A path to murder

The story of Maurice Clemmons

BY SEATTLE TIMES STAFF

It was in the late 1970s that Joe Lewis Clemmons moved from Arkansas to Minnesota and moved to the Pacific Northwest, starting a trajectory for his family that would continue for decades.

He seemed something better for his family — a family so big Joe was one of 21 kids, although one died young. He sought a haven from Lee County's violence and racial hostility.

"Joe started the string of it coming out here," says his niece Carol Henderson, who now lives in Renton. "The whole reason for him trying to get his family to reassure others was for better opportunities and to do something different." The migration Joe set in motion would, a quarter-century later, sweep up his nephew Maurice Clemmons, who was a 12-year-old pauper when he arrived in Seattle in 2004. Maurice told a parole officer he planned to become a plumber. Maybe he'd work for his Uncle Joe, transporting the elderly to appointments.

But when Maurice moved to the Northwest, he brought with him the demons of his Arkansas past. A week ago, he shot and killed four Lakewood police officers, a crime that has shattered families and generated such tension between Washington and Arkansas that both state governments called a meeting Thursday to soothe the heat. All four officers were parents; nine kids have lost a father or mother. Maurice Clemmons was shot and killed by police.

Kelly Richards compares a childhood photograph of her late husband, Gregory Richards, to their son Gavin, 10, last week in Graham, Wash. Kelly said her husband often told her: "I could die tomorrow, I'd be happy. I have everything I want." (Photo by Danny proof)

Lakewood police Officer Greg Richards, 1967-2009

This is the third of four news obituaries on the story of Maurice Clemmons.

BY LYNDA V. MAPES / Seattle Times staff reporter

Loving family man was ‘the golden boy’

Gregory Richards

Trooper Greg Richards, 42, was the glue to his family, the one who saw the best half of any situation, and his widow, Kelly. Married for better opportunities and to do something different.

Lakewood police Officer Greg Richards, 1967-2009

officers who were

Census in April will be a tricky count

by lornet turnbull

BY SEATTLE TIMES STAFF

Deceased Governor Graeme Smith's wife, Makhosazana, has been urged by Islamic clerics to return to her homeland in South Africa.

"We are studying a population that is harder to count than the 2000 population," Census Bureau Director Robert Groves told a group of journalists recently.

The lingering effects of the recession made it harder to find and count people.Millions of U.S. residents are now living in homes — with no fixed address. One out of eight housing units is vacant now.

Furthermore, an influx of immigrants — legal and illegal — over the past two decades make it harder to count the more than 300 million men, women and children living in the country April 1, 2010.

The U.S. Census Bureau is prepping for a $3.2 billion count of nearly 308 million people. People are moving out of their parents' basement? "I am so used to..." "I am so used to..."

"And for her beauty?" They did not know of us, we all wanted to Greg," she said. "And that's him. "Mine." Born in Lynwood, Calif., on Jan. 4, 1987, Officer Richards began playing the drums at age 8. Developing a three-piece band would become lifelong passion for me."

See > RICHARDS, A23

See > APRIL 6, 2009

$ 100

See > RICHARDS, A23

This is the third of four news obituaries on the story of Maurice Clemmons. (Photo by Danny Westneat)

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The Seattle Times

A grand finale

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LASHAUNA CUSH CRUSH CAL 42-10

3 TDs, Runs for 2 more

SPORTS

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

SUNDAY BUZZ BUSINESS

(continued)

DECEMBER 6, 2009

SUNSHINE 6 AM,
MONDAY 6 AM,
MONDAY 5:30 AM

Sunday seattlepi.com

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"NW ARTS & LIFE" H SECTION

"NEWSLINE" A2

"NATION/WORLD REPORT" A2

"MOVIE LISTINGS" NW ARTS & LIFE H7

"LOTTERY" A2

"CORRECTIONS" A2

"BUSINESS" E SECTION

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"INDEX"

"WEIGHTS & " WELCOME TO "NWAUTOS" G1

"DANNY WESTNEAT NW SUNDAY B1"
In memory of those who have been lost.
In gratitude to those who protect and serve.

A salute to the fallen

Officer Timothy Brenton, Seattle Police Dept.
1970 – 2009
Raised in a police family, he was a respected training officer and a married father of two known for his humor.

Officer Tina Griswold, Lakewood Police Dept.
1969 – 2009
She was tiny but tough, a wife and mother of two, and a school resource officer who loved to help children.

Officer Ronald Owens, Lakewood Police Dept.
1971 – 2009
Proud dad of a daughter, he was a calming, positive presence on the force and a caring neighbor.

Sgt. Mark Renninger, Lakewood Police Dept.
1970 – 2009
A leader, SWAT trainer and department "rock," he was a devoted husband and father of three.

Officer Gregory Richards, Lakewood Police Dept.
1967 – 2009
He was the drummer in a police rock band, but his fondest times were at home with his wife and three kids.

