



THE
DANGER INSIDE

THE TEDDIE KENT STORY

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INSIDE THE DEFENSE

In his attorney J. Michael Price's office, Teddie Kent reflects on his case as images on Price's desk — evidence pictures from Kent's living room as well as forensic reconstructions — map the moment that changed his life and the long fight to explain it.

Much of Teddie Kent's world has narrowed to the deep, enveloping seat of a brown recliner in his living room.

"That's where 90 percent of my life is," Teddie said.

The "cuddle recliner" was a gift from his wife, Brenda, meant to make daily life a little easier. Teddie, 64, was once very active — maybe even a little reckless. When he wasn't at work, he was constantly on his feet, tending the couple's 30-acre property in Blue Ridge, Texas.

He worked as a service tech in the printing industry for about 15 years before an on-the-job accident in 1998 forced him into retirement.

"I fell out of a van, cracked my neck and got a closed head injury," he said.

Four years later, after several failed procedures, he was left with a steel plate in his neck. Doctors told him his life would never be the same.

"I had to give up the dirt bikes, the bull riding, riding horses," Teddie explained.

But it's the bouts with intense pain that have proved to be far more difficult

for Teddie to manage, especially when it comes to maintaining the property.

"What I used to do in eight hours now takes me eight days," Teddie said. "I just, I can't work. I do something and I can only work so long and I've got to quit. I got to go back, take my pain pills, sit down, lay down, do something until I quit hurting."

A cluster of pain medication and vitamin bottles sits atop a small wooden shelf — his "pharmacy," as Teddie calls it — beside his chair and within easy reach.

"[Brenda] has 14 different vitamins and minerals and stuff that she pokes down me every day trying to keep me healthy," Teddie said. "She's just trying to keep me healthy and keep me around."

Brenda, 71, survived a battle with breast cancer two decades ago.

"Twenty to 25 percent was the survival rate of her type of cancer," Teddie said. "And she beat it."

Before Brenda was sick, Teddie said everything in their life had to be perfect: the yard, the house, their appearances, even their daughter, Ashley. A brush with mortality forced a change in perspective

about what really mattered.

"Now, you're just grateful for every damn day that you've got," Teddie said.

Teddie's recliner is tucked into the corner of the living room, bracketed by a shelf to his left and a love seat on his right. His "junk" fills the shelf to capacity: magazines, mail, tools, flashlights, pens, a gun-cleaning kit — just about anything he might need at a moment's notice.

The nearby coffee table is nearly covered with overflow. That lived-in feel doesn't stop at the living room; it carries through the house and out onto the property.

OPEN DOORS

Teddie's grandparents settled on 284 acres in Blue Ridge in 1938. He grew up on the property, where his dad ran a dairy farm and taught him how to shoot — .22 rifles and shotguns mostly. It's where Teddie first fell in love with hunting and shooting.

"That's all I ever wanted — to go shoot that .22 or shoot that .410, you know?" he said.

He left Blue Ridge only after meeting the love of his life at 23. Teddie and Brenda moved away for a decade before realizing everything they needed was back where Teddie grew up.

"We moved right back," Teddie said. "We still live there today."

The Kents' modest farmhouse shows its age in practical ways, from a rust-stained metal roof to well-worn carpet and a cast-iron wood-burning furnace. The home fits right in rural Collin County, about 50 miles northeast of Dallas.

In 1985, the couple had a daughter. Ashley moved out after she turned 18, but she never stayed away for long.

"My daughter has had four different boyfriends, husbands, whatever you want to call them, that have all lived with us at one time or another," Teddie said.

Teddie and Brenda always did their best to help, but Ashley struggled with drugs, unstable relationships, child custody issues and more. Teddie said they'd do anything for Ashley and their "grandbabies," and each time Ashley came back, they opened their doors again. The one condition, he said, was that if she brought a man with her, he had to help with the work around the property.

In 2018, Ashley and Jason Rexroad moved into the home. Ashley had recently regained custody of one of her sons, who moved in as well. Ashley introduced Rexroad, 45, as a "friend," though they lived in the same room and by all appearances were a couple. Ashley told Teddie that Rexroad — or "Rex," as he came to call him — had a criminal history and had spent time in jail, but Ashley and Rexroad described it all as a big misunderstanding.

For the first few months, everything went well, Teddie said. They saw their grandchild every day, and Rexroad pitched in around the property.

"He helped me mow the yard," Teddie said. "He helped me weed-eat fence lines."

