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Ronald Reid cleared of murder charge in motorcycle club shooting: 'I still feel bad because I took a life'

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Officials work on the scene of a triple homicide shoot-out that occurred inside Cycle Gear on Dorchester Road in North Charleston on June 29, 2013.

Eleven seconds after he walked into Cycle Gear, Ronald Reid got caught in a melee that carried him back outside.

'Unlawful activity'

Ronald Reid's argument under the S.C. Protection of Persons and Property act hinged on whether he engaged in an illegal activity when he walked into Cycle Gear. The portion of the law dealing with the issue:

"A person who is not engaged in an unlawful activity and who is attacked in another place where he has a right to be ... has no duty to retreat and has the right to stand his ground and meet force with force, including deadly force, if he reasonably believes it is necessary to prevent death or great bodily injury."

He didn't know what was happening, he said.



He had followed members of his motorcycle club to the North Charleston store, but he was one of the last to arrive. He didn't see how a half-dozen men had surrounded a customer. They hit and kicked the man.

Reid, 44, got mixed in with the brawlers as they spilled through the doorway.



Ronald Reid is released from jail Friday, Aug. 30, 2013, after posting bail on the murder charge he faces in a June 29 shooting outside Cycle Gear in North Charleston. Reid has said that he was acting in self-defense. (ANDREW KNAPP/STAFF)

A friend of the customer met them in the parking lot. He had a gun. He fired, killing two motorcyclists and wounding Reid as he tried to run away. Reid drew a pistol of his own and shot Maurice Horry. The gunfire ended.

Detectives later decided that Horry, 41, had legally used deadly force in defense of his friend on June 29.

Reid, who also said he was defending himself when he killed Horry, was charged with murder.

A judge ruled Friday, though, that Reid had done nothing during the 11 seconds he was inside the store that made his presence there illegal. The murder charge was dismissed.



Ronald Reid hugs his wife, Jennifer Reid, as their

The ruling marked the end of a months-long effort by Reid to clear his name. The homicide case drew interest from the motorcycling community nationwide and showed the measures authorities took to disprove a self-defense theory based only on circumstantial

daughter, Ashley Reid, looks on as Ronald Reid is released from jail Friday, Aug. 30, 2013, after posting bail on the murder charge he faces in a June 29 shooting outside Cycle Gear in North Charleston. Reid has said that he was acting in self-defense. (ANDREW KNAPP/STAFF)



Maurice Horry, 41, of Columbia was fatally shot June 29 at Cycle Gear in North Charleston after he opened fire in defense of a friend who was being attacked in the store. (PROVIDED)

evidence.

Reid had a permit to carry a gun, but he wasn't allowed to use it under South Carolina's stand-your-ground law if he had gone to the store with illegal intentions - to beat up someone. His story would have fallen apart if investigators could prove that he willingly participated or meant to get involved in the fracas there. But they could not.

During a three-day hearing last week, Reid asked for immunity from prosecution under the S.C. Protection of Persons and Property Act. His attorney put one witness on the stand: Reid.

Prosecutors called on 12 people, seven of whom were there when the fight broke out. None of them saw Reid taking part.

Ninth Circuit Judge Roger Young's order granting immunity to Reid also bars Horry's family from suing him. Horry's mother declined to comment.

Reid was glad the ordeal was over, he said, so he could focus on his wife, Jennifer, and their three children.

"I still feel bad because I took a life," Reid said after the ruling. "That really has a heavy hold on my heart."

New details

To Chief Deputy Solicitor Bruce DuRant, who prosecuted the case, Reid had the same intentions as the other motorcyclists when he went to Cycle Gear. DuRant had hope that the judge would infer the same from the testimony linking Reid's club to the attack that prompted Horry to fire in self-defense.

"It's about his state of mind," DuRant said. "We generally can prove that by proving his conduct, but we can't prove his conduct."

Reid's lead attorney, Andy Savage of Charleston, said North Charleston police and prosecutors had zeroed in on the case's supposed gang implications. Members of Reid's group belonged to the Wheels of Soul Brotherhood motorcycle club, known in other states as an outlaw biker gang. Horry wore the patch of the Outcast Motorcycle Club, which has butted

heads with the Wheels of Soul elsewhere.

"The assumption was made that night that this was gang warfare," Savage said. "They never deviated from that original theory."

Prosecutors stressed the alleged link again last week. They used testimony to reveal new details of the episode and to paint a picture of a volatile band of misfits.

