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Kerry man shot dead by neighbour in California

Shooting victim left Kerry to seek work in the US. Page 10

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By KEVIN HUGHES khughes@kerryman.ie

Wednesday August 19 2009

A 47-YEAR-OLD Valentia Island man who emigrated to the US in 1982, was shot several times and left to die in his tractor following what is believed to be a dispute between neighbours on Sunday.

Formerly of Caol, Chapeltown, John Michael O'Sullivan leaves behind a wife and young family, including a one-year-old baby. The family had been living in Fiddlestown, Amador County, a remote area of Northern California close to Sacramento.

A 56-year-old neighbour of Mr O'Sullivan's has been arrested and booked on one count of murder. He is currently being held in Amador County Jail.

Reports of the incident, which occurred just before 8pm (local time), conflict wildly with some reports suggesting that Mr O'Sullivan had attempted to mediate between feuding neighbours.

A spokesman for the Amador County Sheriff's office, however, told The Kerryman that neighbour Kenneth John Zimmerman had phoned local authorities reporting a dispute and warning the local sheriff he was going to shoot Mr O'Sullivan.

Stating that the deceased is believed to have had a long standing dispute with the neighbour, the spokesman said the sheriff's office received the 911 call at 7.45pm from Mr Zimmerman who claimed that Mr O'Sullivan had driven a tractor through his locked gate. Mr Zimmerman told the emergency dispatcher that the Sheriff's Office better hurry up and get there, "before I shoot him".

Minutes later at 7.58pm the sheriff's office received a call from Mr O'Sullivan's wife, Krista, who said that she had heard several gunshots and was unable to locate her husband.

Police arrived at the scene at 8.08pm where they found the Kerry man's body slumped on his tractor close to his neighbour's house. The Sheriff's Office said a 'preliminary investigation' indicated that Mr O'Sullivan was the victim of multiple gunshot wounds.

Police searched Mr Zimmerman's house and he was arrested and booked into Amador County Jail on one count of murder. The investigation continues and Mr Zimmerman remains in custody without bail.

John O'Sullivan's relatives were contacted by Krista at 6.15am (Irish time) on Monday morning, just minutes after the incident happened. John's brother Brian said that a neighbour came onto the phone stating, "I'm sorry, John's been shot. He's been killed trying to protect us".

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John O'Sullivan, who was shot dead in California on Sunday, with wife Krista and son Michael.

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