But soon Ashley lost custody of her son again, and Teddie began to feel that Rexroad wasn't quite shooting straight with him. Rexroad claimed to be a trained carpenter with experience remodeling homes, yet even basic projects proved difficult.

"It didn't take me long to figure out he didn't know which way a hammer turned or which way to turn a screw," Teddie said.

Rexroad's stories about rebuilding a

1976 Dodge Charger "from the ground up" also started to ring hollow after Rexroad tore apart two of Teddie's lawnmowers when he tried to fix them and couldn't put either one back together.

"He was a YouTube mechanic," Teddie explained. "Whatever YouTube told him how to do, he could do. He'd get it apart, but he couldn't get it back together."

It wasn't ideal, but it didn't feel permanent. Ashley said they were only going to stay a few months — maybe four — just long enough to get back on their feet and find a place of their own. Any help around the property, Teddie figured, was better than none.

THE DOUBTS DEEPEN

Four months quickly turned into six. Six months turned into a year. And the concerns Teddie had about Rexroad became harder to ignore.

Rexroad's tattoos were hard to miss. They covered most of his body, including a giant star across his scalp — though Teddie didn't see that at first, when Rexroad still had hair. There were spiders, demons and skulls across his body — imagery that left a dark impression.

"Some of the nicest people I know have tattoos, so tattoos don't bother me," Teddie said. "And it didn't bother me that he had tattoos."

But when Rexroad took off his shirt, Teddie noticed ink that gave him pause: two swastikas on his abdomen along with the word "white" across one side of his chest and "pride" across the other.

Teddie asked Rexroad if he'd been part of a gang while he was in prison. Rexroad denied it but admitted that he'd worked with a gang to stay safe behind bars.

"He was a muscle man for them in prison," Teddie said.

Rexroad also told stories about violence inside prison walls, admitting to Teddie that he likely killed two people. He said he was never told if either man had died but that he never saw them again.

"I know what I had to do to survive," Teddie said Rexroad told him.

Not long after moving in, Rexroad asked Teddie for a ride to McKinney to visit the Collin County Sheriff's Office. He said he needed to check in and update his address because he was on parole.

While deputies photographed Rexroad's tattoos, Teddie pulled a parole

officer aside and asked for details about Rexroad's criminal history. The officer brushed the questions off, despite Teddie voicing his concerns.

This became a familiar response from anyone associated with the Collin County Sheriff's Office.

"That's what upsets me more than anything about Collin County, that nobody would tell me what this guy [had] done," Teddie said.

He and Brenda were left to make sense of Rexroad on their own.

Teddie later learned that the photographs taken that day were for an update to the sexual offender registry and that Ashley had lost custody of her son because authorities had discovered that she was living with a convicted sexual offender.

"Because of [Rexroad], we lost him forever," Teddie declared. "I'll never get to see that boy again."

One day, Rexroad angrily cursed at Brenda, and Teddie had had enough. He kicked Rexroad out of the house.

Ashley begged and pleaded, and Teddie relented. For him, forcing Rexroad out wasn't as simple as telling him to leave. He knew his daughter would go with him, and with COVID-19 lockdowns in full swing by this point and Rexroad being a registered sex offender, finding a place to live quickly would have been extremely difficult for the couple.

Rexroad continued to dodge questions about his past convictions, and Ashley continued to defend him. But the red flags multiplied. Neighbors told stories to Teddie about Rexroad threatening them in person, over text and through social media.

Then strangers began appearing in Teddie's driveway and on his property. When Teddie asked Rexroad about it, Rexroad said that he was being stalked and harassed because of his status on the registry. It didn't add up.

Teddie began to suspect that Rexroad and Ashley were dealing drugs.

"I told both of them, 'If I ever catch you doing it, I'll be the first one to call the cops,'" Teddie said. "You know? 'If I find out y'all are dealing drugs, got them in my house, whatever, I'll be the first one to call. There's no doubt about it.'"

Rather than ignore what was happening, Teddie tried to contain it.

He installed security cameras, hoping for answers. Instead, he only saw more people coming and going. He bought a USCCA Membership, worried he might one day be forced to defend his home.¹

Through it all, Teddie assured himself that the situation was temporary. Rexroad swore he was still looking for jobs every single day. Ashley and Rexroad said they were continuing to search for a place to rent.

None of it turned out to be true.

STOLEN VEHICLE

On Christmas Eve 2020 — about 18 months after moving in with Teddie and Brenda — Ashley bought a white pickup truck. Teddie drove her and Rexroad to pick it up.