Wearing 'colors'

When the Wheels of Soul showed up in the Lowcountry two years ago, Reid and a friend, Theodore Waymyers Jr., joined. Their riding buddies were from Summerville, Reid's hometown. They liked going out for chicken wings and drinks.

Affiliation with the group - symbolized by a patch, or "colors," on their leather vests - was good for their business.

Reid had quit working regular jobs at 27, when he was diagnosed with a heart condition. Doctors implanted a defibrillator in his chest and told him to limit strenuous activity.

To help support his family, Reid turned to fixing cars and motorcycles, then reselling them. Waymyers, 36, chipped in when he had spare time.

Motorcycling was a way of life for Reid.

"When you ride a bike, you're a brotherhood no matter what," Reid said. "Whether you're white, black, (Hispanic) ... you have a common bond."

Riders knew Reid as "Joker." He used laughter to keep order during club meetings, part of his duty as the sergeant-at-arms.

Though Reid said he never dealt with them here, disputes between clubs elsewhere usually arise from territorial squabbles. Wheels of Soul members from Philadelphia were arrested three years ago in a plot to kill Outcast bikers in a Chicago nightclub.

Motorcycle groups in South Carolina whose members were mostly black could choose from one of four dominant clubs.

Horry picked Outcast.

The former Mount Pleasant resident had belonged to the Wheels of Soul chapter in

Charleston until he had a falling out with its president, 30-year-old Tyre Rouse of West Ashley.

Fellow riders, who knew Horry as "Bad Boy" and Rouse as "Rackz," couldn't give a reason for the bad blood. Some figured their tiff was over a woman.

Horry eventually formed The Real Kings in Columbia, where he lived, and wore the Outcast patch.

Local authorities didn't pick up on any problems among clubs before June, said Sgt. Christopher Terry, the North Charleston detective who later arrested Reid. But the FBI had alerted Charleston-area agencies, he said, that trouble might be brewing.

'Sign of disrespect'

Reid and his riding buddies were not known for violence. Rouse, who invited Reid's group to a Wheels of Soul cookout June 29, and some of his other guests had more checkered pasts.

Rouse had been convicted of cocaine trafficking.

Carlos Davis, 39, of Columbia, had arrests for aggravated assault and robbery. Charlotte resident Barry Stinson, 33, had a conviction for failing to stop for police. He and Davis traveled by car to the cookout.

Reid's friends held steady jobs and didn't have lengthy rap sheets. Reid's one misdemeanor conviction, for disorderly conduct, came 23 years ago.

Reid was known to carry a gun. He had held a concealed-weapons permit since 2009.

He wore a .380-caliber Smith & Wesson on his right hip as he rode with Waymyers and five others to the cookout at Norton & Sons Auto Detailing on Dorsey Avenue.

There, children hopped in a jump castle. Parents drank Bud Light. Smoke rose from grills.

It was hot when Reid arrived, so he pulled his Harley-Davidson into some shade. He never had time, he said, to talk to anyone about what had happened moments before his group got there.

Horry and fellow Outcast member Timothy Haymond, 38, who lived close by, had stopped their motorcycles nearby. Horry might have revved his engine.

"Everyone turned and just looked at each other," said Tineaka Robinson, 38, a member of a women's club that supported the Wheels of Soul. "That was a sign of disrespect."

Rouse tried to calm everyone, Robinson said, but Carlos Davis had different plans.

He walked up to some motorcyclists and pointed across the street to Cycle Gear, where Horry and Haymond had gone. Reid said he couldn't hear what Davis was saying.

Reid pulled onto Dorchester Road behind Waymyers. Like most riders, they always stuck together.

Davis and Stinson got into a Honda Accord.

"I knew that they went over there to fight," Robinson said.

Reid and Waymyers missed the turn that other motorcyclists made into the shopping plaza. Reid still didn't know why they were on the move, he said.

Davis, Stinson and the Band of Bruthaz, a Wheels of Soul support club from West Ashley, already were there when he pulled in. Some motorcyclists waited outside. Seven went in.

'Arrived as a group'

Horry and Haymond were regulars at Cycle Gear. That day, Horry shopped for a tire and Haymond for goggles.

Davis and Stinson arrived and donned their vests. Three other men got off their motorcycles and followed them inside.

A salesman noticed a diamond-shaped patch on a motorcyclist's vest. It said "1%er," a reference to the percentage of bikers thought to be law-breakers. This meant trouble.

