

Guards, nurse charged in teen's death

By K. Chandler

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FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. (NNPA) - After waiting for nearly one year for justice to be served following the untimely death of 14-year-old Martin Lee Anderson who succumbed on Jan. 5, less than 24 hours after starting a six-month stint at the Bay County Sheriff's Office Boot Camp in Panama City, it now appears that the day of reckoning has finally arrived.

After concluding that the 20 minutes of extreme force

perpetrated by detention center guards led to the youth's brutal death, Special Prosecutor Mark Alan Ober on Monday, Nov. 27 formally charged seven former guards and a female nurse at the Bay County Boot Camp with first degree aggravated manslaughter of a child, a crime punishable by up to 30 years in prison.

Anderson, who had no prior criminal record, had been remanded to the juvenile boot camp for trespassing on school property, a probation violation on an earlier

charge of grand theft stemming from a June 2005 incident in which he "borrowed" his grandmother's 1996 Jeep Cherokee while she was in church one Sunday, to go joyriding with friends.

According to officials from the Bay County Sheriff's Office, guards at the juvenile detention facility restrained the youth after he stopped cooperating with drill instructors during mandatory exercises that were included as part of the facility's intake process.

On the videotape that

aired all over the world, seven guards were seen wrestling the 140-lb. youth to the ground, after which he is repeatedly struck on the arm and the right side of his torso. During the course of the brutal pounding, he was punched and kneed by guards as he lay limply on the ground, offering no resistance.

While the severe body blows were occurring, Kris Schmidt, a female nurse employed at the boot camp, looked on passively, offering no objection to the abuse being perpetrated. She stepped in only after Anderson's body stopped moving. Snatched to his feet by detention guards, Anderson collapsed on the ground, inert. It is at this point that the video shows guards nervously darting in and out of the video camera's view before paramedics rush in and place him on a gurney for transport to the hospital, where he later died.

District Medical Examiner Dr. Charles F. Siebert Jr., who conducted the initial autopsy (despite the fact that the case did not occur in his jurisdiction), ruled that the

young man's death was related not to internal injuries sustained as a result of the horrific beating he received, but rather to excessive exercising, which touched off an unexpected "blood reaction" caused by his "sickle cell trait" — which, interestingly, neither Martin nor his family was aware that he had — and that his bruises and lacerations were the result of efforts to resuscitate him.

"It was a natural death," Siebert stated. "The [sickle cell] trait caused red blood cells to sickle and change shape, causing a whole cascade of events that led to bleeding and hemorrhaging."

Siebert's ruling fueled outrage and utter disbelief among medical professionals and ordinary citizens alike.

To quell the mounting criticism surrounding both Siebert's conclusion and the boot camp itself, which has since been closed down, Anderson's body was exhumed early in March by Florida Department of Law Enforcement officials and transported to Tampa so that Hillsborough County Medical Examiner Dr. Vernard

Adams could conduct a second autopsy.

State Attorney Ober who had been conducting the ongoing criminal investigation at the behest of Gov. Jeb Bush, said that he requested the services of Dr. Adams "to determine the cause and manner of death" as part of his formal inquiry to ascertain whether or not the correctional officers involved should face criminal charges stemming from the youth's death.

"I assure the family of Martin Anderson and the people of the State of Florida that my office is working diligently to aggressively investigate this case," in an "expeditious yet thorough manner," Ober stated at the time.

Not unexpectedly, the formal results of a second autopsy on the body of Anderson, which were made public May 5, directly conflicted with the initial autopsy results of Bay County Medical Examiner Dr. Charles F. Siebert. Noting that he had "enlisted the aid of pathologists" and pediatric specialists (See *Guards, Page 10*)

TV-cop show had Black males rap away ticket

TEMPE, Ariz. (AP) - City leaders have apologized after a program on Tempe's cable channel showed a White police officer telling two Black men they could get out of a littering ticket by performing a rap.

Tempe Mayor Hugh Hallman and Police Chief Tom Ryff apologized for the show and suspended its future production after Black community leaders voiced outrage and disappointment.

"I accept responsibility for the actions of my staff and apologize to any members of our community who have been offended," Ryff said during a news conference last Friday.

The segment appeared on "Tempe Street Beat," a program produced by police in the Phoenix suburb that followed several officers on patrol in a "Cops"-style format. It shows Sgt. Chuck Schoville pulling over two men in August in a mall parking lot.

He first asks for a name and ID from the driver and then asks the two men if they know how much the fine is for littering.

The officer then tells the men that they can avoid get-

ting a littering ticket "if the two of you just do a little rap about — what do you want to do a rap about? Littering? About the dangers of littering."