Later that same day, Rexroad walked through the living room holding Ashley's keys. She hadn't given him permission to use the vehicle.

"I'll be back in a little bit," Teddie said. Rexroad called out as he ran out the door.

Rexroad didn't come back that night. He was gone all of Christmas Day too. The family — which had bought Christmas gifts for Rexroad and had planned a quiet holiday meal — was left wondering whether he planned to return at all.

"[Ashley] was up all night," Teddie recalled. "She was calling. She was trying to get me to go drive around and look for him."

In the early afternoon on Dec. 26, Rexroad finally pulled into the driveway in Ashley's truck.

"As soon as he got there, Ashley went out — my daughter, she goes out — and she starts jumping his butt about running off in her truck," Teddie said. "They're arguing out there in the front yard."

Teddie went outside, hoping to calm things down, and arrived as the argument escalated.

"Just as I go out, he's coming around that truck," Teddie said. "He's fixing to — he's headed to her, fixing to grab her because she's screaming and hollering at him. I stopped him from doing that."

Rexroad began screaming that Teddie would have to shoot him to stop him.

"Rex, I don't want to shoot you," Teddie said he replied. "I want you to just calm down and try to explain to us what the hell's going on."

Brenda also tried to talk Rexroad down,

but he was soon cursing her out too.

"That's it, go," Teddie said. "You're out of here."

Teddie went back inside with Ashley and locked the door. Brenda decided to leave the house for a while, hoping the situation would cool down.

NO WAY OUT

It didn't. While Teddie stepped away to use the bathroom, Ashley unlocked the door and let Rexroad back into the house.

When Teddie returned, he crossed paths with Rexroad in the hallway.

"I walked back in there and I told her, 'March your little butt right in there with him and pack your clothes to go right along with him because what I say in this house goes,'" Teddie said.

Neither Ashley nor Rexroad were welcome to stay.

When the packing wasn't happening fast enough, Teddie warned Rexroad that he would call the police if he didn't leave immediately.

"I don't know if you've ever seen a red bull coming at somebody — the red eyes and how mad it looks," Teddie said. "That's just the way the man looked at me. He was coming at me with fire in his eyes."

Teddie said he had never seen anyone so agitated in his life.

"I'll give you a reason to call the cops!" Teddie said. Rexroad screamed. "I'm going to give you a reason to call the cops!"

Rexroad followed him into the living room as Ashley collapsed onto the love seat, crying. Teddie sunk into his chair.

"Rex, you're going to go," Teddie said. "You've got two choices. You can either leave on your own or you can leave in handcuffs. I don't care."

Ashley put earbuds in and escaped into a video on her phone.

"I'm not going," Teddie said. Rexroad roared back.

Teddie shifted in his chair to stand and reach for his phone. Rexroad charged.

Rexroad was a large man — about 6 feet tall and 225 pounds. Teddie, smaller and physically limited, stood 5 feet, 8 inches.

"I'm not the weakest man in the world," Teddie indicated. "But I couldn't handle a man like that."

Teddie had nowhere to go. Ashley blocked him to one side, and Rexroad was coming straight at him from the other.

"I couldn't get out," Teddie said.

And he had no reason to believe that Rexroad would stop.

"He had blood in his eyes," Teddie said. "That's the only way I can describe it. I knew he was going to hurt me. He was going to do some damage to me that I didn't know if I was going to walk away from."

Even a single blow could have been catastrophic.

"One hit and I could either be paralyzed or dead," Teddie said.

As Rexroad closed to within 2 or 3 feet, bending down and reaching out toward him, Teddie drew his .45 Colt Model MK IV Government pistol and fired a single shot.

"My whole intention was to stop the man so he didn't get a hold of me," Teddie said.

The bullet struck Rexroad in the center of his upper chest. He grabbed his chest, took two or three steps backward, and collapsed to the floor, face down.

ON THE LINE

As soon as Ashley heard the shot, she pulled out her earbuds and jumped to her feet, Teddie recalled. She stopped the video on her phone and dialed 911 as she ran out the door and into the yard. The call was logged at 2:53 p.m.

"My dad shot my friend in the chest," she said, according to 911 transcripts. "He shot my friend in the chest."

Teddie went outside and told Ashley to make sure the police knew that Rexroad had attacked him and that he had fired in self-defense.

"He did not attack you! He did not attack you!" Ashley screamed back.

She then frantically told the operator that Teddie still had the gun in his hand and might shoot her too. Teddie insists that he placed the gun on the arm of his chair moments after firing and was unarmed at the time. He said he never threatened Ashley.