"You shouldn't be here," a man yelled to Haymond.

The bunch told Haymond to leave. They tried to grab him, but he flailed his arms.

"I was just trying to punch everybody," Haymond said.

The group rolled on the floor and toppled a stack of helmets.

Someone hit Haymond with a leather-handled stick. He fell, but they kept kicking him.

Nineteen seconds later, Reid and Waymyers walked in. They froze, Reid said, at the sight of the commotion.

Three workers thought every motorcyclist was fighting, or egging on the ones who were.

"They arrived as a group," said one of the employees, Tom Barkalow. "They started the confrontation as a group. They left as a group."

'Shoot this place up'

Horry ran past Reid and burst into the parking lot.

He cursed as he pulled a 9mm Ruger SR9 from his motorcycle. Nervous, he dropped it.

Haymond kept throwing jabs to fend off the men. Reid said someone hit him, so he shoved back as the skirmish continued outside.

Horry shook his gun at the men. Haymond got behind him.

Davis ran toward Horry, then peeled off when he saw the pistol.

Horry fired two or three shots. A bullet hit Davis' back, and he fell facedown. He was fatally wounded.

Horry moved his gun from the right to the left as he pulled the trigger. Waymyers' lifeless body sprawled over his motorcycle.

Reid ducked as he bolted for the cover of a parked Chevrolet. Before he got there, a bullet pierced one side of his right leg and came out the other.

Drawing his pistol from a holster inside his waistband, he turned and fired three times. A bullet hit Horry's chest.

Haymond heard Horry mutter something about being hit before his friend fell, dead.

"I tried to pick him up and pull him inside," Haymond said, crying. "I couldn't."

Haymond grabbed Horry's gun and ran inside. Other motorcyclists kept taunting him from the parking lot.

"Bring your ass out here," one said. "You're a dead man."

Haymond was as scared as the shoppers and workers in the store. They locked the doors. No one left until police arrived.

"I thought whoever was outside was going to come inside," said Henry Perritt, a shopper from Mount Pleasant, "and they were going to shoot this place up."

Reid ran behind the building and dropped his gun.

By then, the Wheels of Soul president was at the scene. A cellphone video played during Reid's immunity hearing showed Rouse standing over Horry as club members tried to revive Davis and Waymyers. No one helped Horry.

"(Expletive) him," Rouse said.

A policeman arrived two minutes later.

"I shot that gentleman there," Reid told him.

'Made me happy'

It didn't matter how many times Reid gave his account.

His part in the Wheels of Soul, the group that had attacked Haymond, meant that he couldn't use deadly force, detectives said. They had video to prove his role, they told him during questioning that night.

"It made me happy," Reid said. "Everything I was telling (the detectives) should have been on that video."

But the video did not exist.

Cycle Gear was equipped with a surveillance system, but its hard drive had crashed. None of the cameras worked.

Attorneys on both sides agreed that a video from a nearby bank showed when the motorcyclists arrived. It didn't prove, though, that Reid was there to commit a crime.

The judge didn't think the grainy footage showed much of anything. His ruling left only two motorcyclists still facing charges.

Stinson and Derryl Gadson, 50, of West Ashley, a founding member of the Band of Bruthaz, are charged with second-degree assault and battery by mob. Gadson's attorney, Stephen

Schmutz of Charleston, said he was hopeful that his client's count will be dropped.

The felony, which carries between three and 20 years in prison, requires proof that the suspects participated in a group bent on committing violence.

Witnesses to the fight pointed out Stinson in photographic lineups; none picked out Reid.

Haymond still couldn't recognize Reid when prosecutors recently showed him a lineup, and he didn't pin any crimes on Reid when he testified at the hearing.

Motorcyclists on both sides of the saga attended the proceeding. A court deputy warned one member of Horry's family about glaring at Reid's supporters.

But authorities have reported no violence between Lowcountry motorcycle clubs since the Cycle Gear outburst.

Through his attorney, David Aylor of Charleston, Rouse said the Wheels of Soul has focused its energy on a new program that provides meals for the homeless. It continues to meet, Aylor said, "as a group of friends who enjoy riding motorcycles."

But Reid won't rejoin them anytime soon.

He had planned to take a motorcycle trip with his son, but that's on hold.

"If I do ride," he said, "I'll probably take it around the neighborhood, just to keep the battery charged."