

Louisiana TV Host Killed in Murder-Suicide Had a Dark Past – and Unraveling Secrets



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For years, Scott Rogers was known as the beloved host of the upbeat *Around Town* weekend TV show in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Widely praised in the community for using airtime to help publicize the events of local nonprofits, charities and churches, the charismatic Rogers was the last person anyone might suspect of harboring a sordid, secret past.

But that's exactly what Rogers was doing – until his personal history caught up with him last month, culminating in a desperate murder-suicide at his home that shocked the community. Rogers's long-hidden past centered around allegations that he sexually abused an unknown number of young boys while living in England nearly 20 years ago.

On Aug. 27, Rogers, 52, was found dead of a single bullet to his head. In the same bedroom lay an unconscious Mathew Hodgkinson, 36, with whom Rogers had had an alleged sexual relationship dating back to Hodgkinson's early teens.

Local sheriff's deputies presumed that Hodgkinson had shot Rogers, then turned the gun on himself. Hodgkinson remained on life support at a Baton Rouge hospital until being pronounced dead on Sept. 5.

Iberville Parish Sheriff Brett Stassi declared the tragic event to be a case of Karma traveling full circle.

"What Scott had run away from in the U.K. was coming back to bite him in the butt in the United States," Stassi tells PEOPLE.

A Dark Past

The dark days reportedly began in the early 1990s, while Rogers was running a performing arts school he'd founded in England's Suffolk County. In 1992, he was arrested on charges that he'd committed an unnatural act on a 13-year-old boy.

But at his 1993 trial, Rogers was acquitted of the original charge – and the jury failed to reach a verdict on several additional charges of indecent assault and gross indecency.

Despite his acquittal, Rogers's reputation was permanently sullied. Parents pulled their children out of the school for what many of them perceived to be a religious cult-like

atmosphere and inappropriately affectionate behavior by Rogers toward some of the kids.

In 1996, as academy enrollment continued to drop, Rogers fled to the U.S. and settled in the Dallas area to start a new life. But on his application for American citizenship (and subsequent other federal applications), Rogers shortened his birth name from Richard Scott-Rogers to simply Scott Rogers – and neglected to list his court-related history from the U.K.

Meanwhile, two teenage former students from the academy eventually joined Rogers in the U.S. Those students were Hodgkinson and a man whom the sheriff's department refers to as "Stewart," now 35, who recently told Baton Rouge's *The Advocate* that Rogers started sexually abusing him and Hodgkinson when they were 12 and 13, respectively.

Hodgkinson and Stewart joined Rogers in Texas and accompanied him on a 2000 move to Louisiana – where Rogers opened a small media-production studio.

A New Life

Over time, Stewart was granted permanent status as a legal alien resident in the U.S. And Rogers orchestrated a marriage between Hodgkinson and Rogers's daughter, Kimberly Ann Scott-Rogers, now 29 – who had become a U.S. citizen along with her father. But Iberville Parish authorities say the union was a sham, serving only as a means to allow Hodgkinson to remain in the country.

"Kimmy showed up with her boyfriend when she visited Mathew in the hospital the week before he died," Stassi tells PEOPLE.

Kimberly also has a different address from Hodgkinson's. Prior to the shooting, Rogers, Hodgkinson and Stewart lived in a house with Rogers's adopted 10-year-old son and a 2-year-old male foster child. Hodgkinson and Stewart were employed as producers for *Around Town*, which aired on weekend mornings on local station WAFB-TV and gained Rogers a loyal and admiring viewership.

A New Life Unravels

The idyllic outward picture of Rogers's life began to shatter during the summer, when federal authorities launched an investigation into the fraudulent documents Rogers had filed over the years – including not only his citizenship application, but also his applications to adopt his son and to become a licensed foster-care parent.

On Aug. 15, the Louisiana Department of Children and Family Services removed the two young boys from Rogers's home, although the agency declined to provide a reason for the removal. One week later, a continued-custody hearing for the 10-year-old took place at the Iberville Parish Courthouse – setting in motion a rapid series of events.

"During that hearing," Stassi tells PEOPLE, "the bad stuff from the U.K. came out, and the judge ruled that the older child would remain in continued custody." (The toddler also was returned to foster care.)

"The whole thing was ratcheting upward," Stassi says, "as news [of Rogers's past] kept getting tighter and tighter every day."

Among Rogers's mounting problems was a possible indictment in a federal investigation on the child-molestation charges in England, even though he had been acquitted in that country.

Toward the end of August, Stewart, Kimberly and Hodgkinson were subpoenaed to

testify before a grand jury in the fraud investigation. Two days prior to the court date, Stewart left home to seek federal protection. "We know they'd had a meeting earlier in the week where [Rogers] said, 'Maybe we ought to all go lay down and shoot ourselves.' That was when Stewart decided it was time to go," Stassi says.

Shocking Deaths

On Aug. 27, Kimberly and Stewart were at the courthouse preparing to testify. Hodgkinson had not yet been summoned, so he stayed home. Kimberly was on the stand – and Stewart in the wings – when news of the shooting broke. The proceedings were immediately terminated.

When sheriff's deputies arrived at Rogers's home, they found a note allegedly scrawled by Hodgkinson that read: "They broke our happy loving home. They do not get to take Scott too." (Authorities are awaiting the results of DNA tests on the note, as well as ballistics reports on the handgun.)

"We think that some time that morning, [Hodgkinson and Rogers] prayed together a little bit, then they decided that when the grand jury finished hearing testimony, the jig was going to be up for them," Stassi says.

"I think Scott had control over Mathew enough to have him pull the trigger on him, then turn it on himself. That's the kind of relationship they had."