Teddie said that as he approached Ashley, she screamed, hurled the phone at him and ran. Teddie picked it up and took over the call.

"I'm the man who just shot this guy that was in my house," he told the operator, according to transcripts. "He's coming at me, telling me he's going to attack me, going to 'whoop my ass.' I need you to send an ambulance and the police, would you please, ma'am?"

Teddie told the operator that he wanted to speak with an attorney before saying anything more but that he would stay on the line until police arrived. He told her he believed Rexroad was dead. When the operator asked whether Teddie was armed, he said he was not, aside from a pocketknife, which he placed on the porch at her direction.

Perched on the tailgate of his truck and waiting, Teddie stayed on the line for more than 20 minutes. His daughter had already told authorities that he had shot a man in the chest unprovoked. Faced with that account and a steady stream of questions, Teddie began explaining what had happened.

"I didn't want to shoot him," Teddie told her. "I was just sitting in my chair and he came right at me. I don't have any idea what got into him today. I wish I knew."

Teddie walked the operator through the entire incident — what led up to it, what happened inside the house and his physical limitations.

TAKEN INTO CUSTODY

Teddie heard sirens echoing down the country road. Four squad cars swerved into his driveway and parked. As officers approached with guns drawn, Teddie hung up with the 911 operator and raised his hands. They forced him face down onto the tailgate of his truck and handcuffed him there.

"You'd think I'd have killed the president," Teddie said.

Officers pulled him down the roughly 80-yard driveway and placed him in the back of a squad car. Teddie said the handcuffs caused intense pain because of his injuries, and officers agreed to add two more sets of cuffs to give his shoulders additional movement.

He sat in the back of the squad car for what "seemed like forever," watching officers move through his property and into his home. Inside, they confirmed that Rexroad was dead.

By the time Teddie arrived at the Collin County Sheriff's Office in McKinney, it was dark. Detectives brought him into an interrogation room, where he said he would not answer any questions without an attorney. He asked to call the Delta Defense Critical Response Team so that they could help him secure one, but detectives denied his request.

"Just tell us what happened," Teddie said detectives urged him.

Still, he refused.

"I'm not speaking to anybody until I speak to a lawyer," he reiterated.

Teddie said one detective stood up, threw his notepad and pen, and stormed toward the door.

"I'm charging you with murder. That's all there is to it," the detective told him, according to Teddie. "I'm charging you with murder."

Unbeknownst to Teddie, Ashley was also at the Collin County Sheriff's Office that night. After the incident, she had run to a neighbor's house, where police were called. Ashley was later taken to a hospital and treated for what was described as a panic attack. Afterward, officers brought her in for questioning.

Ashley told investigators that there had been an argument between Teddie and Rexroad that escalated until Teddie stood up from his chair, shot Rexroad and then stood over him, shouting, "How do you like that, motherf*****?" She told officers Rexroad had not been aggressive.

Teddie was removed from the interrogation room and escorted to be booked into jail. As they walked, he asked if he could make a phone call.

"I need to call my gun insurance people," he said.

An officer brought him into an office and dialed the Delta Defense Critical Response Team. Teddie relayed the essential details, thanked the person on the line and hung up.

"And they carried me down and put me in a cell," Teddie said.

NO RELIEF

Based primarily on Ashley's account, the police report read as a homicide case. She was asked by one officer why she wasn't protecting her father.

"What happened was wrong, blood or no blood," she responded, according to the report. "What's right is right and what's wrong is wrong."

She indicated that that was how Teddie had raised her. He was charged with murder.

At that point, Teddie said, everything slowed to a crawl.

"Things don't move real fast during the holidays," he said.

Teddie spent more than a week in jail.

"I didn't come out of that cell but one hour a day for 10 days," he said.

The cell was uncomfortable, but what troubled him most was that he wasn't allowed to take his medication to manage his chronic pain.

"There's nothing you can take," he said. "There are no aspirins to get. There's no nothing. You just go through it."

With little else to do, Teddie replayed the incident over and over in his mind. He couldn't understand why Rexroad had charged at him, especially since he knew Rexroad almost certainly saw the pistols — a .45 and a 9mm — resting on either arm of his chair. They had been there before Rexroad had even returned to the house.

"I was fixing to clean them," Teddie said. "My daughter had used my 9mm, went down in the pasture shooting. It had been a while since I cleaned my 45."

