

‘Camp Keller’ was stocked for end of the world

North Bend man who killed wife, daughter feared apocalypse

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Peter Keller's bunker on a hillside off the Rattlesnake Ridge Trail.
Courtesy of King County Sheriff's Office

Peter Keller feared the end of the world was near.

He was ready for it, having spent eight years on the elaborate bunker he called "Camp Keller" and stocking it with weapons and explosives.

Before returning to his mountain redoubt a final time for a standoff with SWAT officers, Keller killed his wife and daughter, then set their house ablaze.

Investigators still don't have a clear motive for why he took the lives of those closest to him, though case documents shed some light on his twisted life that ended after police surrounded him Friday.

Only two weeks before the April 22 murders and arson, Peter Keller's 19-year-old daughter had revealed to her boyfriend that her father was building "Camp Keller" in preparation for the end of the world. While his immediate family had seen at least one picture, neither they nor Keller's coworkers are believed to have known its exact location.



Peter Keller, who killed his wife and daughter before hiding in a bunker he'd spent years building in the woods, stockpiled guns and ammunition fearing the end of the world, according to case documents.
(King County Sheriff's Office)



The hallway entering the mountain bunker of Peter Keller. This image was recovered from a hard drive found at his North Bend home.
King County Sheriff



Boxes of ammunition in Peter Keller's bunker near Rattlesnake Ridge.
King County Sheriff



Peter Keller's bunker on a hillside off the Rattlesnake Ridge Trail.
Courtesy of King County Sheriff's Office



Bullet-proof vests, weapons and other items found in Peter Keller's bunker, April 28, 2012 near North Bend.
AP



This photo provided by the King County Sheriff's Office shows an assortment of weapons found in Peter Keller's bunker April 28, 2012, near North Bend, Wash.
AP



This photo provided by the King County Sheriff's Office shows an assortment of weapons found in Peter Keller's bunker April 28, 2012, near North Bend, Wash.

AP



This photo provided by the King County Sheriff's Office shows fuel containers and other items found in Peter Keller's bunker April 28, 2012, near North Bend, Wash.

AP



This photo provided by the King County Sheriff's Office shows an assortment of weapons found in Peter Keller's bunker April 28, 2012, near North Bend, Wash.
AP



This photo provided by the King County Sheriff's Office shows bullet-proof vests and other items found in Peter Keller's bunker April 28, 2012, near North Bend, Wash.
AP



A King County Medical Examiner's truck leaves with the body of Peter Keller near Rattlesnake Ridge Trail on Saturday, April 28, 2012. Deputies say Keller killed his wife and daughter before shooting himself in the bunker he'd made for eight years.

JOSHUA TRUJILLO



A view from Peter Keller's bunker near Rattlesnake Ridge. This picture was released by deputies after a search of Keller's computers.
Courtesy of King County Sheriff's Office



Officers head toward the scene of standoff with murder suspect Peter Keller near Rattlesnake Ridge Trail on Friday, Apr. 27, 2012.

JOSHUA TRUJILLO



A King County Sheriff's deputy in tactical gear heads toward the scene of standoff near Rattlesnake Ridge Trail on Friday, April 27, 2012. Peter A. Keller, who is wanted for the murder of his wife and daughter, is believed to be holed up in an underground bunker he built in the woods.

JOSHUA TRUJILLO



Officers in an armored vehicle head toward the scene of standoff near Rattlesnake Ridge Trail on Friday, Apr. 27, 2012. Peter A. Keller, who was wanted for the murder of his wife and daughter, was in an underground bunker he built in the woods.

JOSHUA TRUJILLO



A tactical vehicle from the Seattle Police Department drives on a road leading to a standoff near Rattlesnake Ridge Trail on Friday, April 27, 2012. Peter A. Keller, who is wanted for the murder of his wife and daughter, is believed to be holed up in an underground bunker he built in the woods.

JOSHUA TRUJILLO



A King County Sheriff's deputy blocks the road toward the scene of standoff involving murder suspect Peter Keller near Rattlesnake Ridge Trail on Friday, April 27, 2012.
JOSHUA TRUJILLO

Investigation documents show Keller was controlling and cagey with money, to the point where his disabled wife would have to borrow money from family members. Her only consistent income, deputies say, was a state disability payment she got after a workplace accident several years ago.

“Camp Keller” was powered by a generator, had stacks of ammunition boxes in Ziploc bags, several high-powered rifles and was camouflaged with ferns and sticks. But Keller, who also had a scope and body armor, didn’t use his stockpile of high-powered rifles against deputies.

The 41-year-old killed himself with a pistol inside the bunker and was found Saturday morning after a nearly day-long standoff. An autopsy showed he’d put the handgun in his mouth the previous night.

About 8:45 a.m. April 22, firefighters responded to Keller’s home in the 47200 block of Southeast 159th Street in North Bend. Crews immediately suspected arson, finding seven gas cans on the floor and the front door blocked with stereo equipment and furniture.

