

SBI Probe Into Alleged Beating Underway In Columbus, Brunswick

BY RAHN ADAMS

SBI agents last week began an independent investigation in Columbus and Brunswick counties to determine how an Ash man was injured almost seven weeks ago.

Supervising Agent Dave Marshall of Jacksonville said Monday the SBI probe into the alleged beating of Kenneth Marlowe is expected to last "several weeks at the minimum."

Marlowe told lawmen that he was beaten in the Columbus County community of Crusoe Island on Oct. 31 by a gang of white men.

The 37-year-old black man suffered a broken jaw and cut lip, and lost all but four of his teeth. He was released from New Hanover Memorial Hospital in Wilmington on Nov. 5.

However, a preliminary investigation by the Columbus County Sheriff's Department determined that Marlowe's injuries were suffered in a pickup truck wreck the same night of the alleged beating.

Marlowe was a passenger in the pickup owned by W.C. Clewis of Crusoe Island. The wreck happened just inside Brunswick County off N.C. 130 when the pickup struck a ditch, then traveled 50 yards across a field before striking another ditch, lawmen said.

Columbus County Sheriff's Capt. George Dudley said his department is sticking with its theory that

Marlowe was injured in the wreck. "We haven't changed our position, but again I don't want to talk about our investigation," Dudley said last Thursday. "We have asked that the SBI take this case, which they are."

Dudley indicated that his department requested the SBI probe due to the Marlowe family's claim that lawmen "intimidated" Kenneth Marlowe into signing a statement saying he didn't remember being beaten.

"Obviously you're aware that the Marlowes aren't happy with our investigation," Dudley said. "That's basically among the reasons we've asked the SBI to investigate it."

Noting that the case was still open, Dudley said last Thursday he was awaiting test results from teeth, skin and hair samples that were sent to the FBI laboratory in Washington.

Seven of Marlowe's teeth were found inside the truck. Particles of teeth and a skin sample containing what appeared to be a hair from Marlowe's mustache were removed from the truck's dashboard.

Dudley said last Thursday that no charges had been filed, although his department has suspects in the case.

Marlowe's brother confirmed last week that the Marlowe family was unhappy with the sheriff's department's investigation.

"We welcome the SBI here, because the way the investigation

was going before they intervened, it wasn't much of an investigation at all," Lavern Marlowe of Cedar Grove said last Thursday.

He added that his brother had been advised by an attorney not to comment on the case publicly.

"He (Kenneth) was intimidated (into signing the statement)," Marlowe said. "There was no physical force, but Capt. Dudley said he would have Det. Roy Norris (the investigating officer) lock him up for causing a racial disturbance. He (Dudley) did not want the NAACP involved."

Lavern Marlowe also said his brother was treated like a suspect, not the victim, because he was asked to take a polygraph test on Nov. 19.

Kenneth Marlowe refused the polygraph test after sheriff's department investigators "confronted (him) with the evidence we had," Dudley said last month.

Jessie Bryant, president of the Cedar Grove Chapter of the NAACP, last Thursday declined to comment on his organization's involvement in the case.

"I don't know what to say until I see what they've done," Bryant added, referring to the SBI investigation.

Raleigh attorney Amos Link said last Thursday he had agreed to "represent Kenneth Marlowe's interests." Link said he began an in-

dependent investigation of his own by interviewing Marlowe Dec. 5.

SBI Deputy Director Charles Dunn said Friday that his office requested additional information after reading media accounts of the matter. His office also received "some calls" on it, he said, although he didn't know who

had contacted his office about the Marlowe case.

Marshall said Monday that two agents were assigned to the investigation and that they were "starting from the beginning . . . to follow up on all the leads."

He said agents were attempting to

interview everyone involved in the case, including doctors and dentists who treated Marlowe and members of the Brunswick County Sheriff's Department who initially investigated the incident before turning the case over to Columbus County authorities.

Board Reaches No Decision On Superintendent

Brunswick County Board of Education members met for approximately two hours Monday night in a continuation of their Dec. 7 meeting.

Much of the two-hour meeting was devoted to discussion of personnel as board members continued their review of candidates for the superintendency.

No decision was made. The board had expressed a goal of selecting a successor to former Superintendent Gene Yarbrough by the end of the calendar.

Board member Dorothy Worth of Shallotte said Tuesday, the board "hopefully" would do so, adding, "but we don't know."

Policy Proposed
Members gave first reading to a travel policy proposed by member

Doug Baxley that will be voted on at the board's Jan. 11 meeting. It calls for all travel by board members and administrative staff to be reviewed and approved in advance by the board. With the system "tightening its belt" in other areas, Interim Superintendent Jack Kaufhold later explained, it was felt travel would also be a place to check spending.

Under current policy, for instance, any board member who so desired could attend an upcoming National School Boards Association conference in New Orleans, while Baxley has proposed sending perhaps just one.

Other Business
In other business, the board:
• Heard a construction report from Bill Turner, assistant to the

superintendent, and also a proposal to cut a straight road through the county government complex to the school garage. Board members suggested such a road be hard surfaced, not gravel, with Turner to do further research and report at the Jan. 11 meeting.

Continued, briefly, a discussion of the proposed 10-year plan to be submitted to the N.C. Department of Public Instruction by Jan. 1, with staff noting again, as at the Dec. 7 session, that the current list is in only rough priority order and that it can be realigned or amended as needed. Most members agreed that completion of classroom space should precede construction of a new administrative facility.



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