Defense attorney J. Michael Price II, of the USCCA Attorney Network, took on the case, connecting with Teddie for the first time on Dec. 28, 2020.

After 10 days in jail, Teddie received a bail hearing. A judge set his bond at \$100,000 — an amount Teddie said even officers involved in the case described as unusually low for a murder charge in Collin County, where bonds often reach seven figures.

Teddie took it as a positive sign.

"They knew they did not have the case," he believed.

He was released on Jan. 4, 2021, after posting \$10,000 through a bail bondsman. He said the full amount was reimbursed through his USCCA Membership benefits within days.

PEELING BACK THE LAYERS

Price, based in Plano, Texas, graduated from Southern Methodist University's law school in 1995 and immediately went into criminal defense.

"Never worked for the government for one day," he said.

An advocate of self-defense and the right to bear arms, Price has had a concealed carry permit since Texas first introduced them in 1995. A longtime member of the USCCA Attorney Network, he has represented dozens of USCCA Members and has at least six active cases.

His interactions with Teddie were positive from the very first call.

"He's just a good old boy, east Texas,"

Price said.

More importantly, Teddie's account of the shooting matched what he had said on the 911 call. The details were thorough and consistent, and the story made sense.

"I believed him from Day 1," Price said.

That confidence did not extend to the police report.

"Well, from doing this as long as I have, I read police reports with a grain of salt," Price indicated.

Once Price received the full case file, he said it became clear that the investigation was deeply flawed. He described the handling by the Collin County Sheriff's Office as "absolutely horrific."

"The problem with this case from an investigative standpoint was they didn't do anything," Price said. "Small town, Collin County Sheriff's. And they just showed up. There's a dead body. We have an eyewitness. The guy admitted shooting him. Case closed.' I mean, it was literally that. That was the sum total of an investigation."

In other shooting cases Price has handled, he said, investigators documented scenes with hundreds of professional photographs, precise measurements and computer mapping. In Teddie's case, those steps were never taken — leaving Price and his team to conduct their own investigation to fill the gaps.

"Everything we did while representing him just is like an onion," Price explained. "I mean, every layer we just kept peeling over. I mean, it's like, here's another layer to this story, another layer to this story. And every layer and everything just kept coming out more beneficial to Teddie."

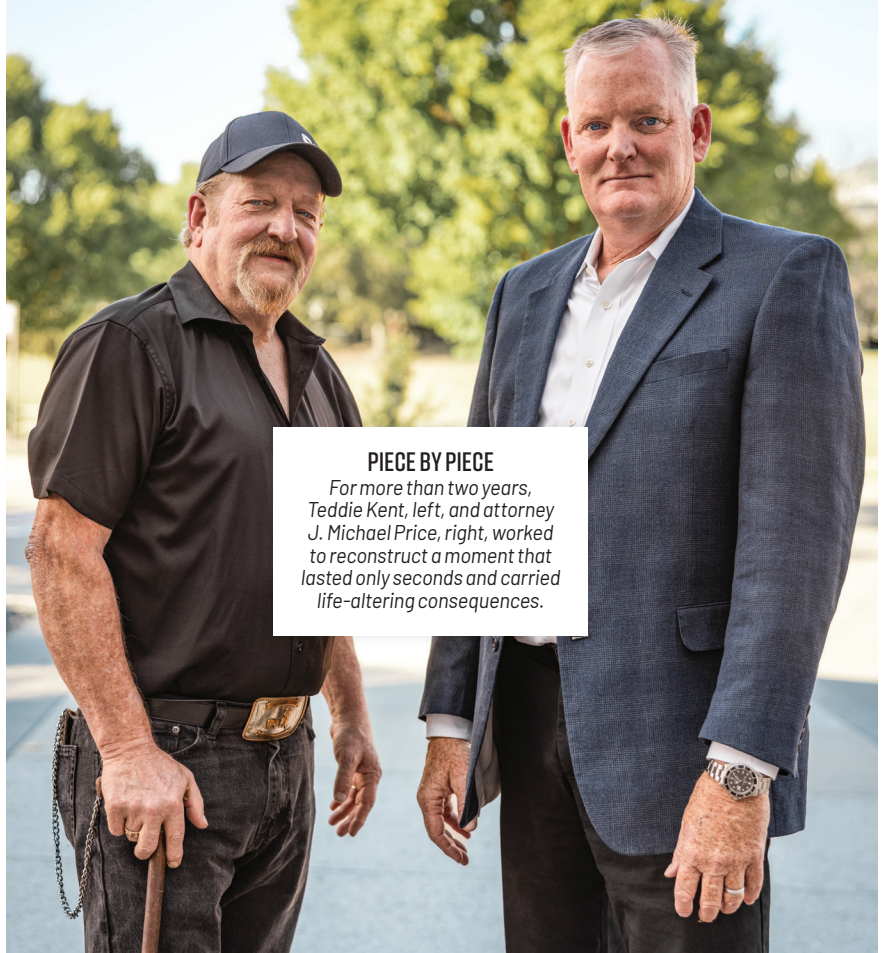
Price told Teddie that they could win.