Keller was suspected immediately after the arson and investigators worked to get his phone records the same day his wife and daughter were found dead. Those phone records also helped narrow the search for what he’d described to coworkers as “Camp Keller.”

Peter Keller hadn’t used his cell phone since 8:47 p.m. April 20. That call registered on a cell tower near the 6800 block of Lake Alice Road Southeast – roughly seven miles from “Camp Keller.”

Keller’s father, who hadn’t spoken to his son since November 2011, didn’t have any clues for investigators and neither did Peter Keller’s coworkers at Solar Systems in Preston. His daughter’s boyfriend also told them he couldn’t think of a motive for the killings.

Peter Keller’s wife, Lynnettee, stayed home often and was an avid scrapbooker who posted scrapbooking videos online. A California native and 1989 graduate of Aloha High School in Oregon, she sold her crafts at fairs and online.

Because Peter Keller was controlling with household finances in multiple bank accounts, his wife would sometimes ask her father or stepfather to pay for various expenses, according to investigation documents.

Keller had previously told family members that Peter had established a “fairly sizable” cash savings and that she believed that when he retired they were likely going to be millionaires, Sheriff’s documents show.

It’s believed that Lynnettee Keller and her daughter had seen a photo of “Camp Keller,” but weren’t told where to find it – and it’s not clear when exactly they saw that image. Deputies were told Peter Keller was a loner who would often leave from “Camp Keller” about 10 a.m. on weekends and return home about 4 p.m.

Shortly after 1 p.m. the day of the arson, a King County Superior Court judge approved a search warrant by telephone, and detectives searched the house about the same time a medical examiner initially checked his dead family members.

A spent shell casing was found in Lynnettee Keller's hair.

Her daughter, Kaylene, last talked to her boyfriend April 21, but everything seemed fine, according to investigators. Cell records show Lynnettee Keller last used her phone at or near her home about 9 p.m. April 21 – hours before she and Kaylene were killed there.

Smoldering combustibles reignited after the initial blaze, and crews from Eastside Fire and Rescue responded to the North Bend home a second time before the detective's search to douse the interior of the home. Still, investigators were able to pull several electronics that helped in the search for Keller.

Detectives seized a Hewlett-Packard laptop, a Seagate laptop hard drive, a desktop computer tower, a USB-powered Western Digital external hard drive, a Sprint cell phone believed to belong to Keller's daughter, 21 media discs and an xBox 360 console.

Investigators also saw ammunition and gun cases, but no guns were there.

Kaylene Keller, a Mount Si High School graduate who was attending Bellevue Community College, had been dating her boyfriend for about a year. He told police he spent several days a week at the Keller home, but didn't talk much with her father.

However, Peter Keller had shown the boyfriend his gun collection that included several pistols and large-caliber rifles, including an AR-15, according to investigation documents.

Deputies completed their search of the Keller home the day after the arson, but returned April 24 after reviewing a plot map and determining the property had an odd hour glass-shaped perimeter, including an out building and tarp-covered wooden structures not initially searched.

Deputies reviewed Peter Keller's cell phone records and cell tower information for the past three months trying to determine his general whereabouts and the location of "Camp Keller."

His bunker was found tucked into Rattlesnake Ridge with more than a dozen guns, propane tanks, gas cans, binoculars and stacks of ammunition. Photos from Keller's computers helped pinpoint the location, along with hikers who remembered seeing his red 1994 Toyota pickup at the Rattlesnake Ridge trailhead.

Last Thursday, two deputies disguised themselves as locals on a Rattlesnake Ridge day trip and searched for clues while trying to avoid Keller's scope. They noticed off-trail prints that appeared to come from military-style boots and smelled smoke from what turned out to be the "Camp Keller" woodstove.

SWAT members moved into position and watched lights going on and off in the bunker Friday night. But tear gas didn't force him out, either because it wasn't ledged deep enough or Keller was prepared with a gas mask.

He'd been charged with killing his wife and daughter and burning during the North Bend house. Before the killings, Keller withdrew \$6,200 from a bank account and told one of his co-workers he might not return.

At 7:34 a.m. Friday, Sgt. Cindi West sent a note to Seattle-area reporters asking that the location of the search for Keller – just south of Interstate 90 off exit 27 – not

be reported for fears that Keller had a radio or scanner. The information was held for eight hours, and Saturday night West thanked those same news media outlets for not jeopardizing SWAT members.

After detectives cleared “Camp Keller” it was turned over to King County Parks. What happens to it now is up to them and the Department of Natural Resources. A family memorial service for Lynnette and Kaylene Keller is scheduled for May 5.

“There’s been a huge sigh of relief,” Sheriff’s Sgt. Katie Larson told The Associated Press. “Our people are out safe, and the trailheads are now safe for the community to use.”

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