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## 'A very loving individual'

**Family of woman slain by law enforcement questions justification**

When the phone rang late on the night of April 26, 2018, Brenda Abrew could never have predicted what would be relayed. She anticipated something about her older sister who was battling cancer. Instead, the news was about her younger sister, Myra Micalizio. She'd been shot and killed by Butte County sheriff's deputies.

"You hear about these things and never think it's going to happen to you," Abrew said. "Myra was a very loving individual. She never had any police contact. She wasn't a druggie or an alcoholic. She basically kept to herself."

By all accounts, Micalizio was not herself on that April evening, when she drove into a neighborhood near her home in Palermo and began sifting through items in front of the trailer homes there. The 911 calls and photos of the scene were released Monday (Feb. 11), along with a detailed account of the incident and the results of the investigation into the officer-involved shooting—District Attorney Mike Ramsey's conclusion is that the deputies were justified.

Micalizio's family—Abrew included—is not OK with that.

"What Mike Ramsey was describing was not my sister," she said during an interview in her Oroville home.

**Micalizio grew up in a large household** in Rio Linda—she was the ninth of 10 children; Abrew was No. 8. They all eventually migrated to Butte County, seeking a safer lifestyle for the younger generations. Micalizio had three children with her first husband, and after she remarried she became somewhat estranged from them, Abrew said. They now reside in Michigan.

After a stint as a card dealer in Reno, Micalizio returned to California, living with Abrew for about 3 1/2 years starting in 2010. "By that time, I'd gotten to know my sister really, really well," Abrew said. Micalizio worked for a time dealing at Gold Country Casino, but after joining the Kingdom Hall of Jehovah's Witness in Palermo, her whole



Brenda Abrew (left) and Tommy Widener are grieving the loss of their sister, Myra Micalizio. They attended a press conference Monday (Feb. 11) with Micalizio's niece Merissa Ainsworth at which her killing by sheriff's deputies was declared justified.

PHOTO BY MEREDITH J. COOPER

life changed.

"She decided she didn't want to do that [deal cards] anymore—she said it was sinful work," Abrew recalled. "She became a happier person. Her mission in life was to tell people about Jehovah. Jehovah was the man in her life."

Micalizio had her quirks, however. She had what she called "air friends" whom she spoke to regularly. Abrew said she'd overheard conversations and they sounded more like prayers, like her sister was talking to dead relatives, than imaginary people. It's possible she had an undiagnosed mental illness, she said.

It's possible, too, that last April 26, she experienced some kind of mental break. That's the only thing that could explain what witnesses described, Abrew said.

According to the resident who called 911 at 6:37 that night, Micalizio thought there was a yard sale; in fact, it was a pile of household items from a recently deceased family member that had yet to be sorted. The caller described a screaming, crazy woman who asked for change for a trillion-dollar bill and threatened to shoot her and her two companions, flashing finger guns.

"She's threatening like she's going to shoot me and kick my butt," the woman told the dispatcher.

Two sheriff's deputies

were sent to the Stanley Avenue address after the caller was told to go inside. When the deputies—Charles Lair and Mary Barker—arrived, however, the three residents were outside, pointing at Micalizio, who was reportedly on the passenger side of her black Mercury Sable. As Lair approached her, with Barker behind, she circled the car. Lair told investigators that she faced him the entire time and her hands were behind her back. He was concerned she may have a gun, so he unholstered his and "loudly commanded the woman to 'show her hands,'" Ramsey's report reads.

As Micalizio turned to get into the driver's seat, Lair noted that her hands were empty. But she allegedly "bolted" through the door, and he again feared she'd grab a weapon, Ramsey said. Instead, she got fully into her car, turned it on and shifted into reverse. That was her fatal mistake, as Lair opened fire on her, discharging nine rounds from his Glock .45 when the car came within 6 to 7 feet of him.

Barker also fired her pistol, missing most of her five shots—