

HOMICIDE WITNESS STATEMENT

This is the statement of: Karen Taylor
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This statement is made on Wednesday November 17, 2004 at 10:17 a.m. hours in the **Homicide Office West Interview Room, 201 Poplar, Room 11-17** to Sgt. W. D. Merritt relative to the **Criminal Homicide** of Shelia Braswell, which occurred at 8152 Creekside Circle North on November 5, 2004, at approximately 3:50 a.m. hours and which is filed under **MPD# 0411002362**.

Questioned by: Sgt. W. D. Merritt IBM 5546
Typed by: Melodye Montgomery IBM 10318

Q: Mrs. Taylor do you know a person by the name of Shelia Braswell?
A: Yes.

Q: How long did you know Mrs. Braswell and what was your relationship with her?
A: I've known Shelia since 1995 and I've known her since we worked together.

Q: When was the last time you spoke with Mrs. Braswell?
A: I spoke with her Thursday, which would have been the 4th of November around 6:00 and 7:00 p.m.

Q: Do you recall what that conversation was about?
A: We talked about beauty control, which is a business that Shelia was involved in. I was going to the pharmacy to drop ^{my} our prescription off. I was explaining to her

that I could not be as active now, and she was saying that she understood. Basically that is what we talked about.

Q: On November 5, 2004, did you receive a telephone call that Shelia Braswell had passed away?

A: Yes I did. It was about five minutes after six in the morning. It was her mom. She asked was I awake and I told her not really. She asked me was I sitting down, and I told her yes. She told me that she was gone. I dropped the phone and my husband took the rest of the message.

Q: Did you go over to Shelia's residence after learning about her death?

A: Yes I did. After my husband took the message, I gathered myself and called Shelia's mom back and asked her more details about what happened. She explained to me, what Vern had told her. She said that Vern told her that they had had sex, and Shelia started cramping afterwards. She got in a tub of water and he fell asleep around 1:30 a.m., and he got up around 3:45 a.m., and found her in the water. I told her that I would be over there as soon as I got myself together. She told me at that time that they were still not able to go in the house because forensics were still there.

Q: What time did you finally arrive at Shelia's house?

A: It was between 9:00 a.m. and 9:30 a.m.

Q: Did you speak with Vern after you arrived?

A: Not right after I arrived. When I got to the home, Shelia's mom was gone. And the only people who were there was Vern's mom, his aunt, Sheronda Smith, Robin Harris, and his cousin Dedra and I don't know Dedra's last name. We just waited around for any information. I was told, and I am not for sure who told me, that Vern had to go down for more questioning. I am not sure what time it was that he came back to the house but I was not the first person to talk to him but I did get a chance to ask him what happened.

He told me that he just didn't know. He then asked me about the last paralysis incident that I knew about. And he said that he was not aware of it. And then I told him "well, yes you were aware of it because Shelia said that you all were in the bath tub and she had the same episode of not being able to move and that she told you just to leave her in the bathroom and you let the water out. Shelia told me that she stayed in the bath tub for about forty-five minutes and that you then came back in and ran more warm water."

He then said, "I remember that but I just didn't know what was really going on."

Q: Did Vern tell you what he and Shelia were doing before he found her dead in the bathroom?

A: No he never told me.

Q: How long did you stay at Shelia's house the day she passed away?

A: Okay, I got there between 9 and 9:30 a.m., and for the first couple of hours we kind of just sat around. When Vern's principal Mrs. Payne came to the house she started cleaning up the house. That is when I started helping clean up the house. So I cleaned up everything in the kitchen. There were a lot of papers and cameras that were on the counter and I got a box and put them in. I moved the computers to the side. I did this because I knew people were going to be coming in and you didn't need all that stuff sitting out. I vacuumed and dusted the boys room. While I was doing that Mrs. Payne and Robin Harris was in the guestroom folding the laundry that was on the bed. So I vacuumed and did the boys bathroom. And even the living room. We just straightened the whole house.