"There's no 100 percent guarantee. I'll tell you that right now. In a jury trial, there's no 100 percent guarantee," Teddie said Price told him. "I feel very confident in this case. Let me do some more research."

REBUILDING THE SCENE

The challenge Price faced was timing. He didn't begin his investigation until weeks after the scene had been cleaned and evidence had been removed.

"We had the room, but we didn't have the crime scene," Price said. "So we had to go back and put all that together with what photos they did have, measurements and stuff we took ourselves,



PIECE BY PIECE

For more than two years, Teddie Kent, left, and attorney J. Michael Price, right, worked to reconstruct a moment that lasted only seconds and carried life-altering consequences.

taking the autopsy report and doing measurements and putting all that in and doing our own forensics."

One of the key disputes in the case was where Rexroad had been positioned when the single shot was fired — and how close he had been to Teddie's chair. Ashley claimed that Rexroad was not advancing. Teddie said he was.

Though investigators took only 20 to 30 photographs, Price said several clearly showed blood spatter on the right side of the pill bottles on the shelf beside Teddie's chair — consistent with Teddie's account of Rexroad's movement and proximity.

The medical examiner's report added another critical detail. The bullet had entered Rexroad's chest and lodged in his back on an upward trajectory, supporting Teddie's claim that he had been seated when he fired and that Rexroad had been leaning over him.

Toxicology results raised further questions. According to Price, the medical examiner found that Rexroad had a lethal amount of methamphetamine in his system — a level the county's own expert would later describe as "10 times the amount that would be deadly to anyone in the courtroom."

Price said the evidence suggested that Rexroad had gone on a "three-day meth binge" after stealing Ashley's truck, which, in his view, explained the erratic behavior Teddie described and the "fire" in Rexroad's eyes.

As the investigation continued, Price also uncovered the extent of Rexroad's criminal history. Born in Toledo, Ohio, in 1975, Rexroad had been in and out of jail for more than 25 years and had more than 15 felony convictions — including several violent crimes — across multiple states. Most troubling was a conviction for sexual assault of a child — a 15-year-old girl who had suffered a fractured skull.

Because Rexroad frequently moved and used aliases, Price said, no one ever had his complete criminal record.

"Even throughout that whole trial, I'm not sure if any of us — meaning law enforcement, detectives I've questioned — if anyone had a clear picture of his full criminal history," Price said. "It was in so many states."

He described Rexroad as a "time bomb."

Using photographs, ballistics data and autopsy measurements, Price's team of experts built a 3D model of the crime scene. They paired that reconstruction

with toxicology results and Rexroad's history to argue that he posed a lethal threat — even unarmed — particularly to a disabled older man.

It was the kind of investigation Price believes should've been done from the start.

"If they would have done all that, then I think they would have requested a no bill," Price said. "I think they would have been just like us and been like, 'Yeah, this case needs to get no-billed because we've determined that this was a justifiable shooting.'"

Prosecutors, however, showed no interest in resolving the case short of prison time for Teddie.

"They would never budge, never budge," Price recalled. "It was plead to murder and go to prison, or go to trial."

Any prison sentence was unacceptable, Price said. Given Teddie's health, even a few years behind bars would likely be fatal. So they prepared for trial.

"For Teddie, this was life or death," Price said.

JURY SELECTION

To Price, no part of a trial matters more than jury selection.

"I always say that you win these cases in jury selection," he said.

In Teddie's case, Price said he was looking to avoid jurors with strong opposition to firearms. While gun owners and concealed carry permit holders were ideal, he said it wasn't as simple as asking potential jurors whether they fit that description.

"Those would be all the people the state would want to get rid of," Price said.

Instead, he focused on identifying jurors whose views could derail the case entirely. Who hates guns? Who won't allow firearms in their homes? Who would remove all guns from the country if given the chance?

"Bing, bing, bing, bing — those are the people that I wanted to make sure to strike from the jury," Price said.

