

Litigation settles over harassment after 2018 bear killing in Snowmass

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A Snowmass homeowner under a no-contact order with relatives of a hunter who legally killed a bear also has agreed to a cash settlement with the family who sued him in federal court.

“The only thing I can say is the parties have reached a confidential agreement,” said Sean Breen, an Austin, Texas, attorney who also has a home in Snowmass.

Breen represented Andrew Huck, his wife, Javiera Francisca Valenzuela Yuraszeck, and their two young sons in a civil case against Thomas Andersen. Their suit accused Andersen of repeatedly threatening and harassing the family after Huck, on Sept. 7, 2018, shot and killed a black bear on a Brush Creek Ranch property next to Andersen’s residence.

Authorities said the kill was legal, yet Andersen got in criminal trouble after he attempted to set the family’s car on fire, leading to his [pleading guilty to felony attempted arson in April 2019](#). He also pleaded guilty to disorderly conduct, a misdemeanor, and was sentenced that June to two years of probation and fined \$2,500.

Yet the threats and harassment continued, alleged the family, which originally [sued Andersen in Pitkin County District Court](#) in August 2019; the case was transferred to Denver federal court in October.

Despite a Pitkin County order prohibiting Andersen from having any form of contact with the family, he persisted to taunt, harass and threaten them, they alleged. He also harassed Breen, their attorney.

“Nevertheless, Mr. Andersen remains at large for the time being, and the Huck family remains in a state of severe apprehension that Mr. Andersen will make good on his threats and will follow through with his attempts to set fire to their property or otherwise do harm to them,” said an amended complaint filed in February 2020.

After mediation, the parties in June reached an agreement on the minors’ claims against Andersen.

That settlement included a federal permanent injunction precluding Huck from having contact with Huck and his family members, as well as Breen.

“Additionally, as a result of his guilty plea in the underlying criminal case, Defendant is already under a temporary restraining order prohibiting behavior nearly identical to that which the parties have agreed to permanently enjoin by this motion, however, that order only remains in effect during the time of Defendant’s probation (two years),” said motion filed in September.

Both sides agreed to the motion’s proposed terms, which precludes Andersen from “harassing, threatening, molesting, intimidating, retaliating, tampering with, contacting, or communicating with (directly or indirectly) any of the Plaintiffs or their counsel Sean Breen of Howry, Breen & Herman, LLP, in any way (including via written, electronic or telephonic forms of communication); and coming within 300 feet of the Plaintiffs’ residence, any of the Plaintiffs, or any location the Plaintiffs are likely to be found.”

A notice of settlement recorded Dec. 22 in the U.S. District Court of Denver had few details other than informing the court that monies were deposited into accounts belong to two minors. Multiple documents in the case are closed to public viewing as well.

Denver attorney Billy-George Hertzke, who represented Andersen in his civil defense, did not respond to telephone and email messages last week.

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