

## 'Why did you have to shoot him?' cries wife of man - Kansas City Star, The (MO) - July 2, 2018

July 2, 2018 | Kansas City Star, The (MO) | Joe Robertson and Robert A. Cronkleton, The Kansas City Star

Moments before Grandview police opened fire on **Larry San Nicolas**, terror swept over his family watching across the street.

This was supposed to be a medical call, his wife, Jessie San Nicolas, cried Monday, the day after.

Her 60-year-old diabetic husband was having a manic reaction because he needed insulin. He was out of control, brandishing a sword, and she wanted police to come with paramedics and help him they way they had done over a year ago when she called 911 for help.

But this time, about 2:40 p.m. Sunday in the 6000 block of 148th Terrace, the family saw police officers leveling rifles. Jessie San Nicolas had told the dispatcher her husband had a sword. No firearms.

His oldest son, Frank Arceo, who lives across the street, tried to run back to his father's house to keep him inside. The array of police armor and artillery terrified him. But officers holding the family back wouldn't let him.

**Larry San Nicolas** came out the side door and down the driveway, the sword over his head. Two officers stood poised behind Jeep Grand Cherokee parked across the front of the driveway. Other officers were stationed behind a Grandview police vehicle some 20 yards to the east.

The adults didn't realize it, but **Larry San Nicolas'** grandchildren were watching from the window in Arceo's home.

First an officer behind the police vehicle fired beanbag shots to try to stop San Nicolas, witnesses said. Then an officer behind the Jeep fired several live rounds.

"It all happened so fast," his wife said, weeping. "Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom!"

And she heard herself screaming, "Why did you have to shoot him?"

She tried to run to her husband, but the officers held her back. It was all unfolding in front of her and her grandchildren, and none could go to his aid.

Neighbors across the street saw the shooting, watching a man they said they have known and loved for years.

They saw Jessie San Nicolas, unable to get to her husband. They saw the officer who fired his rifle, breaking down and crying before other officers took him away.

"I yelled, 'Hey stop! What are you doing?'" said Jose Luis Solis, who saw the shooting with his brother, Juan Carlos Solis.

Larry and Jessie San Nicolas.jpeg Larry San Nicolas and his wife, Jessie San Nicolas

The Missouri Highway Patrol is investigating the shooting of San Nicolas, who died Sunday night at the hospital.

"No police officer wants this to happen," said Highway Patrol Sgt. Bill Lowe. Lethal force, he said, "is the last resort of any officer. They did what they could to help this individual, but he would have nothing of it. He continued to move aggressively toward them."

"I understand the family is searching for answers," Lowe continued. "Especially the way it unfolded in front of them."

The hardest part, Jessie San Nicolas said, was not being able to comfort her husband as he lay bleeding. She was never able to speak to him before he died.

"Why couldn't they let me have that moment?" she said. "Why couldn't I say, 'I love you, Dad, hang in there, hang in . . . We all love you?'"

The investigation will take several weeks, Lowe said, as investigators study autopsy results and review witness statements.

The family doesn't understand how a man with a sword, with an SUV between him and the officers, presented a lethal threat.

"This is a nightmare," Jessie San Nicolas said.

In a statement Monday, Grandview Police Chief Charles Iseman described the more than 600 hours of training Grandview officers receive, including medical first-responder training.

The department also sends all of its officers to the 40-hour Crisis Intervention Team — CIT — training on how to respond to people experiencing a mental health crisis, he said.

Both Jose and Juan Solis said it appeared to them that San Nicolas was receiving little medical attention from officers. They believe an ambulance did not arrive until some 20 minutes after the shooting.

The witnesses also raised questions about non-lethal alternatives police could have tried to subdue San Nicolas.

The highway patrol reported that one Grandview officer fired beanbag rounds from a shotgun. San Nicolas was hit but continued to move toward the officers. Witnesses said that officer was stationed behind a police SUV some 15 to 20 yards from the driveway.

The lethal rounds from the officer closest to San Nicolas immediately followed, fired from across the hood of the Jeep Grand Cherokee in the driveway. One round fired into the hood of the Jeep.

Bean bag rounds are intended to inflict enough pain to make a person give up, said Ed Obayashi, a Plumas County, Calif., sheriff's deputy and police force expert. But someone in mental distress might persist through that pain, he said.

The shotgun fires a miniature fabric bag that typically contains lead shot, he said. The gun is color-coded so officers know it is not a lethal weapon.

If fired at about 30 feet, the beanbag would hit at the speed of a major league fastball, Obayashi said.

"Going that fast, it's going to knock the wind out of you," he said. But where someone is in severe mental distress or under the influence of alcohol or drugs, "it's not unusual where beanbags and Tasers are ineffective against such individuals."

Mark Cable, a neighbor who has known San Nicolas and his family since Cable moved onto the block in 2002, mourned the loss of a man he said made instant friends of everyone.

San Nicolas loved to grill, and he shared his Mexican dishes, and hamburgers and hot dogs.

"They (the Nicolases) always had dinner" offered to their neighbors, he said. "It was that kind of family."

Jose Solis had just seen San Nicolas the morning of the day he was shot. He was in his familiar place, sitting in the shade of the canopy set up at the top of his driveway, with his stereo.

"He waved and shouted, 'Hi Jose!'" Solis said, the way he always did.

Now he can't get the sight out of his mind, of the shooting, of officers standing around San Nicolas where he fell with the wounds that would kill him.

The San Nicolases' church, Coronation of Our Lady Catholic Church in Grandview, held a Mass for the family Monday morning, to pray and gather courage, family said.

The pastor called on the parish to press for answers to their questions and to raise up San Nicolas' life and death to help protect other families in the future from deadly engagements with police, Jessie San Nicolas said.

"He said we want to fix this so his death is not in vain," she said. "We can save other people."