Collin County is a conservative area with a large population of gun owners, which Price said worked in their favor.

"I took the chance that out of the 12 people that ended up on the jury, that most of those would be firearms owners," he said.

THE STATE'S CASE

It didn't take long in the courtroom for Price to see where the state's case

would rise or fall. Prosecutors hinged everything on Ashley's account — a losing proposition according to the seasoned defense attorney.

"At the end of cross-examination, she was our best witness," Price said.

He described Ashley as a "mess" on the stand. Her demeanor was off-putting, her credibility deeply questionable and her story constantly shifting. She had "five different versions of what happened that day," Price said, changing "every time she was interviewed."

Through Child Protective Services (CPS) records, Price was able to demonstrate that Ashley had her own history of drug abuse and child endangerment. In one CPS hearing, a judge referred to her as a "frigg'in' liar" on the record.

Even Ashley's insistence that Rexroad was merely a "friend" rather than a boyfriend struck jurors as implausible, Price said.

"The jury didn't believe a word she said," he stated.

The medical examiner's testimony was equally beneficial to Teddie's defense, according to Price. He confirmed that the bullet had entered Rexroad at an upward trajectory and that Rexroad had had an extremely high level of methamphetamine in his system.

"He admitted, 'Yeah, that's 10 times a lethal amount for a normal person,'" Price said. "So, you know how that went over with the jury."

DEFENSE TAKES OVER

The prosecution never called the crime scene investigator from the Collin County Sheriff's Office as a witness, so Price did.

Through the investigator's testimony, Price said, the shortcomings of the investigation became clear. The investigator admitted that he didn't pull the 911 call audio — which prosecutors played for the jury — until two months after the incident, according to Price. He also acknowledged that he never read the autopsy report.

"He took a bunch of bad pictures of the crime scene and did nothing else," Price indicated. "No measurements, no diagrams, no DNA testing, no re-creation, no opinion, nothing. The investigator did confirm the red drops at the scene were blood but couldn't say if it was human or where the blood came from."

The defense then called its own foren-

sic expert to walk the jury through a full crime-scene reconstruction using 3D models and renderings.

"The jury loved him," Price said.

Drawing from the medical examiner's report, ballistics data, blood drops and spatter, body positioning, and scene measurements, the expert showed that the shooting unfolded exactly as Teddie had described: He had been seated in his chair — not standing — and Rexroad had come straight at him. Rexroad had been between 2 and 4 feet away from Teddie when the shot was fired.

Using those same renderings and trajectories, the expert also demonstrated that the shooting could not possibly have occurred the way the prosecution alleged.

"That was the whole case right there," Teddie said.

TEDDIE'S TESTIMONY

Still, the defense decided that the jury needed to hear directly from Teddie.

"We felt in this case, it was very important that he needed to tell his story," Price said.

Putting a defendant on the stand is almost always risky, according to Price. But Teddie, he said, was "outstanding" and "absolutely perfect."

"His story hasn't changed," Price said. "It's exactly what he told the 911 operator. It's exactly what he's told us all along. Every single thing about what happened matches the forensics."

Price said he was stunned when the prosecutor attempted what Price described as an "O.J. Simpson reenactment" during cross-examination.

The prosecutor asked Teddie to step down from the witness stand and sit in a chair and then positioned himself as Rexroad. Price estimated that the prosecutor stood about 6 feet, 3 inches tall and was in good physical shape.

Teddie calmly described the encounter again, repeatedly asking the prosecutor to step closer to show how close Rexroad had been when the shot was fired. The visual — a large man looming over a smaller, older man with his hands raised in defense — was striking.

"I'm sitting there looking at my co-defense, and I'm like, 'We couldn't have scripted this any better,'" Price said, describing the maneuver as a "dog-and-pony show."

Price said he could see the realization spread across the jurors' faces.

"You can almost see the jurors like going, 'Yeah, that's exactly what y'all proved in court,'" he said. "So it completely backfired on the prosecutor trying to do it."

By the time Teddie stepped down from the stand, Price said, the jury had seen not just his version of events but also his character.

"This was not Teddie's decision," Price said. "This was Rex's."

THE VERDICT

Teddie described the seven-day trial as "gut-wrenching," but said it was nothing compared to the wait for the verdict.

"I've got them 14 people looking at me all seven days," Teddie said, referring to the jurors and alternates. "And they're looking at me, and it doesn't look like they're happy about me at all. You know what I mean? In fact, most of them had, to me, they had a snarl on their face."

