

“He wasn’t a criminal. . . . Why did they feel it necessary to shoot him?”

[The Bethlehem Gadfly](#) [George Floyd killing, Police](#) July 9, 2020

 *Latest in a series of posts responding to the George Floyd killing* 

This is what the current conversation is all about.

From Andrew Scott, “Relatives say Jim Thorpe man shot dead by police in Monroe County was mentally ill.” Morning Call, July 8, 2020.

Joey Hoffman was only 4 or 5 years old when he started showing signs of mental illness, his parents said.

It was a struggle, but the 40-year-old Jim Thorpe man made a life for himself, marrying, fathering two children and working in home improvement.

“He seemed so happy,” said his stepmother, Doree Hoffman.

But something went wrong. On Monday morning, state troopers responding to a report of a man behaving erratically at a house in Smithfield Township shot Hoffman in the chest, killing him. According to officials, Hoffman pointed a laser-sighted handgun at the troopers and refused to drop it.

“He wasn’t a criminal,” a tearful Doree Hoffman said Tuesday from her Florida home. “He didn’t even like guns. Why did they feel it necessary to shoot him in the chest?”

According to state police, troopers called to a Mosiers Knob Road house, where they found Hoffman, in a pickup truck, pulling into the driveway. Hoffman called troopers names and said the property was booby-trapped, according to police.

When troopers tried to detain him, Hoffman fled into a garage and refused to come out. He then reappeared in the garage doorway, pointing the gun at troopers, police said.

Hoffman refused to drop the gun, police said, and was shot in the chest. He died at the scene, the coroner's office said.

Hoffman settled in Jim Thorpe with his two children and their mother.

Then, the coronavirus pandemic hit and Hoffman lost his job. The family said the stress caused a mental health relapse.

"It all just piled up on him. People tried to get him help, but he refused," Doree Hoffman said.

She said her stepson was trying to buy the house where the shooting happened.

"All Joey wanted was to do the right thing in life and see his kids," Lance Hoffman said. "He loved his kids."

Situations with people in a mental health crisis put police in a difficult situation. . . . police aren't trained as well as mental health experts in dealing with the mentally ill.

"Police are left to do the best they can with the limited training they have," Shane said. "They bring EMS with them and use certain words and a certain tone of voice when addressing people with mental health issues. They have to present themselves as community caretakers instead of armed authoritarians.

"It would be ideal if mental health experts were on call 24/7 and available to respond with police to emergencies, but they're not," Shane said. "And if a mentally ill person is pointing a gun at an officer or civilian and refuses to drop that gun, what are police supposed to do?"