Donate to the officers’ families through the Lakewood Police Independent Guild: www.lpig.us or P.O. Box 99579, Lakewood, WA 98499. The Brenton family asks for donations to be directed to the Lakewood fund.
AT 16, CLEMMONS WENT ON A CRIME SPREE. He was sentenced to 108 years in Arkansas but was granted clemency. By 2004, he had a WIFE and a JOB in TACOMA.

**Clemmons Timeframe**

- At left, Maurice Clemmons played in the Marianna, Ark., neighborhood 30 years ago. The area, one of the poorest counties in the country, is host to a patchwork of strip malls and dilapidated shacks. A Civil War cannon stands in the town square, right, which is bordered by empty parking lots and a few dead businesses.

Police say Tuesday that the manhunt for a wanted fu-

light, low Gordon, who is handy with a gun, was in- 

advising a weitere police officer that the man- 

Clemmons’ father worked, a factory where Maurice 

brought to his family’s name. 

Christian family and was 

no excuse” for his criminal 

Clemmons wrote. “I wasn’t

“angel of death” had visited 

blessed to this day for the 

time that seemed more suit-

prison. To Clemmons’ fam-

sets removed, their own life he was unable to 

old misguided fool, whose 

wanted to fit in and be ac-

in prison that he “fell in with 

began a seven-month crime spree. 

settled upon Little Rock, 85 

raised six kids, working two 

mother, Dorthy Mae, was 

ever after that, he never 

mention of Robert E. Lee, the 

feral cats. 

dilapidated house, owned by 

share property lines with 

stretches almost to the hori-

railroad anymore. In places, 

counts in one of the coun-

comes from Marianna, Ark., 

30 years ago. The area, in one of the 

year be-

blamed to this day for the 

time he was influenced by Arkan-

Huckabee. 

his family, in Arkansas and 

manhunt. In the aftermath, 

police officer early Tuesday 

Clemmons wrote. “I wasn’t

a plumber, pulling seats 

as a plumber, pulling seats 

$60,000 in debt, driving her 

November, the bank issued 

that house’s monthly mort-

Clemmons began missing 

the first of six subcontractors 

appears to hit financial diffi-

Newark’s Mortgage Brokers. 

Services, who encouraged 

Opposite: Nicole Smith and Clemmons, photographed on the day of their 2004 wedding. When Clemmons lived in town-

30 years ago. The area, in one of the poorest counties in the country, is host to a patchwork of strip malls and dilapidated shacks. A Civil War cannon stands in the town square, right, which is bordered by empty parking lots and a few dead businesses.

5 At 16, Clemmons went on a crime spree. He was sentenced to 108 years in Arkansas but was granted clemency. By 2004, he had a wife and a job in Tacoma.

Washington. Last week, they found mari-

Clemmons’ release, officiat-

the judge who had urged 

Marion Humphrey, his 

aunt living in 

stood to buy a house soon.

He hoped to buy a house. 

Ten years later, they have only 

had left a house for Nicole 

and, at gunpoint, 

Clemmons had his first job — 

An Arkansas parole form 

At left, Maurice Clemmons played in the Marianna, Ark., neighborhood 30 years ago. The area, one of the poorest counties in the country, is host to a patchwork of strip malls and dilapidated shacks. A Civil War cannon stands in the town square, right, which is bordered by empty parking lots and a few dead businesses.

Clemmons started amassing property in the Tacoma area in 2006. Pictured from top 

At left, Maurice Clemmons played in the Marianna, Ark., neighborhood 30 years ago. The area, one of the poorest counties in the country, is host to a patchwork of strip malls and dilapidated shacks. A Civil War cannon stands in the town square, right, which is bordered by empty parking lots and a few dead businesses.

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"He was a diverse group. 

Clemmons began acquiring property cycle. 

Tim was a kind of a troubled 

His first sale was a small 

the property. When sheriff’s 

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"He listened and said, ‘I don’t want to go to the police, I don’t want to turn myself in, I don’t want to go back to prison.’"

---

"We are working with a criminal."

"Most vividly do you remember his reaction when he was arrested?"

"The deputy snapped forward. He turned and walked away."

"He stood defiantly in my presence and said, 'I don't want to go to prison.'"

"If convicted of the rape charge, Clemmons likely was to be sentenced to 108 years in prison, based on all he had received."

"Maurice’s program, as crazy and illogical as it was, fit to stand trial. Asked if he wanted to take his case to the 108-year sentence as the 108-year sentence would be, "The Lord Jesus Christ," Jordan said. "I don’t want to go to prison, if people need to be punished."

"We WEB EXTRA Photos, video online"

"In New York, Clemmons was a fugitive. He was listed as ‘on the dot,’ because that’s what the parole administrators, ask Arkansas what his cases."

"‘He’s a normal man who was caught in life’s other.’"

"God told me to come, and I was going to solve that crime."

"‘You’re trying to solve the hole within him — the great injustice that occurred when he was 10 years old. All his choices led him back to that hole."

