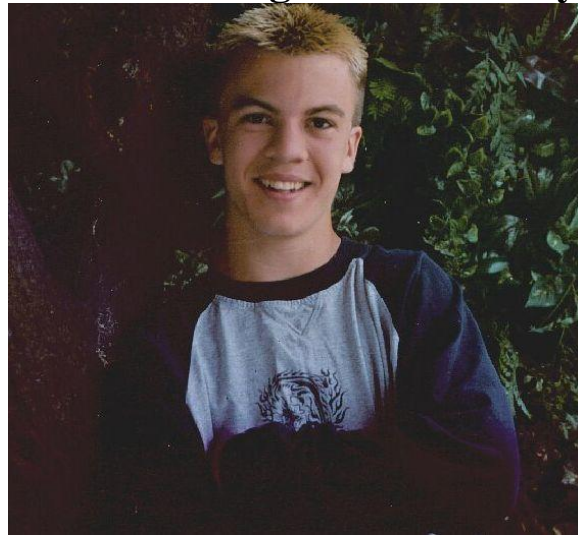


Remembering Kevin McCoy



In March of this year, *Scene* ran a comprehensive account of the October 23, 2004 hit-and-run killing of 20 year old Kevin McCoy and the crime's connection to the January 8, 2009 snowmobile deer slaughter in Waupaca. At the center of both stories was an individual named Rory Kuenzi.

Kuenzi chased and ran over a herd of deer in a stolen Polaris. The grisly details of the animal abuse incited public outrage. Kuenzi has been held on charges of felony animal mistreatment and hunting violations, however two judges have ruled that state laws protect hunters from accusations of animal abuse so the mistreatment counts are nullified by the DNR charges. Local snowmobile enthusiasts and ethical hunters have been vocal in criticizing Rory Kuenzi's actions. In mauling the deer and allowing them to suffer, he echoed a statement he had made years ago when he allegedly ran his truck into Kevin McCoy: "I thought I hit a deer."

The night McCoy was run down and left for dead on Butts Drive he had an altercation with Rory Kuenzi at a party. McCoy left the scene on foot in the early morning hours and was struck by a vehicle a short time later. Smashed pieces of the perpetrator's truck were found on the road, leading investigators to Rory Kuenzi. Kuenzi said he thought he hit a deer and claimed to have stopped to survey the damage. His passenger counters this assertion.

Kuenzi's inconsistent statements, admission of being at the scene of the crime, physical evidence, and multiple accounts of his altercation with Kevin McCoy the night of the killing, create a compelling case for possible murder charges.

Kevin McCoy's father spoke with a young woman who was at the party. She claims to have witnessed a direct threat by Kuenzi towards McCoy.

“She said he was acting like ‘a complete asshole’ all the time she was there but she did not witness what happened between Kuenzi and Kevin that set Kuenzi off, although we are pretty sure it was because Kevin was being friendly with Kuenzi’s girlfriend. This woman did say however that she heard Kuenzi say something like ‘I’m going to kill you’ or ‘I’m going to get you’ to Kevin. She said she could not remember his exact words, but she remembers vividly what she interpreted it to mean at the time and the threat was clear.”

Referring to Rory Kuenzi’s extensive criminal record and the evidence against him, James McCoy states, “When a person with a violent history threatens to kill another in front of eyewitnesses and then kills him only moments later, it doesn’t take much imagination to conclude that the killing was intentional.”



(Rory Kuenzi)

District Attorney John Snider requested a detailed accident reconstruction but miscommunication with the sheriff’s department and a generalized accusation of “bungling” created an atmosphere of incompetence that allowed the case to languish for years.

I sat with a forum of Waupaca citizens who wished to remain anonymous but were eager to express their displeasure with the DA’s office. An older gentleman who had significant experience with local politics and law enforcement said District Attorney John Snider “Likes to appear tough on crime by never actually prosecuting cases that require real investigation and hard work. It’s easy to say ‘Here’s my success rate’ when you only run with the blatantly obvious open and shut cases.”

The state Department of Justice is intervening with a John Doe investigation that will attempt to move the case forward.

Months before he testified in the closed state proceedings, I interviewed a young Waupaca man named Alfredo Estrada, Jr. who was one of Kevin McCoy’s best friends. In between his military National Guard training sessions, I was able to catch up with him to discuss his friendship with the victim, connections to the Kuenzi family, and feelings about the investigation. He struck me as sincere, straightforward, and consistent in his

statements. Every so often I would stop him and say, “Are you sure you want to go on the record with this?” He answered candidly, “I have nothing to hide.”

Estrada spoke with Judge Philip Kirk in the John Doe hearing but I did not ask him about his testimony and he did not share what occurred in confidence. Our earlier talks about the case offer insight into the night McCoy was killed, the events leading to his death, and Kevin’s final words.

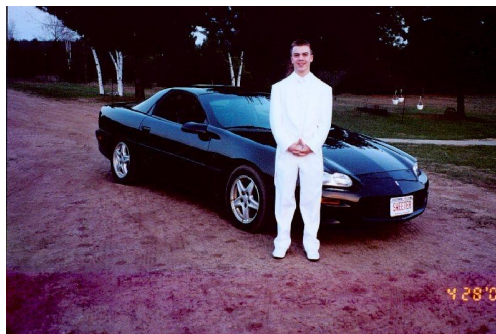
SCENE: What kind of party was it?

Alfredo Estrada Jr.: It was supposed to be a small group of friends. Kevin had just gotten out of his lease and we were going to move in together so we were celebrating. We planned to spend the night at the house because we don’t drink and drive. Kevin wasn’t drunk. He had a few social drinks, but it was just our policy not to get on the road with any alcohol in our systems. Rory Kuenzi was dating one of the girls at the house and his group showed up later. It seemed like that whole crowd was already drunk.

