

# Toronto frauds an attempt to make friends, earn reputation; Magnotta lived in fear after alleged sexual assault, lawyer says

BY ANDREW DUFFY AND GARY DIMMOCK JUNE 1, 2012



Luka Magnotta was a 'creepy neighbourhood guy' who 'seemed like he was trying to make friends and trying to be known', says a former acquaintance who knew him as Eric Newman in Toronto.

OTTAWA — A Toronto man once charged with fraud alongside Luka Magnotta says he always knew his co-accused was unstable but figured him too timid to ever get involved in serious crime.

Antonio Minakakis, 30, described Magnotta as a "creepy neighbourhood guy" who dragged him into a 2004 fraud case in an attempt to reduce his own culpability.

The two lived in the area of Don Mills Road and Sheppard Avenue at the time.

"He was a very weird guy, which is why nobody hung around with him," said Minakakis, who still lives in the same Parkway Forest neighbourhood.

"He had a very weird way to him. Very weird. His eyes. He was very unstable, very shaky. I don't know if he was on meds or what ... He was schizo. That's what we used to say: 'The guy's schizo.'"

In 2004, Magnotta was charged with a dozen counts of fraud and impersonation for using a woman's credit card to buy \$16,900 worth of goods, including a television, DVD player and several cellphones.

He was also charged with sexually assaulting the same woman, but that charge would later be dropped.

Minakakis said he was charged because Magnotta distributed some of the goods he obtained to people around the neighbourhood in an attempt to ingratiate himself.

"He seemed like he was trying to make friends and trying to be known," he said. "But nobody let him in. He was trying so hard to enter a group and he did what he did: he passed around a bunch of stuff."

Magnotta bragged about being an escort and a porn star in attempt to impress people, he said, but most found him simply "creepy."

After Magnotta was arrested, he went to police and tried to implicate other people in the fraud, Minakakis said.

Charges against Minakakis were dropped within days of being laid by Toronto police once he returned the goods at issue.

"I never wanted to see the guy again after all that," he said. "I just know it was complete b.s. on my side."

Minakakis said he was not surprised to see Magnotta in the news given his instability, but was shocked at him being described as a murder suspect.

"I'll tell you one thing, I didn't think he'd be the type that could actually kill somebody," Minakakis said. "He just seemed so scared, so unstable, when it came to anybody. Say, 'Boo,' he would jump, you know what I mean?"

"Somewhere down the line, he must have got real twisted."

Magnotta eventually pleaded guilty to four fraud-related charges in connection with the Toronto case after serving 16 days in pre-trial custody. He received a nine-month conditional sentence and a year of probation.

In 2005, as the case was moving through the courts, Magnotta's criminal lawyer says he wrote a letter to the Toronto Police Service, warning that his client may be in danger.

Magnotta had been charged with sexual assault and the woman's father was irate. "The reason I remember it was because I was concerned there was a potential for violence. It was serious," said Peter B. Scully.

The lawyer described Magnotta, formerly known as Eric Newman, as “soft-spoken” and genuinely in fear of the alleged victim’s father.

“The father was a powerful man in the Greek community and my client was afraid,” Scully told the Citizen.

The sex assault case was thrown out. Scully also represented Magnotta on the fraud-related charges, to which he pleaded guilty.

Magnotta, a 29-year-old former porn actor and stripper, is wanted for second-degree murder and committing indignities to a human body, according to an arrest warrant filed Thursday in Montreal. The warrant said the killing occurred Friday, May 25.

Lin Jun, a 33-year-old Concordia University exchange student from China, has been identified as the victim.

- with files from Lee Greenberg

© Copyright (c) The Ottawa Citizen