

Everett mom struggled with gunman, died after saving daughter, 11



(Mark Wilson/Globe Staff)

Photo: The scene of the apparent murder suicide today on Russell Street.

By John R. Ellement and Andrew Ryan, Globe Staff

EVERETT -- A scorned lover burst into the apartment of his former girlfriend with a shotgun early this morning and opened fire in an apparent murder-suicide that left two dead and one man wounded, according to prosecutors and neighbors.

The gunman, identified by authorities as Edward H. Pettengill, 44, walked up the back stairs of a second-floor

apartment on Russell Street at about 12:30 a.m. and blasted his way through the door, according to prosecutors and neighbors. The victim's 11-year-old daughter was inside the home when the shooting began, but she escaped before her mother, Altijana "Tina" Moric, was killed, according to Middlesex District Attorney Gerard T. Leone Jr.

Moric, 36, struggled with Pettengill and screamed for her daughter to run.

"Tina fought for herself and fought for her 11-year-old daughter," Leone said at a press conference this afternoon at the Everett Police Department.

Neighbors described a harrowing scene, recounting how they heard the struggle and the blasts of the shotgun.

"It was awful. It was really, really terrible," said Ruth Giannasoli, who lives in the apartment downstairs. "At least nothing happened to the little girl."

The shooting started just before 12:30 a.m. when Pettengill forced his way in the back door, Leone said. Moric's new boyfriend, Joseph E. Scimemi, 35, heard the noise and went to investigate. Pettengill shot Scimemi in the arm and went after Moric, Leone said.

Scimemi stumbled outside and called police at 12:32 a.m. Moric fought with Pettengill and helped her daughter escape. While the struggle continued inside, police arrived with tactical equipment and prepared to force their way into the apartment, said Chief Steven Mazzie of the Everett Police Department. They tried unsuccessfully to communicate with Pettengill.

With police outside, Pettengill shot and killed Moric and then turned the gun on himself, authorities said. Officers waited another nine minutes before forcing their way inside.

Mazzie said the strategy was to use time as an ally and try to negotiate a peaceful end. Police training has taught officers not to storm a home where hostages are being held at gunpoint, especially a woman and a child, he said. From the first 911 call until Pettengill killed himself, 23 minutes elapsed, authorities said.

Moric and Pettengill had dated for 3 1/2 years before they broke up in August, shortly before she moved from East Boston to Everett. Neighbor Elena Aresco said Moric had recently told her that Pettengill was "unstable" and did not get along with her daughter.

"I think that's why they ended things, because [her daughter] came first in her life," Aresco said.