SCENE: How did you know Kevin?

AE: He was my best friend. I knew him for two years and we were big into the car show thing. We bought import vehicles and refurbished them. I had a Hyundai Tibron and Kevin worked on a ’91 Nissan MX 2000.

Our club, TRM Motor Sports, was established in his memory. TRM stands for The Real McCoy. After Kevin passed away, we all sat on lined up cars and took pictures as a tribute to him.



SCENE: Did you know Rory Kuenzi before that night?

AE: I grew up in the area, so I always knew who the Kuenzis were, but I never hung out with them. Rory and his younger brother definitely had reputations as troublemakers.

It's complicated because my ex-girlfriend, with whom I have a daughter, is involved with the oldest Kuenzi, Ryan. He isn't like his brothers. Ryan is a real decent guy and he has helped take care of my little girl for seven years. We don't talk about what happened.

SCENE: Do you know anything about the argument Kevin had with Rory?

AE: Kevin was talking to Rory's girlfriend, Dea. She and Rory had an argument earlier, so tempers were already fired up. I heard about what happened from Kevin. At first, I saw him all upset and asked what was wrong. He told me, "I don't want to talk about it," but I got him to open up.

Kevin told me, "I was just talking to Dea and her boyfriend got jealous. Rory got in my face." Dea is a sweet girl. Kevin was just friends with Dea and couldn't understand why her boyfriend was so angry. He said, "I wasn't doing anything wrong."

Kevin is not the type of person to back down. He'll step toe to toe with someone and stand his ground if he believes in something, but he couldn't figure out how things had gotten out of control so fast.

When Kevin got really upset, he sometimes cried. That night he was really worked up and shocked that the whole situation got heightened like that.

SCENE: What were his last words to you?

AE: "That fucking bastard just threatened my life."

I will never forget those words because that was the last thing I heard from Kevin before he was killed.

I was ready to confront Rory and asked Kevin, "Do you want me to do something about it?"

He just walked outside. He did that when he was feeling bad. He and I have spent a lot of time together and when we had a disagreement or he was upset about something, he would take a walk to cool off and come back. He wasn't supposed to leave. Like I said, we were going to spend the night at the house.

I kept asking people, "Where did Kevin go?" I thought he might have gotten a ride with someone, but then figured it was too early for anyone to leave. When he didn't come back in a half hour, I went out looking for him and never found him. I remember seeing a shoe in the road. I drove around it more than once. It didn't hit me that it was Kevin's shoe.

SCENE: How did you feel when you learned of Kevin's death?

AE: Early in the morning, the police were outside of the house and I freaked out. In the back of my mind I knew something bad had happened.

SCENE: Did the police talk to you?

AE: They escorted me to the sheriff's office and I gave three or four interviews. They had so much information. I told them everything I knew. I don't understand why Rory Kuenzi hasn't been prosecuted yet.

SCENE: Why do you think some of the people at the party are not talking?

AE: The only people who really know anything are the people who were on the road that night.

As far as the girls who threw the party, Michelle and Dea, they are completely freaked out. The police were threatening them, saying that they would spend time in jail and their whole lives would be ruined. The cops made them feel like everything would be taken away from them and they were in big trouble. They didn't do anything wrong. In fact, after Michelle figured out Rory had gotten into it with Kevin, she said, "It's not happening in my house" and kicked everyone out.

Michelle was shaking when she told me about what the police said. She has already told everything she knows and doesn't have any more information. I've seen her since, and to this day, she doesn't want to talk about that night.

SCENE: What about Dea?

AE: She won't talk. She's terrified and probably just wants to erase it from her memory. Officers seemed more concerned about getting a list of underage drinkers or drug users than they did about finding out what happened to Kevin.

SCENE: Do you believe if the police had handled this situation differently, let's say buying witnesses a hamburger in an unthreatening environment or saying "We're not here to talk about drinking and drugs" that their inquiry into Kevin's death would have been more effective?

AE: Absolutely!

SCENE: Have authorities been in contact with you recently?

AE: I was subpoenaed by the state and have to go in to go over my statement and tell what happened again. The detective told me they were looking for information and not to lie. I thought, "What do I have to lie about?"

It's weird around here. If you're rich and something happens to you, you're fine. If you don't have money, it seems like they don't care. You get picked up for little stuff. The guys in the car club are often being watched and pulled over by the cops because our cars are tricked out and they're worried about us speeding, but then one of our best friends gets killed and nothing happens.

SCENE: What do you hope happens in this case?

AE: I don't judge people. I wasn't there when it happened. I do believe Rory Kuenzi was pissed off enough to do it. I believe he killed Kevin. It sounds strange, but I feel like Kevin is watching all of this and he is going to get what he wants done. Kevin can't rest until this case is solved.

SCENE: What did you think when you heard Kuenzi was involved in running over the deer with snowmobiles?

AE: The minute I read about the story, I told a friend of mine, "I'll bet it was one of those Kuenzis who did it." I wasn't surprised.

In some ways I feel Kevin did something to make this happen. In your article, you wrote how Kevin was almost like inside the deer. That makes sense to me. I can't believe it took this deer story to make people remember him.

SCENE: It's a quote from a Susan Griffin poem: "And in that instant remembered you/had been in that body of that deer dying/what does it feel like to be a deer/dying, the death consumes/you like birth, you are/nowhere else but in the center."

AE: Kevin swept people off their feet, whether it was women or the guys who were his good friends. He just affected everyone and he is missed by so many people. I see bits and pieces of him every day. You know when you see a star that shoots across the sky? For me, that's Kevin saying "hi."

