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A Father's Call for Help

'My Son Has Killed My Wife'

Late one afternoon in June 2006, Joe Bruce of Caratunk, Maine, came home from work to find his wife dead. He called 911 and told the dispatcher that his 24-year-old schizophrenic son, William, had killed her, that he couldn't find the son, and that he was arming himself for self-defense. Below are excerpts from the transcript of that call made available to The Wall Street Journal. (See related article.)

* * *

Caratunk, Maine, June 20, 2006, at 4:49 p.m.

Dispatcher: 911. What is the address of the emergency?

Mr. Bruce: My name is [...] I live at [...] in Caratunk. Um, my son has killed my wife, he is schizo -- completely out of his mind.

Dispatcher: Where is your wife now?

Mr. Bruce: She is in the bathtub, she is dead. I just came home from work, her car is gone. [...] I don't believe anyone has been here, there is no sign the neighbors are aware of anything going on. His name [...]. He is 24 years old.

* * *

Dispatcher: How old is she?

Mr. Bruce: She's 48 years old. Please, please don't put this out over the scanner. Just send someone up somehow. Would you please just do me that favor?

Dispatcher: Hold on just one second sir, OK?

Mr. Bruce: Yes.

Dispatcher: OK, we are going to send them out over the phone that way....

Mr. Bruce: Yes, please. I will be right here. There's uh....

Dispatcher: Do you have any idea where your son may be going?

Mr. Bruce: I have have, he is completely out of his mind.

Dispatcher: OK, what is your phone number there?

Mr. Bruce: [*Number*]. I don't know where the phone went from up at the house, I'm down in her shop.

Dispatcher: OK. Stay right there, sir, I will be in touch with you shortly. I am going to make some calls and get everyone started that way, OK? Don't go anywhere.

Mr. Bruce: OK, yes. I will not.

Dispatcher: I'll call you back in a few minutes.

Mr. Bruce: Yes. Sir, I am going to arm myself. Please, I will only have a weapon nearby. I don't intend to kill him or anything, but if he shows up I do want to be able to defend myself. I don't want the officers to feel threatened when they get here. I won't be standing out there with a gun. I just wanted you to know that, OK?

Dispatcher: If you see a deputy or officer, just make sure you keep your hands where they can see them. I will inform them of that.

Mr. Bruce: OK.

Dispatcher: Just make sure if you see them you keep your hands where they can see them.

Mr. Bruce: OK.

Dispatcher: Somebody will be in touch with you shortly, sir.

Mr. Bruce: OK.

Dispatcher: Thank you.

* * *

[*The 911 Center called back.*]

Dispatcher: Did he have any access to weapons?

Mr. Bruce: I have... everything has been locked up for a long time.

Dispatcher: Do all of your firearms are locked up?

Mr. Bruce: Yes, I have a federal firearms license. Everything has been locked in a building in a safe with an alarm system. I have checked that.

Dispatcher: When was the last time you spoke to your wife?

Mr. Bruce: About 7 a.m. this morning.

Dispatcher: Was your son there at that time?

Mr. Bruce: My son was here -- he was asleep. We tried to get hold of the case manager. There's a guy they have, this, oh, this f--ing system. They let these people out. They won't give them medications and they let them out, and they put them with a case manager, I have called this guy. We said, "Jeez he is getting worse." I said, "I can't go on like this having him here, until he killed somebody."

Dispatcher: He has had some longer issues that go back?

Mr. Bruce: He got out of Riverview, they committed him and let him out, said there was nothing they could do for him, he won't take medication and they won't give it to him under this these f--ing nuts are the ones making these friggin, she was one of the most beautiful people in the world. [*Inaudible*]

Dispatcher: You have to stay with me.

Mr. Bruce: I know, I'm OK.

Dispatcher: We need to make sure we get everybody up there for you to make sure....

Dispatcher: I'm alright.

Dispatcher: OK. You are doing great.

Mr. Bruce: I'm alright. I'm, my other kids, the rest of the family, the lives that are going to be ruined because of the lunatic God D---laws. We told them he's going to kill somebody. They say, "Well he seems OK now so there is nothing that we can do, you know."

* * *

Dispatcher: You're the one there correct, sir?

Mr. Bruce: As far as I know. I don't know where he is.

Dispatcher: OK.

Mr. Bruce: But the car is gone.

Dispatcher: And that is your wife's car, correct?

Mr. Bruce: That is my wife's car.

Dispatcher: OK. There's a description showing on the Department of Motor Vehicles. We got the plate number and everything.

* * *

Dispatcher: Does he have any friends? Any idea at all where he might have gone?

Mr. Bruce: No clue. He has been completely out of his mind. He's been home here with us... I'm going to say three weeks, and he'll have periods where he'll calm down, but most of the time you talk to him and you can't even carry on a conversation with him. He talks about, way gone, way gone. Well, obviously.

Dispatcher: OK. I'm going to explain to you what we are doing on this end. Just so you know real quickly. I have an ambulance coming that way, but they are not going to be able to come there until the police secure that scene. OK?

Mr. Bruce: Yes.

Dispatcher: For their protection and your protection.

Mr. Bruce: Yes. I understand.

Dispatcher: OK. Police will come first. I've already told them you have a firearm to protect yourself. It's close to you and you don't have it on you. OK, when you see them....

Mr. Bruce: I know what to do. I will come out. They will know its me and not him.

Dispatcher: Right. They're going to go inside, probably just one of them.

Mr. Bruce: Which officers are coming up?

Dispatcher: I have numerous deputies coming.

Mr. Bruce: Alright. I know some of them.

Dispatcher: OK. [*Name*] is on his way. There's a list of them. Probably just one of them will go into the house and secure the scene.

