

## Shooting

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agreed. "Some more investigation needs to be done."

In an interview after the meeting, Nelson Malloy Jr., a member of the roundtable and a Winston-Salem alderman, said, "I certainly will ask them (the police) to leave no stone unturned."

"A 12-gauge shotgun might be much for a 6-year old...." Malloy said.

Malloy questions whether police did a test to see if gunpowder residue was on the boy's hands or if his fingerprints were on the shotgun.

Lt. Fred Jones of the Winston-Salem Police Department said last week that there had been some inaccurate news reports that the boy lifted the gun to his shoulder and fired. Jones said the boy "didn't shoulder the gun." The boy said he lifted the gun some distance off the ground, put his finger on the trigger and the gun accidentally went off. Jones said it would take little strength to lift a nine-pound gun off the ground.

Jones said that fingerprints on the gun have been sent to the State Bureau of Investigation for analysis.

When asked if the boy was tested for gunpowder residue, Jones said that often no gunpowder residue is left from a shotgun.

Besides, he said, to do a gun powder residue test, police must have a suspect, someone who may be charged with a crime. If not, the person's rights are being violated, Jones said.

"It's a moot point," he said. "I can't charge a 6-year-old."

Some authorities believe a 6-year-old is generally not capable of forming the intent to commit a crime, Jones said. But that might have to be looked at on a case by case basis, he said.

Jones said the shooting happened about 5 p.m. May 17 in woods near 931 Woodcote Lane, where the boy and Taquisha lived with their maternal grandparents during the week. Taquisha Yvonne Lewis was shot once in the face area and died at the scene, Jones said. Officers found a jacket, some money (\$18) and a 12-gauge pump shotgun at the scene.

Jones said the 6-year-old boy told police at first that an 11-year-old, then a 21-year-old man shot his sister, but later the boy said that

he himself had accidentally shot his sister. The boy made the statement in front of his grandfather, Jones said.

Asked why the boy said a man shot his sister, Jones responded, "I guess he was scared."

The 6-year-old boy, Taquisha and another girl had been playing in the woods and found the gun propped up against a tree, Jones said. The gun was loaded. Jones said the safety was off at the time of the shooting.

Jones said police do not plan to file charges against the boy. Jones said he has no reason to doubt the boy's account that he shot his sister accidentally.

Jones said the second girl did not witness the shooting.

"I feel like we know what happened," Jones said. "We know the events that led up to the shooting, but we don't know is how the gun got there."

The gun was reported stolen in 1997 from the home of Harold Dean of 656 Naomi Ave., Winston-Salem.

Information about how the gun got in the woods off Woodcote Drive may be limited. "Who wants to report a stolen gun stolen?" Jones said.

Relatives of Taquisha Lewis have many questions about the shooting and they wonder whether the 6-year-old really did shoot his sister.

Christine Lewis, the children's maternal grandmother, said police do not know the 6-year-old boy "like we know" the boy. There have been times when he took the blame for something he didn't do. Sometimes he would even take a whipping for one of his siblings, she said.

Christine Lewis and daughter "Tasha" Lewis, the children's aunt, said that, in their opinion, the 6-year-old has told only "bits and pieces" of what happened.

"He's not giving the full story," Tasha Lewis said. "It's fragments."

"It's like he's trying to remember what somebody else said," Christine Lewis said. "I don't think he knows what he did. He don't know whether he shot her or not."

According to Christine Lewis, police have said the girl who was with Taquisha and the 6-year-old boy in the woods gave an account similar to the one the boy gave about how he accidentally shot Taquisha.

"Police said the little girl told

the same story. Now they say she wasn't a witness," Christine Lewis said.

According to Tasha Lewis, the boy said the girl was standing next to Taquisha.

The two women question why Taquisha, who was known as Peaches, was even in the woods, because she was afraid of snakes.

"She didn't go in the woods," Christine Lewis said.

Tasha Lewis said she believes the 6-year-old saw Taquisha shot from a distance. Tasha Lewis said that the boy has told her that he saw a man with a gun follow Taquisha into the woods. The boy said he told the man not to shoot his sister and Taquisha begged the man not to shoot her, but the man shot her.

Christine Lewis said that since the shooting, the boy will not go with her into the woods. He stops a distance away, as if he is afraid that something bad will happen to him if he goes into the woods, she said.

Tasha Lewis said that hours after Taquisha died the boy dreamed about her.

He said, "She's all right. When she comes back, I'm not going to let nobody hurt her," she said.

She also said the boy "is still talking, 'A man might get me.'"