Around 2 or 3:00 p.m., Robin Harris, Sheronda Smith and I decided to leave the house and go and visit Mrs. Pearlina and Shelia's grandparents at her grandmother's house. And we stayed over there maybe a couple of hours and we arrived back at Shelia's house around 6:00 p.m. Vern's family was still there and I was getting ready to leave. I had my coat and my hat on. Then I explained to Mrs. Wallace that I had placed some dishtowels in the washing machine but I hadn't started the washing machine yet. I said that we had not touched the bedroom or the bathroom where everything was left after the crime scene. And I didn't know if we could touch those things yet. She told me that I could, that the investigators were gone and that we were free to clean up in that area. Mrs. Wallace had said that she would get up later and go back into the room and clean up, get the wet towels that had been placed on the floor in the washer and go on and finish. I then told her that I would go ahead and stay and finish cleaning. So Robin Harris, Sheronda Smith and I went to the back to clean the bathroom. When we got back there, Robin and I got the towels and the wet robe, it was a green robe and we started the washing machine. I then went to let the water out. I briefly touched the water and said no I better have some gloves on. Robin went and got me some gloves and I put them on and let the water out. When I let the water out I noticed a large amount of hair and Shelia's little scrungy hair tie, that was in the tub and it was just a huge amount of hair. It was an earring piercing and also her earrings. During this time I didn't know where Sheronda and Robin had gone, but they were not in the bathroom when I let the water out. Then I called for them, I thought they heard me, but they didn't they were just coming back in the room. So they also noticed all the things in the bathtub. And my main concern was that I thought that the small earring was her naval ring. And I said, how did her naval ring come out. They commented on the large amount of hair. Sheronda even said, "I can't believe that she would lose that much hair from just being under the water." I said, "you will leave some hair, but this is like a glob of hair." I went on and finished cleaning the tub and I took the earrings, the scrungy and that small little ring, and I placed it on her vanity. I don't know where Robin had gone, but it was just me and Sheronda in the bathroom at that time. I asked Sheronda, "you don't believe he would do anything to hurt her do you." And she said, "no", and I said, "yeah, surely not, but you are aware about the affair and the girl and everything he is involved in." She kind of looked at me



with this expression on her face that she had no clue to what I was talking about. So we just went on and finished cleaning up.

Q: Describe the hair that you found in the bathtub on November 5, 2004?

A: It was hair from your head. It was long strings of hair. Some of it was short strings of hair, like hair that was broken off. Me and Sheronda discussed that this hair could not be pubic hair or hair from a chest, these were actually strands of head hair.

Q: Did Shelia confide in you about the marital problems that she was having with Vern?

A: Yes, I knew that Vern was having an affair with a young lady named Christy. Shelia had told me that back in 2003 she had first met this girl Christy in Millington at the Sports Motorpark. She at that time had suspicion but had no definite proof. And she had told that something just told her to go out there. She said when she got out there she spotted Vern and this girl that we know now as Christy at Vern's bike. Shelia said she was walking toward the girl and Vern and then she said that Vern went one direction and so Shelia walked up to the girl and said, "hi are you with Vern?" And the girl said, "yes I am." And then Shelia said, "well I'm Shelia, Vern's wife." And she said the girl could have shitted on herself. She said she told the girl, "listen, I am not her to cause you any problems in turns of going off on you or anything." She said, "I just knew that I had to come out for some reason and I guess this is my reason, to find out what was going on." She said that she and the girl was talking and Vern was somewhere trying to get his lie together. She said she then went over to his bike and took his motor bag and leaves. Later she says, Vern is calling her and asking her is everything alright. She goes home, and goes through the bag and sees all the girls belongings in the bag. Shelia said her oldest son William looks at the keys, and says, "oh I know how these keys work." He gets the keys and opens the latch to get in her keys. And Shelia asks William, "you know Vern's friend?" and he says yes. She asked him had he ever been around her. And Willliam says "yeah we've been around her and she has been at the house and everything." Then she says William gets kind of scared and he stopped talking. She told him that was fine and she kind of lets it go.

Q: Did Shelia tell you that one of her reasons for filing for divorce because of Vern's affair with Christy?

A: Yes that was the straw that broke the camel's back so to speak.

Q: Have you ever met Christy?

A: No.

Q: Do you know Christy's occupation or where she works?

A: Shelia told me that Christy was a nurse that worked at St. Jude. She said that she may have just finished nursing school about a year ago.

