Who killed Dee Dee?

Murder of Pretty teacher a mystery

By Bettye Moss

"She never bothered anybody..she was always helping other people.. she never held a grudge, she was always trying to make something of herself... it's hard to believe."

Royal White, her uncle, was speaking of the death of 27-year old Deserra Cortessa Press, who was killed by a single bullet fired through a window at her home on Gatehouse Drive in the Village of Cornell of Northwest Baltimore.

The slaying has baffled police, as well as relatives and friends.

At AFRO presstime, police report no arrest had been made and they were still investigating the case.

Mrs. Press, a special educational teacher and mother of two small children, was fondly known as "Dee Dee" to relatives and friends...

One grief - stricken family friend told the AFRO, the Jan. 27 slaying "has just upset me no end. She was a fine person, such a nice person to be around. I have known her since she was a youngster. She was working hard to be somebody education..."

Mrs. Press was the daughter of William Johnson and the late Lillian Johnson, a teacher at Arlington School., when she died in 1980. Mr. White revealed his sister's death came shortly after her son, William Corbin Johnson, was an apparent suicide in August 1979.

Educated in the Baltimore schools, Mrs. Press was a graduate of Coppin State College, and was employed at the Villa Marie Residential School for special children. She was studying for her master's degree at Loyola College.

At funeral services on Jan. 31 at Bethel AME Church, it was noted that Mrs. Press "was highly conscientious and motivated to teach students who were mildly handicapped.. intellectually. She was a lover of people and so well loved by all who knew her."

In addition to her uncle, Mr. White, a retired Baltimore teacher, Mrs. Press is survived by her husband, Dwane Darrell Press, a Coast Guard employee; two children, Kelly, 9; and Kwuan, 4.

Also, her father William Johnson; sisters, Veronique and Tracye Johnson; stepsister, Danny McCoy. Her in - laws are Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Press (Ernestine), also Baltimore city educators.

Burial was Tuesday, Feb. 1, in the Maryland National Cemetery in Laurel.

DESERRA C. PRESS — working on her masters degree at the time of her death.

Abernathy released from Hopkins

Dr. Ralph Abernathy, former head of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, must return to a city hospital in five or six weeks to ensure recovery from a mild stroke, a hospital spokesman said.

Abernathy was discharged Wednesday from Johns Hopkins Hospital where he underwent treatment for a mild stroke.

A spokesman said Abernathy, 56, will return to the hospital for an evaluation and - a possible cerebral artery bypass.

Abernathy has suffered slurred speech as a result of his stroke but his condition is improving, the spokesman said. The Civil Rights leader was scheduled to leave from a Baltimore airport en route to Atlanta Wednesday evening.

Eye doctor pleads guilty

An optometrist who pleaded guilty to medicaid fraud must pay $3,523 in restitution to the medicaid program and perform 500 hours of community service, a judge said.

Dr. Thomas Azman, 32, was sentenced to two years probation Feb. 2 and also fined $5,000 by Circuit Court Judge Edgar Silver.

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CRIME DISPATCH

High schoolers face expulsion in drug raids

Annapolis — Thirty three students arrested during recent drug raids at three Anne Arundel County schools will be immediately suspended and eventually expelled, top school officials said Thursday.

Edward J. Anderson, superintendent of county schools, said the stiff action will be taken because "we're bound and determined to get drugs out of the schools."

"We're not dealing with youngsters who were just using drugs. They were charged with distribution of drugs," Anderson said.

The students, arrested Tuesday, Feb. 1, at Old Mill, Glen Burnie and Meade High Schools, will have a right to appeal their expulsions to the superintendent's office.

"It's not something to take lightly, Anderson said. "It's real sad for me to see this happen. I don't know if we're doing our job right or not. We've got a very extensive drug abuse program."

Police investigators said they found LSD, marijuana, hashish, Methaqualone and cocaine for sale suring a five-month undercover investigation at the schools.

Arrest warrants on drug distribution charges were issued for a total of 47 people, including seven adults. Police said seven students and two adults remain at large.

Refund due to citizens offered free trips

Maryland Attorney General Stephen H. Sachs stated this week that hundreds of Marylanders may be entitled to restitution totalling up to $22,000 under a settlement that has been reached in a case involving a Tennessee based firm that offered Maryland consumers a "free" Florida vacation for which they actually had to pay.

Circuit Court Judge Robert M. Bell has signed a consent order requiring National Travel of Tennessee, Inc. of Sparta, Tennessee, to pay $22,000 in fines, restitution and settlement costs.

This is the first case in which the Consumer Protection Division of Sach's office has obtained a ruling that Maryland courts have jurisdiction over the business practices of an out-of-state firm whose only contact with Maryland consumers was through the mail.

A second respondent in the case, Lehigh Corporation of Ft. Myers, Florida, is not required to pay any part of the settlement costs but has agreed to all other portions of the consent order.

Under terms of the settlement announced, the initial $5,000 of the payment by National Travel will be earmarked to provide restitution to consumers who paid a $46.50 "service fee" in order to obtain a vacation certificate for the "free" trip, as well as postage and telephone expenses.

