

# Lifelong friend expresses shock, disbelief over Boca shooting deaths

'I just still can't believe he would do that. That's just not the way he was'

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Growing up, Charles Thomas Ott was a big, strong kid who would often stick up for those smaller than him.

"He was just like my big brother," said Steve Briggs of Boca Raton. "He taught me how to sporkel, and we played baseball and softball together."

Ott, 55, and Briggs, 54, both attended the same elementary and middle schools, going their separate

ways in high school. Ott went to Seacrest High School, and Briggs attended St. Andrews.

But through the years, the two remained close friends - spending time together at family celebrations and talking periodically.

So when news broke Wednesday morning that Ott, a retired Boca Raton firefighter, had shot his sister to death in a law office during a dispute over the sale of their deceased parents' home, then drove to the home on the Northeast Third Street and fatally shot himself, Briggs said he was in complete shock.

"I knew there were problems

with the handling of the estate because he had told me that," Briggs said. "I just still can't believe he would do that. That's just not the way he was."

Ott's wife, Carol Ott, a Delta Airlines flight attendant, remained in seclusion Thursday after witnessing the shooting at 10:26 a.m. Wednesday in a law office at the Mellon Mellon United National Bank Building, 1801 N. Military Trail.

Police said Ott used a .38-caliber handgun to shoot his sister, Margret Ott Jones, 53, multiple times before a mediation session in the law office of Hodgeson Russ.

Jones, of 2342 S.E. Avalon Road in Port St. Lucie, died at the scene. Ott, of 641 N.E. Harbor Drive, fled the building and police followed him to the driveway of his parents' home, 366 N.E. Third St., where he shot himself in the chest. Ott was pronounced dead at Delray Medical Center at 12:30 p.m.

"They're obviously still in a state of shock and grief stricken," said Kenneth Lipman, Carol Ott's attorney. "She still has many questions, but there's no new information that we know of."

No funeral arrangements had been made of as Thursday night.

As investigators continue to piece together what led to the fatal feud, a tape of the 911

telephone call echo with the sound of the last shot fired:

911 operator: Hello

Woman: Hi, I'm in the office at (inaudible). There's been a shooting. (The sound of a gunshot can be heard in the background.)

911 operator: Where, exactly, ma'am?

Woman (breathing heavily as if panicked, her voice shaky): Corner of Military Trail and N.W. 19th Street, right across from King's, in the Mellon Bank Building.

911 operator: OK, has anyone been shot?

Woman: I'm not sure what the situation is. I'm at the reception desk and they're in the meeting room, but I've been told several times to call 911 immediately.

911 operator: OK, you didn't have a visual on what was going on?

Woman: I did not. (She yells to someone in the background, asking, "Is there someone hurt?") A person in the background answers, "Yes." The woman tells 911, "There's someone bleeding."

911 operator: There's someone shot?

Woman: Yes.

Calm had returned to the bank building Thursday, but there was still tension in the office. A male receptionist told a *Boca Raton News* reporter Thursday that all questions were being referred to bank executive Robert Conklin in the main office in Buffalo, N.Y. A woman who answered the phone in

Buffalo said Conklin was not in the office Thursday afternoon and no one else could comment on the situation.

The only thing at the scene that seemed out of the ordinary was a television news truck park across from the Mellon Bank building, on the N.W. 19th Street side. The law office windows looks out to N.W. 19th Street.

Court records show the siblings had been involved in a yearlong battle over their mother Ellen Ott's estate of at least \$535,000. The two also feuded about how to sell commercial property at 251 N. Federal Highway in Boca Raton. Ott wanted a public auction, while Jones wanted a private sale.

The brother and sister were ordered on Jan. 28 to a mediation session to settle the lawsuit. It was to have taken place in West Palm Beach last week, but was rescheduled for the Boca Raton law office of Larry Corman, Ott's attorney, court records show.

A father to one son, Ott was very involved in working with kids in the coaching capacity, Briggs remembered. He was also a member of the Pioneer Club of Boca Raton, an organization open to all people who were residents of the city prior to 1959.

"He always gave a lot of himself," Briggs said. "That's why all of this is just a shock to me."

Staff writer Dale King contributed to this story.



Ott