

# Jury awards war hero over 1 million dollars: verdict returned on employee murder lawsuit

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ANGELTON, Texas – A jury verdict was returned, on Wednesday, regarding a lawsuit filed against Woven Metal Products, Inc. on behalf of Jacob Matthew Cadriel, who was killed on the job by a co-worker, Steven Damien Young. This tragic incident took place on April 1, 2015. On that date and on Woven Metal Products, Inc.'s workplace premises, co-worker Steven Damien Young reached into his waistband, pulled out a 38-caliber handgun and shot and killed Jacob. Young was arrested and charged with murder, and is now serving a 45 year sentence.

Jacob Cadriel left his home in rural southeast Texas in 2006 to fulfill a five-year commitment to the US armed Forces, where he completed two extended tours of duty in Iraq and Afghanistan. A brother was a drill sergeant and a sister had enlisted as well. He returned home to a wife who obtained her



Jacob Cadriel

nursing degree while he was away with plans to have a

large family of their own. Platoon brothers lost to the war were etched in ink on his arm, along with the name of his wife over his heart. He went to work in one of the local fabrication shops servicing the petrochemical industry. He was unaware of the former criminals employed there. The shop was managed by the parent company, Woven, which was also the owner of the premises as well.

One such prior inmate, Steven “Kareem” Young, had pulled a gun on workers at a prior job and had pulled one again at employees of a Jack in the Box shortly before he was hired on at Woven Metal Products facility to work for their subsidiary, Indchem. While a background check

would have revealed those charges and convictions, none was undertaken.

This was unknown to Jacob, who worked around Young in the shop. It was also unknown to him that in the prior shift Young had ripped his shirt off and tried to fight another co-worker who had reprimanded him for calling their supervisor a “skinhead”, a pejorative for Aryan Nation racists.

Within minutes of their shift, ironically on April 1, 2015, Jacob was told to borrow the forklift from Young. He did so only to be challenged and then repeatedly struck in the face by Young. Even after the brutal attack was broken up by co-workers, Young pulled a pistol from his pants and stepped over to Jacob and shot him in the back.

The lawsuit alleged that Woven Metal Products, Inc. who owned the facility where Mr. Cadriel worked, was negligent in knowingly providing an unsafe workplace for its employees and that the company failed to, among other things, conduct comprehensive employment background checks and criminal record searches on their employees

and failed listen to numerous workers at the facility who repeatedly told them about the erratic and unstable behavior of Steven Young and who failed to provide any training or education on identifying and handling this type of violence behavior in the workplace.

Young was subsequently restrained as he fled to the parking lot and Jacob



died two hours later at a local hospital from massive blood loss.

Evidence developed and revealed at trial showed that Young had well-known behavior problems throughout his short tenure at the Woven jobsite. Talking to himself, frequent confrontations with many of the other co-workers, and an unwillingness to work with the rest of the crew were examples of his behavior. The other workers at trial described him as a loner, weird, and crazy. Employees expressed these concerns to management, even the president of the company, yet nothing was done.

**Steven Young**

A leading expert in workplace violence, security and background screening,



Millwee

Steven C. Millwee, testified at trial that in the 40 years of work in the field he had only seen one or two other incidents that were so striking. Millwee spent almost eight hours on the stand over two days detailing the missteps of Woven.

This was not Young's only brush with the law due to his violent behavior. In 2008, Young had been arrested, charged and convicted in Harris County of the offense of carrying an illegal weapon on the jobsite. In 2014, Young had been arrested and charged in Harris County with the offense of making a terroristic threat. Young was out on bond awaiting trial on that charge when he murdered Jacob Cadriel. Woven had never trained any of their workforce in how to address any issues associated with workplace violence. Even more ironically, Woven was in the process of terminating Young for the

prior incident but admittedly "let time slip away", resulting in Young returning to work on the next shift. The coworker from the prior shift had even told the supervisor he wasn't coming back to work if Young was there, and that he was concerned Young might have a weapon. The defense had a workplace expert as well but chose not to call him at trial.