"Candy" Lewis, the mother of Taquisha and the 6-year-old boy, said the boy gave her this account of the shooting: There was a man in the woods wearing a black coat and black hat. The boy didn't know why the man shot his sister.

"He said Peaches said, 'Don't shoot me.' He said he told the men, 'Don't shoot my sister, don't shoot my sister.'"

"He's not the smartest boy to think of a story that quick," Candy Lewis said. "This is his second year in kindergarten."

Christine and Tasha Lewis say that they and many other people question whether a 6-year-old boy could have handled a 12-gauge pump shotgun.

"That gun was as tall as him," Tasha Lewis said.

Candy Lewis said the boy weighs 47 1/2 pounds and is about 4-foot-7 or 4-8.

"There's not a person who has seen the boy who has not said, 'How in the world could a little boy hold that gun?'" Christine Lewis said.

The women said that if the boy had fired the gun the impact would have left a bruise on him, but they said there were no bruises on the

boy after the shooting. But according to one family member, the boy did say that his finger hurt after the gun fired.

Family members also said there was no blood or mud on the boy, even though it was muddy in the woods that day.

The woman said they want police to find out why the coat and loaded shotgun were in the woods and who left them there.

Christine Lewis wonders if the items were even in the woods before the shooting. She said that several days before the shooting her husband and some helpers were in that same section of the woods doing some work and they did not see the shotgun or coat. She said she thinks they would have seen them if they were where they were reported to be.

Family members said they want their questions answered to bring closure to their ordeal. We just want the truth....If our grandson did it, we can deal with it, and he can deal with it," Christine Lewis said. "If he didn't do it, why let him go on (with) his whole life thinking he did it?"

Family members said that the boy and Taquisha loved each other, but had disagreements from time to time like all brothers and sisters.

"He followed her wherever she went," Tasha Lewis said. "He loved her. They always were playing together. She protected him. She was the oldest."

Family members described Taquisha as a happy child who often had a smile on her face. "I couldn't believe the lives she touched," Christine Lewis said.

Tasha Lewis added, "I told you

she was an angel on Earth."

Tasha Lewis said, "No matter what anybody did to her, she loved them."

Tasha said that she and Taquisha spent a lot of time together. "She'd be in my room. She'd be wearing my clothes. She'd play with my computer. She'd keep my little boy, Joshua, 5 months old. I'm hurt because she won't see his first steps. She'd try to get him to say, 'Mama.'"

Christine Lewis said that Taquisha was very responsible for her age and respectful of elders. When her siblings would sass their grandmother, "she'd say, 'Don't sass Grandma,'" Christine Lewis said.

Tasha Lewis said, "She was a caring 11-year-old who seemed like she was way beyond her time."

Christine Lewis said Taquisha wanted to do so many things. She wanted to be a singer, She wanted to be a scientist."

Tasha and Christine Lewis said that Taquisha died 10 days before she would have graduated from fifth grade at Easton Elementary School. She would have gone on to middle school.

Family members attended the graduation and Taquisha was memorialized. Taquisha's favorite song, "I Believe I Can Fly," was performed. "That's the song she sang one hour before she died," Christine Lewis said.

A waterfall will be built at Easton Elementary School in Taquisha's honor. It will be called Taquisha's waterfall.

Christine Lewis said, "The waterfall just broke my heart. I couldn't believe the lives she

touched."

A tree at Easton Elementary also will be dedicated in Taquisha's honor.

Tasha Lewis said she is saddened that Taquisha's life was cut short. "She didn't even get to the sixth grade. She was looking forward to the sixth grade."

Taquisha accomplished a lot of things, but, but she could have accomplished much in the future, Tasha Lewis said. "She was smart. Sometimes I think that (the shooting) was a waste of a life."

Christine Lewis said, "I guess it was just her time (to go)."

"My heart hurts," Tasha Lewis said.

Family members said they wish to thank everyone for their acts of kindness after Taquisha's death. "Please, please let them know that we are so very thankful," Christine Lewis said.

"It was almost as if the whole community rallied together," she said.

Nearly 200 people attended Taquisha's funeral. Hooper funeral home donated the funeral at cost and Piedmont Memorial Gardens donated the plot.

The family hopes someone or a business will make a donation to make it possible for there to be a gravestone on Taquisha's grave.

"When we get that, everything will be complete," Christine Lewis said.

"I don't know how they (her siblings) are going to make it without her," Tasha Lewis said. "Her little sister said, 'Who am I going to play with now? Who am I going to have to help me with my homework? Who's going to protect me now?'"

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