



# UPFRONT

## What Will It Take To Listen, Learn?

**Joline Gutierrez Krueger**

Three years ago this week, we were all in shock, our collective anguish over the loss of five people gunned down in the insanity of one Aug. 18, 2005, day rivaled only by our fear that it was not yet over.

Because it wasn't. It isn't. Not really.

It's just that now, once again, we don't really care.

John Hyde, the mentally ill man accused of killing them all, is locked away in the state asylum for 179 years, his mind still broken but inflicted now with momentary, cruel clarity in which he sees, he knows, he mourns the horror he wrought.

Mayor Marty conducted his annual wreath-laying photo op and took another jab at those who tossed away his version of Kendra's Law, a mandatory-treatment bill he pushed after the bloody rampage even though the law would have done nothing to prevent it.

And recently, an out-of-court settlement was reached between Presbyterian Kaseman Hospital and some of the victims' families. What might have shed light on what went wrong with Hyde's mental health treatment — or lack thereof — was silently settled out of court with no details released and no public accountability.

We have learned nothing.

Attorneys on either side of the settlement say they and their clients are bound by confidentiality agreements to keep lips zipped. Presbyterian spokesman Todd Sandman says he is bound by HIPAA, the federal privacy laws.

"Privacy laws prevent us from knowing the absolute truth," says Audra Iversen, widow of Garrett Iversen, the second one to die that day.

With the lawsuit cloistered, we have lost our last best chance to learn what went wrong and, more important, what should go right for the next John Hyde.

And there will be one.

Sandman assures us that things have improved at Kaseman in the past three years, although what he can say is infuriatingly vague.

"There is more coordination and communication now, more education," he says. "It's very clear it takes caregivers working together better with other caregivers, facilities learning to better coordinate both within and outside with law enforcement."

Huh?

Three years ago, we took flowers, balloons, candles and notes of sorrow to the three sites where madness and death collided:

Outside the Department of Transportation building on West Central where Ben Lopez, 54, was shot that morning.

Along the chain-link fence in front of Rider Valley Motorcycles on East Central where co-workers Iversen, 26, and David Fisher, 17, were shot that afternoon.

At Ash and Gold SE where that evening Albuquerque police officers Michael King, 50, and Richard Smith, 46, were killed while attempting to take Hyde in on a mental health check that came much too late.

For the most part, we have left the families' sides, moved on, forgotten. We ask, "Oh, was that this week? Has it already been three years?"

The names have blurred. It is now those cops who died, those motorcycle boys who died, the first to die.

We are healing, and that is great, but we are forgetting too much.

But we don't forget John Hyde.

His name has become an adjective, a word to describe depravity, as in "That was very John Hyde."

And still, for the most part, we do not understand John Hyde. We do not care.

Last week, venerable KRQE anchor Dick Knipfing recounted how that day three years ago unfolded but then added the gaffe that has become part of the lore of Albuquerque's bloodiest day.

John Hyde, who had maintained a credible semblance of normalcy despite a longtime diagnosis of schizophrenia, had refused his medication, Knipfing explained as reason for the homicidal madness.

This week, with gentle prodding from Hyde's brother, Knipfing did the ethical thing and made an on-air correction, gave an explanation for the error and issued an apology.

Not everyone does that.

Hyde's brother, Robert Hyde, has explained it over and over: His brother's medication and treatment had been changed months before, and it appeared impossible to convince the Kaseman folks that a mistake had been made.

No one listened.

As John Hyde spiraled downward, even he knew a mistake had been made. In the three days leading up to the murders and even in the heat of the daylong rampage, police records show that he attempted no less than six times and maybe more to seek help from Kaseman and ValueOptions, the state behavioral health management.

No one listened.

These days, Hyde lives in his mental prison, a dark, delusional world of paranoia and pain. That he lives at all angers those who still haven't listened.

“He knows what he’s done,” his brother says. “He knows his life is over.”

John Hyde chain-smokes now in the hopes of dying of lung cancer, his brother says.

Robert Hyde continues to be an advocate for fixing what is wrong with the mental health care system. But things seem to be going backward.

That, even Kaseman acknowledges.

“In the last three years we don’t have any better laws today than we did then,” Sandman said. “We still have insufficient resources and fewer inpatient beds today than we did then.”

We have learned nothing.

We are forgetting.

We can’t.



HYDE: Details of settlement unknown