According to Ronald Brown, author of "Dying on the Job", each year approximately 800 employees are killed in brutal homicides in the American workplace. According to Millwee, both Cadriel and Young had only worked at Woven Metal Products, Inc. for approximately 6 months when Young's violent temperament and behavior was directed at Cadriel. Routine and readily available background and criminal history checks done prior to Young's hire by Woven Metal Products, Inc. would have uncovered his criminal background and offered insight as to his history of odd behavior.

Texas law does not require background checks and does not allow evidence of a past conviction to be the basis of

liability. Likewise, Texas law prohibits exemplary damages when criminal acts of others cause an injury, even if it was from a coworker or invitee to the premises.



Mr. Cadriel was represented by Brent Coon and Eric Newell from Brent Coon & Associates

and by Robert A. Schwartz with the Heard Law Firm. Lead attorney Brent Coon noted, “These cases are always tragic, regardless of the outcome with the jury. We are pleased that the family can now get some closure to the matter, and that a jury has agreed with us that Woven bears responsibility for the criminal culture they created on the jobsite with their hiring and retention practices. Low-level and even senior management had little understanding or appreciation of the risks inherent in utilizing workers in a shop around other coworkers who had histories of abnormal and violent behavior. Hopefully, lessons will be learned for Woven,

and even other companies, from this case and this decision that workplace violence is a very serious matter that every company should educate and train their workforce, particularly their management team, on how to identify it, confront it, and eliminate it.”

The Coon legal team also notes that Defense now gets the benefit of new laws from the recent rash of one-sided tort reforms intended to protect business owners (ie: owner cannot be held liable for punitive damages because of criminal conduct of a 3rd party). Texas laws benefiting businesses have also been passed that state that an owner has no duty to perform a criminal background check on invitees and there is no liability in cases where there is only one prior criminal conviction on the record at the time the invitee was allowed on the premises. Jacob Matthew Cadriel served his country in the U.S. Army from 2004 through 2009, and was active in two tours in Iraq. He was back home in Texas, married to his high school sweetheart, and raising their 5-year-old son, Jacob Matthew Cadriel, Jr.,

at the time of his death.

At closing, lead plaintiff counsel, Brent Coon, pointed out how tragically similar Jacob's path was to that of Chris Kyle, the hero of the movie "American Sniper" who was also gunned down by a deranged acquaintance. He closed with pointing out that Jacob had always put others before himself, first his country and then his family and it was time for him to be put first. As his last tattoo eerily stated, it is better to be judged by 12 than carried by 6.

Counsel finished the close, pointing out that Jacob didn't get to make that choice and as a result of Woven's negligence, it was Jacob who was carried by six, and now 12 could provide justice for his family.

The jury returned its one million-dollar-plus verdict after a long and intense deliberation and stated that Woven Metal Products were negligent and that the Woven premises were in an unreasonably dangerous condition and that they failed in their duty to warn Jacob of the highly foreseeable likelihood of harm, which contributed to Mr. Cadriel's

death. The jury awarded for the estate of Mr. Cadriel his pain and suffering and his medical bills. Additionally, he is survived by his wife who will receive compensation for his lost earning potential as well her suffering due to loss of companionship.

His distraught wife abandoned their apartment and moved back home with her 6 year old son, Jacob Jr. She kept the apartment and all the contents for another year as they were that day, even leaving her clothes and all of little J's toys, except for a doll that Jacob had bought him earlier on the day of shooting.

Erika Cadriel was quoted as saying after the verdict, "This verdict helps to bring the family closure as defined by the citizens of Brazoria County, saying unequivocally that Woven should not have allowed this tragedy to have happened. Hopefully, we now as a family can move on. Thanks to the jurors for their service and we hope that the Texas legislature looks at this case and considers it a referendum to mandate criminal background checks for all employees. We will always

miss Jacob Cadriel, a great father, son, brother, husband, leader, and a great servant to our country for the 5 years of his life he committed to the international war on terror and to keep this country safe. This verdict validates

his existence, but will never replace him in our hearts”.

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