

Felony charges now await the return of Charles "Ross" Blankenbaker in the wake of the injuring of his estranged wife, Tara, on Thursday night, March 28.

Both of the Blankenbakers were still patients at University of Louisville Hospital on Monday, April 1. Tara Blankenbaker suffered at least four stab wounds from a knife allegedly wielded by her husband at the Austin home of her grandparents some time before 8 p.m. on that date. The origin of Ross Blankenbaker's single stab wound to the upper left chest may or may not be self-inflicted.

Ross Blankenbaker had been visiting his wife and two children, ages two and four, at the house on West State Road 256 that evening. Previously, the family were reported to have been living with his parents in Washington County. Tara Blankenbaker and the couple's youngsters had been at the home of her grandparents, Gary and Josephine Surber, for about a week.

Sheriff Dan McClain said that when Ross Blankenbaker arrived, the couple stepped outside and then went for a short drive. When they returned to the house, Tara went to the basement, and Ross followed. They came back up with their children. Tara took the children to the back bedroom.

Ross reportedly followed and knocked on the door, which Tara opened and allowed him to enter the room.

The grandparents told investigating officers that they heard nothing further until the door reopened and Ross Blankenbaker quickly left the residence, the children crying and screaming in his wake.

When the grandparents checked the bedroom, they said they found their wounded granddaughter and called 9-1-1 for help.

Sheriff McClain, Chief Deputy Don Campbell and deputies Jeremy Arnold and Joe Guarneri were dispatched by a 9-1-1 call from Tara Blankenbaker's grandparents shortly before 8 p.m. Austin Major/Detective Lonnie Noble and Patrolman Nathan Hall were also alerted by the dispatch and met the county officers at the ranch-style home at 3996 West State Road 256.

They found the young woman bleeding profusely from her wounds and lying on the floor of the bedroom. Ptl. Hall immediately began applying pressure to the woman's wounds. He stated that he asked Tara Blankenbaker who had hurt her, and she identified her husband as the assailant.

Mr. and Mrs. Surber explained to officers that Ross Blankenbaker had come to the house to talk to Tara.

As Scott County EMS and the medical team from the Air Methods helicopter got the woman on the aircraft, officers secured the scene and called the Sellersburg post of the Indiana State Police for assistance in collecting and preserving evidence. Sheriff McClain said a pocket knife with blood on the blade was recovered from the bedroom. Several officers combed the neighborhood looking for the suspect.

An NCIC bulletin was issued alerting law enforcement agencies that Ross Blankenbaker was wanted for questioning as the hunt for Blankenbaker. Officers with the Washington County Sheriff's Department began searching for him, presuming that he may try to reach his parents'

home.

Blankenbaker's empty car was found off State Road 160. Blankenbaker was located a short time later by Washington County deputies. He was suffering from a stab wound to the chest and was also flown to U of L Hospital.

Tara Blankenbaker's condition has improved tremendously since she was admitted. At first, she appeared to be partially paralyzed and family members feared damage to her spinal cord, but she is beginning to get feeling back and wiggling her toes, according to one report. Her knife wounds included one to her upper left chest and a couple around the base of her neck. Another wound was found near her spinal cord.

Sheriff McClain said his department is still investigating how Ross Blankenbaker's injury was inflicted. Purportedly, Blankenbaker has stated he was stabbed in self-defense. The knife blade is reported to have nicked his pericardium, the membranous sac around the heart, and doctors are watching him carefully.

So are officers with the Louisville Metropolitan Police Department. Because there is a Scott County arrest warrant ready to be served on him once he is released, Blankenbaker has an officer waiting for him at the hospital. He is also reported to be shackled to his hospital bed. Sheriff McClain said once Blankenbaker is released, he will be taken to the Louisville correctional facility.

An extradition process from Kentucky may occur after the warrant is served, the sheriff said.

When Blankenbaker does get back to Scott County, an initial hearing in Scott Circuit Court will be scheduled. He is charged with one count each of attempted murder, a Class A felony; aggravated battery causing serious, permanent disfigurement, a Class B felony; and battery causing serious bodily injury, a Class C felony.