The two men agree, and each performs a short rap, laughing afterward. One says, "The dangers of littering, you will get a ticket. If you ain't wit' it, you better be experienced."

The second man raps, "Yo, I just got pulled over 'cause I threw my trash out the window when they rolled over. They got behind me and pulled me over."

Later, Schoville talks football with the men, one of whom agrees with his prediction that the Oakland Raiders will make it to the Super Bowl this year.

Schoville then says, "You know why you say I'm right? Because I got a gun and badge. I'm always right. That's the way it works, right?" The three laugh and the two men get in their car.

Leaders of chapters of the NAACP and the National Action Network expressed outrage and demanded that the city act.

The Rev. Jarrett Maupin of the National Action Net-

work, who was at Friday's news conference, said he had accepted Hallman's and Ryff's apologies and intends to make sure the police department makes good on a proposal for an African-American advisory board and increased diversity training.

"It's important for police officers to realize that Black people do not speak hip-hop," Maupin said. "We're not all rappers and thugs and gangbangers. We speak the English language and we're entitled to the same amount of respect."

Ryff said the department is investigating how the video got on the air, who watched it and who edited it.

He wouldn't discuss whether there would be any punishment for those involved.

The chief said that he hadn't been able to contact Schoville, a 25-year veteran of the Tempe force, because the officer is on vacation. A message was left with the department seeking comment from the sergeant.

Because the men in the video were not cited, Tempe police had no record of their names.

Texas mayor eyes Taser study

HOUSTON (AP) — Houston's mayor has called for an independent study of the city police department's use of Tasers, two weeks after officers zapped a pro football player with the weapon.

Mayor Bill White said the city should "promptly" select an outside group to conduct the study, which would examine data accumulated since the department adopted Tasers for widespread use two years ago.

Activists have been calling for a study or moratorium on Taser use. They argue Blacks are a disproportionate target of the devices,

which use jolts of electricity to subdue combative suspects.

On Nov. 14, an officer used a Taser to subdue Houston Texans lineman Fred Weary during a traffic stop. Police reports said the 29-year-old "became verbally combative and extremely argumentative." Weary denied any wrongdoing and a judge subsequently dismissed charges of resisting arrest.

Police commanders review each case involving a Taser, White said, but a study could help assure the community that the devices aren't used "based on stereotypes."

Shooting

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tal told her that Burks had been shot in the back, with the bullet entering his heart.

She said he was the second youngest of seven children. She said he was a straight-A student at Osborne and had received trophies and awards. He planned to go to college away from Detroit when he graduated.

"My son was going to be somebody," she said. "Those kids are all good kids; they don't get in any trouble. Everybody knew them. Most of the time, wherever I went, they went with me."

Burks, who works as a housekeeper, said that since her son's death, police have treated her rudely as she tried to get information on her son's killing and information on Moore's arrest and terms of his release. An attorney for Fieger's firm was seeking his release at press time.

Burks said that while she was gone from the family's home Nov. 28, a man wearing a security guard hat drove by the house and fired a gun in the air.

"I'm burying my baby, and trying to hold myself together, but now this harassment is going on," she said.

Burks's father John Moore Sr. said, "I'm devastated. The police department wants us to honor and respect them, then, they go and do this. What are we paying them for, to kill us?"

Johnathan Stanley's mother, Chrissie Stanley, said her son is being scouted by colleges across the country. She said he was on the way to a banquet where he was supposed to receive two football trophies when his friends came to the house to get him to go shopping.

"But he wasn't at the banquet, he was locked up," said Stanley. "These parents lost their son, but the police are interrogating and harassing these kids instead of interrogating the man that killed this child and wounded my son."

Johnathan's stepfather, Sharife Barnes, said he has worked for seven years as a security guard, and that there was no justification for how the officer handled the situation. Also on Thanksgiving weekend, two undercover police officers chased and shot to death another man, who had allegedly robbed a Family Dollar store on McNichols and Greenlawn.

In published reports, police representatives said the man, who was fleeing on foot, fired once at their car as they pursued him from McNichols to Puritan — at least 8 blocks away. However, neighbors at Puritan and Greenlawn said they heard a volley of at least 18 gunshots at that intersection when the chase concluded.

A parent from the nearby Bates Academy said the store had been robbed in September, and that police had been prepared this time.

Detroit police have killed several others this year. They included a man who was shot multiple times on Sept. 5 after police stopped him in a car with an alleged prostitute, and another man who was killed July 5 after police fired at him seven times. Police claimed he pointed a gun at them while walking on the street.

Funeral services for Burks were held last Tuesday.

Diane Bukowski writes for the Michigan Citizen.