Mr. Bruce: OK.

Dispatcher: And then the ambulance will go in, OK?

Mr. Bruce: I've been upstairs. The only place I haven't been down into the basement. I left my... I had no weapon, so I grabbed my flashlight when I went down to check the gun room, I grabbed my flashlight, that was the only light, but I'll....

Dispatcher: Do you have power there? There was a big storm going through.

Mr. Bruce: We lost power. I hit the worst of it in Solon, Bingham. It's just rain and a little lighter up here.

Dispatcher: OK.

Mr. Bruce: Oh God.

Dispatcher: You haven't called anyone to come down, have you?

Mr. Bruce: I haven't called anybody but you.

Dispatcher: OK. If you could refrain from doing that for right now.

Mr. Bruce: [*Inaudible*] Yes... just, I don't need all the, kinds of people getting wound up. We knew there was no plan and within a week he was back up here and we ... My wife wouldn't just leave him out. I said, "If he comes here something bad is going to happen." I knew it. I felt it.

* * *

Dispatcher: OK. They are actually coming towards you. I just want to make sure that they are going to get there. OK, as soon as they get there we can hang up.

Mr. Bruce: Yup.

Dispatcher: You're on the front porch now?

Mr. Bruce: I am on the front porch now.

Dispatcher: OK. Just so they can identify you sir, what are you wearing?

Mr. Bruce: Blue jeans, black and white checked shirt, sleeves rolled up, blue baseball cap on.

Dispatcher: OK.

Mr. Bruce: I'm 54 years old [...] I have the shot gun sitting on the kitchen table. I don't know where he is.

Dispatcher: OK.

Mr. Bruce: When they come, I'm watching, I'll go out the door. There's nothing to worry about. I understand how it works.

Dispatcher: OK.

Mr. Bruce: There's not going to be a problem. You don't have to worry about it. I'm not going to do anything stupid.

Dispatcher: Please, don't walk around much sir.

Mr. Bruce: I am sure you have already put out an APB, or whatever you guys call it. I just want to let them know they want to be God D--- careful approaching him because he is completely out of his mind.

Dispatcher: OK.

Mr. Bruce: And he was in the army and he does know how to kill.

Dispatcher: He does, OK. So he would be considered armed and dangerous.

Mr. Bruce: He must be. I don't know what he is armed with. I don't know what he is armed with. I've got to say it's a knife of some sort.

* * *

Dispatcher: So, is it still raining up there?

Mr. Bruce: Yeah, but not hard.

Dispatcher: Does your wife work, sir?

Mr. Bruce: Yeah, home business.

Dispatcher: And your son, does he work?

Mr. Bruce: My son does not do anything. He is totally incapable of functioning.

Dispatcher: OK. Was he on any medications, I know you said he refused?

Mr. Bruce: No.

Dispatcher: OK. Does he have a diagnosis?

Mr. Bruce: Yes.

Dispatcher: Do you know what that is?

Mr. Bruce: Yes, schizophrenia. [*Inaudible*]

Dispatcher: What was that?

Mr. Bruce: I haven't checked out the barn yet.

Dispatcher: OK. Don't go in there then.

Mr. Bruce: OK.

Dispatcher: Hang on a second. I am going to ask them how long it is before they get there.

Mr. Bruce: OK.

Dispatcher: They are about four minutes out.

Mr. Bruce: Yup.

Dispatcher: Think you can take talking to me for another four minutes.

Mr. Bruce: Still hanging in there.

Dispatcher: Alright. Good deal. When you called me today, sir, you had just arrived home from work?

Mr. Bruce: Yes. I work for [...]. I just left the Fairfield office, stopped at Dr. ------ office to pick up a prescription and didn't stop for gas.....

Dispatcher: Is there something else?

Mr. Bruce: No.

Dispatcher: Just trying to see if you knew what he was wearing when you left for work or was he still sleeping so you wouldn't know that.

Mr. Bruce: I have no idea what he was wearing.

Dispatcher: OK.

Mr. Bruce: He's got... I believe it's... [*Inaudible*]

Dispatcher: Have you been fighting lately? I'm sure it is hard to live with someone with that diagnosis. Do you know if they were fighting?

Mr. Bruce: No.

Dispatcher: OK.

Mr. Bruce: No, he was really whacked out the last couple of days. We talked about it last night. I said, "He's getting worse, more aggressive." I called this guy named [*Name*] who is the case manager three times trying to get hold of him.

Dispatcher: Are you south of the Pleasant Pond turnoff, sir?

Mr. Bruce: [*Directions*]. As soon as I see a cruiser I'll be right out the door.

Dispatcher: OK. He is on the road now, just looking for your place.

Mr. Bruce: Yup, I'll stand out on the porch.

Dispatcher: OK. You can see the porch from the road?

Mr. Bruce: Yup.

Dispatcher: They're there sir?

Mr. Bruce: No.

Dispatcher: He's asking if you are north of the Village.

Mr. Bruce: I'm in the Village, [*Directions*]. I'll be standing out in the driveway.

Dispatcher: OK.

Mr. Bruce: I see him right now.

Dispatcher: Is he there with you?

Mr. Bruce: He is coming, they're pulling in now, two of them.

Dispatcher: You got them?

Mr. Bruce: Yes.

Dispatcher: OK. Thank you, sir.

Mr. Bruce: Good bye.

* * *

Police arrested William at his grandparents' house, 120 miles away in Portland, Maine, and charged him with his mother's murder. William was eventually found not criminally responsible by reason of insanity for the crime and was sent for treatment at Riverview Psychiatric Center, in Augusta, Maine, the same hospital that had released him shortly before the murder. He will be there indefinitely.

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