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## Murder victim's family seeks justice, closure

By KATHERINE HEAD  
Bigfork Eagle

Daniel Thompson was in grade school when he first got to know his cousin Larry Roedel. Known as Buzz by family members, Roedel moved in with the Thompson family while going through a divorce. Daniel's sister Dawn was six years his senior, and by the time she was 17, she was pregnant with her first child. Roedel was the father, and he was nearly twice Dawn's age.

"I came home from school one day and mom and dad were just mad as hell," Daniel said. "They had thrown him out of the house and Dawn was gone too."

Years later, Roedel would stand accused of Dawn Thompson's murder, and now it's Daniel's turn to be mad as hell. To exacerbate an all ready tumultuous deed, an associate of Roedel's was charged last week for using the deceased's credit card in the access of \$5,000.

Dawn Thompson was shot with a revolver and died at her Ferndale home on Aug 29. Her brother and sister-in-law were at home in Kalispell when emergency medical crews called their home late that night.

Daniel and JoAnne Thompson were told that an incident had occurred, no one was hurt, and they needed to drive down to pick up the five children at the house. When they arrived, they were told to wait at the Ferndale Market, right next to the Shady Lane home of Thompson and Roedel. The couple waited about 45 minutes before investigators made contact. When they got to the house, the Thompsons learned the worst.

"An officer met us and said Dawn didn't make it," JoAnne said.

Daniel's reaction was "complete shock--I couldn't believe it," he said.

The children, ranging in ages from 18 to 5, were separated--the two youngest were in the house with Detective Jeanne Landis, and the three older kids were sitting in a police car. Three of the children were home at the time of the shooting.

"The kids knew--the three oldest didn't really say anything the whole ride home, and the two youngest didn't really understand," JoAnne said.

She added that the kids were not really surprised by the tragedy. Roedel was known for his jealousy and fury. Daniel described him as "very domineering, paranoid and jealous." And in the house, Daniel noted, Dawn was belittled and bullied.

"There was a rank structure in the house, and she was at the bottom," he said.

Unfortunately, Dawn didn't reach out to her family. The public facade she and Roedel presented did not match the domestic reality.

"We never knew half the stuff that was going on in that house," Daniel said. "They were just living a lie."

Dawn did, however, start to confide in friends that she was thinking of leaving Roedel. She had just received a raise at her job with the Postal Service, and could entertain thoughts of independence.

"She had told him that she was outta there, and I think that's what did it," Daniel said.

But, in truth, the motive behind Dawn's murder may never be known. What is known is that five kids have been caught up in a tragedy--even before any shots were fired. Daniel and JoAnne became the children's guardians after Roedel was arrested. With two



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Daniel Thompson holds a picture of his sister, Dawn, who was killed Aug. 29, 2005.

children of their own, the Thompson house is at maximum capacity. Even so, Dawn's children "are adjusting really well" in their new environment. They have started to open up and relay some of the ill-treatment and neglect suffered under Roedel's heavy hand, the Thompsons said.

"They had never been to the doctor," JoAnne said. "They had a lot of home remedies."

After taking in the kids, Daniel and JoAnne received permission from investigators to enter the Ferndale home to collect beds and clothing for the children. There they found Chase Calder.

"She said she was one of Buzz's rentals and was keeping an eye on them," Daniel said.

Daniel observed one of Calder's children wearing boots belonging to one of Dawn's boys. Another of Calder's children was driving Dawn's Isuzu, Daniel said.

Calder made an appearance at Dawn's memorial, demanding the children's birth certificates. In the end, Calder was awarded power of attorney for Roedel, who signed over the deed to the Ferndale house. According to the Thompsons, she sold off pieces of his property in order to pay for an attorney. Daniel added that she has bought dirt bikes and pick-up trucks in the process.

"She's been on a spending spree. As far as I'm concerned, that's the kids' money, and that's why we're going to court," Daniel said.

The Thompsons have retained attorney Peter Carroll in their civil case. In addition, Calder is now facing criminal charges for felony deceptive practices. According to Detective Landis, "She acquired a credit card in the name of the deceased woman." The credit card had been issued to Dawn in June of 2005, but was never activated. Calder allegedly activated the card and used it to withdraw about \$5,000 in the course of several visits to ATMs in the Kalispell area.

"We got the bill--she gave them our address," JoAnne said.

Calder will be arraigned on Feb. 23. If convicted, she could face a penalty not to exceed \$50,000 in fines and incarceration of up to 10 years.

Roedel's trial for deliberate homicide is set to begin April 3.

The Thompsons said that closure is possible, "when the trial will be over and we're done dealing with CC," Daniel noted. "Those are the only two things plaguing us right now."