lakes Yacht Club, 20015 N. 108th Ave., with an AR-15 assault rifle, fully loaded with 30 rounds of ammunition. He also carried two fully loaded 9mm pistols, strapped and holstered to his chest, and a .22 caliber pistol in his hand. He arrived at the Yacht Club in a rented U-Haul truck and police reported it contained large amounts of weapons and ammunition.

Wounded in the attack were Edward Ettinger, Charles Yankowski and Gilbert McCurdy. Mr. Glassel was subsequently subdued by the group and held on the floor until the police arrived.


TO READ:


By Irvin H. Perline, Ph.D., Jona Goldschmidt, Ph.D. (this includes Ventana Lakes HOA, pp. 229)