The jury returned with a decision in less than an hour.

"That's quick even on a DWI," Price said. "That's kind of unheard of for a murder case."

Price told Teddie that it could be a good sign, but he warned against assuming anything in a jury trial.

"I listened to everybody in that trial, and it sounded like I had a pretty good chance," Teddie said. "But, like I say, you're also talking about a jury. You're talking about 14 different people sitting up there that look at it in totally different ways."

The jury read its decision: not guilty.

"I collapsed. It's over," Teddie said. "You know? Boom. I fell right back in that chair. Bam. That's it. It's over. I never had such a weight lifted off me in my whole life. I'm free."

Price said the whole defense team was left in tears.

"It's such a big case and a big moment for a great client," he said.

After the trial, 10 of the 12 jurors stayed behind to speak with Price. They told him that Teddie's account made the most sense from the start and that the defense's expert testimony explained why.

One juror asked how Teddie had been able to afford such a comprehensive defense. When Price explained that Teddie was a USCCA Member, the response didn't surprise the juror.

"He goes, 'Yeah, the USCCA. Figured that,'" Price said.

According to Price, that juror and several others said that they were also USCCA Members, and most in the jury were familiar with firearms.

"Nine of the 12 either had their own concealed handgun permit or their wife that was going, 'Yeah, my husband has a concealed handgun permit,'" Price said.

For Price, the case was a reminder of how fragile self-defense cases can be.

"If this can happen to Teddie with facts like this in Texas, good grief," he said. "I mean, what can happen in all the other 49 states?"

WHAT IT TOOK

From the shot to the verdict, Teddie experienced 28 terrifying months. His defense cost "a little shy of \$200,000," according to Price, covered fully through Teddie's USCCA Member benefits.

Price said cases like Teddie's often turn on whether a defendant has the resources to challenge the state's version of events. There's no doubt in the attorney's mind that Teddie would've gone to prison without a USCCA Membership.

"Our support saved his life," Price said.

Teddie is effusive in his praise of Price and Price's dedication to defending him.

"He's done me a great service," Teddie said.

Teddie is equally appreciative of the USCCA.

"Without my USCCA Membership, I know I'd be in jail. No doubt," he said. "Y'all paid for it. You paid for the lawyer. You paid for the specialist, the experts, everything. It was taken care of."

WHAT REMAINS

Dec. 26, 2020, still haunts Teddie. In fact, just talking about it brings back nightmares.

"I've still got PTSD from it. It all comes back," Teddie said.

Every time he feels like he's beginning to come to terms with the incident, something brings it back stronger than ever.

"It's been five years since, this Christmas," Teddie said. "It's still there. I guess it'll always be with me. It hasn't gotten any better in the last five years."

Teddie hasn't seen Ashley since the courtroom. He and Brenda haven't spoken with her since the day of the incident.

"I haven't heard from her. I don't know where she's at," he said.

He still can't understand why she did what she did that day or how she could have chosen a man like Rexroad over her own father — her flesh and blood.

"To have your daughter, your own daughter that you give everything to and you're going to leave everything to, turn on you like that?" Teddie asked. "That might break your heart. I'm still not over it. I'll never be over it. Because she was my baby girl."

The loss hasn't softened with time, but it hasn't stopped the days from coming.

Today, Teddie is making the best life he can with Brenda. Sometimes that means eating an extra cookie or two, even if he's had to adjust his belt a couple of notches.

"That's my biggest problem," he laughed. "That and my wife's cooking. She's been feeding me for 43 years. I kind of got used to that cooking."

Most of their days are spent at home in Blue Ridge. And much of Teddie's time passes in that same brown chair. It's a little more worn now. So is he.

ENDNOTES

(1) Insurance has been purchased by the USCCA and is one of the benefits of membership in the USCCA. USCCA Members are additional insureds under a policy issued to the USCCA by Universal Fire and Casualty Insurance Company, an insurance company with its principal place of business in Hudsonville, MI. Coverage and benefits are subject to the terms, conditions and exclusions of the insurance policy. Information provided herein is for informational purposes and is not intended to be a representation of coverage that may exist in any particular situation. Contact Delta Defense's Member Engagement Team at 800-674-9779 with any questions. Delta Defense LLC provides sales, marketing, operations and administrative support services to the USCCA and is a licensed insurance agency in all 50 states and the District of Columbia, with its principal office in West Bend, WI. Delta Defense LLC does business as Delta Defense Insurance Services in California. California License #0M34093