"The psychologists concluded that he could be judged ‘normal’, but ‘at the level of abnormal."

"‘God is holy, and ‘God is the Father of all mankind.’"

"‘You’re trying to solve the hole within him — the great injustice that occurred when he was 10 years old. All his choices led him back to that hole."

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"‘He’s a normal man who was caught in life’s other.’"
Clemmons was shot and killed by a Seattle police officer early Tuesday. A staff member of the King County Medical Examiner’s Office, inside an ambulance near the scene, takes photographs of his body.

**SEATTLE TIMES SPECIAL REPORT**

How this story was reported and written

The story was reported by staff writers Lisa deming, Sammy Burkert, Nicole Bruder, Jack Reimer, Charis Rosser, Jodi Branson, Mike Carter in Mavericks and Little Rock, Ark.; Christine Clarridge; Sara Jean Green; Susan Kelleher; Jack Broom; Charles Brown; Jim Brunner; Mike Carter in Marianna, Ark.; Jonathan Martin; Justin Mayo; Steve Miletich; Maureen O’Hagan; Nick Perry; Sier Perry; Jessica Sarkin; Greg Nick; Christian Whittier; and news researchers Gene Bahl, David Turner and Myoko Wolf. Armstrong and O’Hagan were the lead writers.

Griswold, Ronald Owens and Mark Renninger and officers Tina Hinton, the half-brother who sponsored Clemmons when he moved here on parole.

How do we avoid anyone else being killed, including Seattle?” The couple told Clemmons not to come to their house. Then they went to police.

Five other family members have been charged with helping Clemmons after the shootings. They include Eddie Davis, the cousin who tried to stop a sheriff’s deputy from arresting Clemmons, and Richard Hinton, the cousin in Renton, is trying to find him. He also received one coupon per stay valid for complimentary photos with the Macy’s Santa, including eight wallet-size photos.

Fifteen other officers drinking coffee and working on their laptop. The officer mopped to return home, wound- ing Clemmons. All four officers were killed. Sgt. Mark Harrington and officers Tim Goyette, John Kneeland and Greg Richards.

Within hours, police say, several family members came to Clem- mons’ aid, treating his wound, giv- ing him cash, driving him to Se-attle. On his way north, Clemmons called his Aunt Chrisceda, saying he was wounded and wanted to come to their house. Then they called his Aunt Chrisceda that he wasn’t going to kill cops, that he planned to kill more people. Our concern was, our concern was for loss of life. He told Clemmons to go down, that he was going to kill himself. He developed a mental illness in May, some kind of ner- vous breakdown that made him ex- tremely paranoid.” Clemmons’ husband, Michael Shane, says, “You don’t have to look too far to see why he has en- ded up like this. I have very sympa- thy for families because I feel the da- mage he has done. I see him as a well person, but there’s de- pressed and has mental retardation.” But when Clemmons called that day, Shantz and his wife felt the fear all go.

“Our first concern was for our family,” Shantz says. “Our most con- cern was for loss of life.” He told Clemmons it wasn’t going to go down, that he was going to kill himself. He turned and be- gan shooting at four Lakewood po- lice officers drinking coffee and working on their laptop. The offi- cer mopped to return home, wound- ing Clemmons. All four officers were killed. Sgt. Mark Harrington and officers Tim Goyette, John Kneeland and Greg Richards.

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SUNDAY, DECEMBER 6, 2009

SEATTLE TIMES SPECIAL REPORT

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**FOUR FALLEN OFFICERS**

**How to help**

The Lakewood Police Independent Guild is taking donations for the families of the four slain officers.

**Police Guild:** Donors can be made to the Independent Guild and sent to P.O. Box 99579, Lakewood, WA 98499. Donations also can be made online at www.lakewood.com.

**5th Avenue Coffee:** Donations also can be made at the 5th Avenue Coffee Web site (www.5thaveneccoffee.com). The Lakewood Police Benevolent Fund and the Lakewood Police Independent Guild are set up donation boxes at Forza Coffee, 11215 NE 124 Street, Lakewood, WA 98499.

**Lakewood, WA 98499.**

**WEB EXTRA**

**Loving Family Man**

Officer Gregory Richards was remembered as a loving family man.

**Funeral Home:** The funeral home for Officer Gregory Richards was Miller Funeral Home, 13013 S. 35th St., Tukwila.

**Procession:** The procession will begin at the Lakewood Police Department, where the families of the slain officers and the Lakewood police will join the procession. They will then proceed to the Evergreen Memorial.

**Memorial Service:** The memorial service for the four fallen officers will be at the Tacoma Dome at 1 p.m. Proceeds from a part of the processional route, go to www.somaticsense.com.

**Funeral:** The funeral will begin at 10 a.m. with visitation at McMorris & French Funeral Home's, 1606 S. Division St., Tacoma. Burial will be at Evergreen Memorial Park. There will be a reception to follow.

**Donations:** Donations can be made to the Lakewood Police Benevolent Fund and the Lakewood Police Independent Guild.

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