

Fire lieutenant in serious condition today after shootout that killed two in Palm City Sunday | Video

By James Kirley

Originally published 02:04 p.m., January 8, 2012

Updated 08:40 a.m., January 9, 2012

PALM CITY — A 49-year-old Port Salerno woman and her 74-year-old brother-in-law are dead and a Martin County fire lieutenant married to the woman is critically injured, following a domestic violence situation early Sunday afternoon, according to Martin County Sheriff Robert Crowder.

Crowder said his deputies were called to a former horse ranch in the 2600 block of Southwest Martin Highway about 12:11 p.m. Sunday. Crowder said an investigation indicates that a woman, later identified as 57-year-old Ann Chason, was in the process of leaving her husband and moving out of the home. She was being aided by her sister and brother-in-law, Pamela and John Richardson Jr., both of Port Salerno, and five other people, when Chason's estranged husband, Vernon D. "Sonny" Chason arrived.

Crowder said Vernon Chason, while attempting to shoot his wife, fatally shot Pamela Richardson. He and John Richardson then exchanged gunfire in the home's carport area, Crowder said, resulting in Vernon Chason being killed and John Richardson being critically wounded.

Richardson, 54, was in serious condition Monday morning after surgery at Lawnwood Regional Medical Center & Heart Institute in Fort Pierce Sunday night, said hospital spokeswoman Ginger King.

Ann Chason was uninjured, Crowder said.

The five other people who were helping Ann Chason move were not in the carport area at the time of the shooting.

Crowder added he personally knew the Richardson family from vacations in the north Georgia mountains.

"This has just kind of knocked the wind out of me," Crowder said at the scene. "These are just very nice people. It's just unexpected that something like this would happen."

The shooting occurred across the street from the Isleworth neighborhood, where 14-year-old Angie Benson said she was outdoors when she heard six shots being fired.

"I thought somebody was having target practice," she said.

She got her dad, John Benson, and together they walked about 100 yards to the highway to investigate.

John Benson said they saw a woman standing in front of the property, screaming, while two others restrained her from returning to the house, which is set back off the road.

Moments later, deputies — one of them armed with a rifle — arrived and ordered Benson and his daughter to get out of the area, Benson said.

The incident remained under investigation Sunday evening.

Staff writer Elliott Jones contributed to this report.



© 2012 Scripps Newspaper Group — Online