In an earlier, pre-settlement action last February, 50 consumers who had filed complaints with the Consumer Protection Division about the advertisements they had received from National Travel shared $2,287 in restitution, according to Assistant Attorney General H. Robert Erwin Jr., chief of the Division, and Assistant Attorney General Deborah K. Hines, who handled the case.

Another $5,000 will be earmarked for civil fines and the remaining $12,000 will cover the costs of the implementation of the agreement and the division's investigation expenses, Erwin said.

However, if valid requests for restitution exhaust the initial $5,000 designated to cover them the remainder of the settlement amount up to the full $22,000 will be used to reimburse consumers, Erwin said.

Any claims for restitution must be accompained by proof of payments for the company's "service fee," as well as any telephone or postage costs connected with the vacation offer, and be submitted to the Consumer Protection Division by June 30, 1983, according to Hines.

The division's address is 7 North Calvert St., The Consumer Protection Division filed suit against National Travel and Lehigh in March 1980, charging that they had violated the state's consumer protection laws by mailing an undetermined number of advertisements to Marylanders, offering them a "free" five day, four night trip to Florida for which they actually had to pay a "service fee" of $46.50 in order to receive a vacation certificate.

Consumers also had to pay travel and meal costs and were invited to attend a land sales promotion as part of the trip, the suit alleged.

The respondents, who since have severed their business relationship, denied any wrongdoing but reached the settlement agreement rather than pursue the case in court.

Over a year and a half of legal argument was required prior to Baltimore Circuit Court Judge Martin B. Greenfield's ruling in November 1981 that Maryland Courts had jurisdiction over the business practices of firms with no offices whatever in Maryland and whose only contact with Maryland consumers was through the mail, Erwin said.

Cicely Tyson

The NAACP, at its annual board of directors meeting held January 10elected actress Cicely Tyson as a trustee of the NAACP Special Contribution Fund.

Ms. Tyson, a native New Yorker, is well remembered for her starring role in such movies as "Sounder," for which she was named best actress by the Atlanta Film Festival.

State task force recommendation:

Somerset County for new prison site

By John W. Freece

The recommendation that had been expected that Maryland should build its next state prison in Somerset County on the lower Eastern Shore has been made, but the site selection process is still not over.

Gov. Harry Hughes asked his task force that has been studying available prison sites in Maryland for still more information about other sites in rural Somerset County before making his recommendation of a site to the General Assembly.

That recommendation, originally expected Jan. 19, now may not be made until the end of the week, said Press Secretary Lou Panos.

Administration officials would not discuss the precise sites that are under consideration and Panos said Hughes asked the Task Force to determine if any other sites within the county may also be available.

"We have tried to avoid being specific because he may choose another site," said Norm Silverstein, the assistant press secretary.

The governor also wants to know if the sites under consideration are still available to the state for purchase and if there are adequate water and sewer services available, Silverstein said.

The Somerset County commissioners have voted 3-2 against locating a prison in the county after initially expressing an interest in attracting such a facility to help alleviate the county's chronic unemployment.

"We've gotten expressions of support from Somerset County as well as expressions of opposition," said Panos. "No matter where you site a prison, there will be some opposition to it."

The Task Force had also considered sites in Cecil, Caroline and and Prince George's Counties as well as in other parts of the state, but was attracted to Somerset when County residents showed interest in the facility.

Panos refused to rule out the possibility that Hughes may yet recommend a site elsewhere in the state, saying, "It depends on the kinds of answers we get" from the questions Hughes has asked.

Man selling drugs for food stamps

A federal grand jury has found an Ellicott City man guilty of running a drug ring that sold heroin in exchange for food stamps on the sidewalks of West Baltimore.

The jury Feb. 2 convicted Melvin M. Stanford, 35, of conspiracy to distribute heroin, possession of narcotics, illegal possession of food stamps and operating a continuing criminal enterprise. Stanford could receive life in prison without parole on the latter charge.

Prosecutors said Stanford's West Side ring engaged in a fierce rivarly with an East Baltimore heroin operation headed by Maurice "Peanut" King, who was convicted of drug and racketeering charges in Federal Court three weeks ago.

Testimony during Stanford's trial showed that on one occasion he agreed to sell a police informant $50,000 worth of heroin for $100,000 in coupons. Prosecutors said Stanford planned to dispose of the food stamps through two city grocery stores in which he had financial interest.

Authorities said they confiscated more than $101,000 in cash, $40 in food stamps and two handguns when they raided Stanford's Ellicott city apartment last August.

Defense attorneys argued that Stanford obtained the money through illegal gambling games in the city, heavy betting at Atlantic City casinos and from friends.

Union wants 31 new guards hired

A union representing prison employees has asked Gov. Harry Hughes to hire 31 new guards for the Maryland Penitentiary in order to defuse a "time bomb" situation at the facility.

Joseph Adler, executive director of the Maryland Classified employees association, said on any given day as many as 30 of the penitentiary's 350 correctional officers are forced to work double shifts. In addition, he claimed many guards work 65 hour weeks overseeing the maximum security prison's 1,600 inmates.

"This has been going on for months and if something is not done, something's going to break loose soon," Adler said. "There is a feeling among correctional officers that they are sitting on a powder keg."

The budget Gov. Hughes sent to the General Assembly last week did not ask for any new guards existing prisons.

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