

Trailer park death stumps local police

By Johanna Thatch-Briggs
Special to Sentinel-Voice

WILMINGTON, N.C. (NNPA) - Even while riding in broad daylight, the drive down Dogwood Street evokes a dark, eerie feeling. Seemingly hidden behind Wilmington's most affluent and exclusive neighborhoods near Eastwood Road, the Dogwood Mobile Home Park is miles away from the roots of Mark Anthony Street.

The sadness that sags heavily in the air and the yellow tape left dangling from the abandoned porch at 202 Dogwood Drive, Lot 2 signals that the presence of death looms on the desolate street, which merely provides one-way in and one-way out.

It's the street where the body of 26 year-old Mark Street laid after he was "stabbed" and slain with an "unknown sharp object" on Tuesday, March 31 around 9:30 p.m.

Recently, as many in the Port City carefully planned their weekend around the Azalea Festival activities, Mark's family made final preparations to lay him to rest in more familiar surroundings — closer to home.

Born in Connecticut and reared in rural Brunswick County since the age of six-years old, Mark's life came to an abrupt end after he reportedly asked a group of men outside his girlfriend's trailer to quiet down.

Huddled in the living room in the home of Mark's parents, Carolyn and George Street, the remaining members of his family expressed deep concerns about the deadly altercation, which left this large family in mourning. Together they shared the same answers when asked the most basic questions related to his murder, "We don't know anything."

And truly, they don't. As of yet, no arrests have been made, and the family claims the names of the suspects who were detained for a short period of time and eventually released were not revealed. According to them, no profiles or sketches that may assist the community in identifying the perpetrators has been released either.

What they do know is that the "stab" left a mysterious wound that they describe as "a perfect hole [which was] the size of a dime" above his heart.

His sister, Tanya Walker, and his father maintained that there were no other cuts or abrasions surrounding the

hole. At press time, the family did not have an autopsy report.

The family claims the only information they have to go on is the accounts of witnesses who gave statements to the local daily newspaper. Mark's girlfriend, Keely Wright and neighbor, Robert Bridgers offered similar stories to the press that contained minor conflicts; however, what remained consistent is the allegations that racial slurs were spoken by the assailants who were White.

In fact, the family stated that during the only conversation they held with Wright, she indicated that Mark was indeed called a "nigger" just before he encountered the last moments of his untimely death.

Uncertain as to whether the murder constitutes a hate crime, the family wants justice served. But what perplexes the family the most is even with all the information witnesses have cooperatively shared, no one has been charged for the murder of the man they characterized as a brother who possessed the gift to make family and friends laugh.

His sister, Tanya, told The Journal, "It's still hard for me to believe that he's not going to walk through that door and do something playful. I was hoping he would come in and say 'April fool!'"

She excused herself and returned with pictures from her wedding, when Mark stood proud as her husband's best man.

Tanya points to one of the tiniest members of the wedding party and says, "That's his son, but he's a lot bigger now."

In the meantime, someone pops in a videocassette. Street, who up until that moment, had only shed sporadic tears, listened attentively and rarely spoke, began to giggle as the family watched Mark conquer the dance floor in celebration of his sister's wedding.

And as modern technology captures their memories of a lost son, father, brother, and uncle, it seems as though Mark's cheerful spirit sweeps the sadness away. Soon after, it becomes apparent that while loneliness may lurk on the "street" in Wilmington where he met his death, Mark's life as a "Street" will forever be remembered in his small hometown where there is no shortage of love.

In the midst of it all, the

Poll: Race relations slightly better

NEW YORK (AP) - A majority of Americans support affirmative action, believe race relations have improved since the civil rights movement and approve of interracial marriage, according to a new poll.

Still, 49 percent of Blacks said they had experienced some form of discrimination in the month preceding the poll and 62 percent believe they are treated somewhat or very unfairly.

"The good news is there is a sense of optimism in

the respondents to the poll. There is a real sense that America has changed for the better," said Wade Henderson, executive director of the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, a coalition that includes AARP, unions and religious organizations.

However, Henderson said, the poll also "shows there is a gulf, not only in perception, but in reality" when it comes to differing views on discrimination.

The Gallup Organization poll, commissioned by the AARP and the LCCR, was

released to coincide with next month's 50th anniversary of the Brown vs. Board of Education ruling that declared school segregation unconstitutional. It will appear Friday in the May-June issue of AARP The Magazine.

Gallup said it is the organization's most comprehensive survey on race relations.

In the poll of adults 18 and older, nearly 90 percent of Whites, 73 percent of Blacks and 76 percent of Hispanics said race relations had somewhat or greatly improved.

Americans of different

racers are increasingly comfortable living together: 78 percent of Blacks, 61 percent of Hispanics and 57 percent of Whites said they prefer to live in a mixed neighborhood.

Fifty-seven percent of Americans support affirmative action, a finding that Henderson called a pleasant surprise. "Americans in a general manner accept the equitable principle that, for every wrong, there is a remedy," he said.

Sixty-three percent, however, said that "race

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