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- Q: Did Shelia go into any detail about her sexual life with Vern?
- A: Yes she did. She told me that he was interested in anal sex and that she had done that. She didn't particularly like it but that she did it to please him. She also said about a few months ago, or maybe year ago, Vern started asking her questions like had she ever been with another woman and what were her fantasies. He then propositioned her to have a woman at their home. She talked to me about it, she went back and forward with it. She got to a point that she said she wasn't going to do it. I told her to think about it and asked her did she even know the girl. She said that it was somebody that Vern knew. And that she would be willing to come over and meet her. She said that one day she came home and the lady was there. She asked Vern who was this. But it didn't happen that day. She kept thinking about it and thinking about and finally said yeah that she was going to do it. She called me and told me that it happened. She said that her, Vern and this woman had this encounter.
- Q: Did Shelia tell you if she and Vern ever went to any topless clubs in Memphis?
- A: Yes, she told me that she had gone to some strip clubs in Memphis with him and that he enjoyed giving her the money for the girls to come by and take the money from her. And she said that he would place it in areas where they would have to get the money, not in her hand, but like in between her legs or in her bra, places that they would have to touch.
- Q: Did Shelia tell you if it was Vern's idea to go to the topless clubs?
- A: Yes she said that it was Vern's idea and basically anything that had anything to do with outsiders coming into their relationship was Vern's ideas.
- Q: Did Shelia ever tell you if Vern strangled her or attempted to strangle her while they were having sex?
- A: No.
- Q: Did Shelia ever mention that Vern had physically assaulted her during their marriage?
- A: Yes. She told me that when they very first got married he hurt her and that she actually left him and she stayed with her friend Madra Hardin.
- Q: Did Shelia tell you anything about the nature of the injuries that she received when Vern assaulted her?
- A: No.
- Q: Did Shelia say where the assault took place?
- A: No.
- Q: Do you know anything about Shelia's hospitalization in December 2003?
- A: Yes I do. She called me the morning after she was in the hospital and said that, "you will not guess where I am." And then said, "I've just been admitted into the hospital." She said that the night before she got to the place that she had no

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steady balance, she was paralyzed and that she could barely talk above a whisper. And she said that she was laying across the bed and Vern came in the room and she told him to call 911. She then said that they had ran test and she was very very upset because they had found drugs in her system. She said that she had test positive for amphetamine. She said that she wanted them to dig deeper because she was adamant that she had never done any drugs. Later, a day or so later, after more test she then said, that she was low in potassium and magnesium, her levels were low in those areas and they put her on those two type of pills and wanted her to follow up with her primary care doctor.

Q: Did Shelia tell you if the episode of paralysis was something that came on quickly or something that gradually occurred over time?

A: No she just said it was sudden. She had been working everyday. This was during the Christmas season. We were talking about Christmas. She said that needed to finish shopping for the boys. She said that she was going to Wal-Mart to get the boys lay-away out. And then all of sudden she called me saying that she couldn't move. We talked about what it could be. Both of us being therapist we speculated that it could be guian barre or even possible signs of MS. But I really urged her to go and have further work done to rule out anything else.

Q: Did Shelia tell you what time of the day or evening that the episode of paralysis occurred?

A: She said that it occurred early in the morning. It was like in the A. M. after midnight. It was early in the morning. She did not tell me exactly what she had been doing. The only thing that she told me was that she had become tired and weak and that she went to lay across her bed.

Q: Do you know the approximate date that Shelia experienced the second bout of temporary paralysis?

A: It was the end of July the 1st of August in 2004. I remember when it was because she had just come back from her Beauty Control conference in Dallas, and that was the end of July. That was the July 30th weekend. She told me that when she came back, that the women that she rode with to the conference had had a really great time. She said that they had a nice praise session and she felt that she had really felt the Lord's presence there. She said that she had talked with her husband about it, because at that time she had already filed for divorce, but she was not sure that she was going to proceed with it. So she said that she had told Vern let's just begin praying and see what the Lord is going to do with this marriage. So sometime during the early part of that week, either Monday or Tuesday in the evening, she said that she had came home and he had drawn her bath water and had roses in the bath water, with candles and her cocktail drink, her Vodka cocktail drink. She said that he kept wanting her to have a drink and she kept saying that she didn't need this in her system because she was full on the Lord. I questioned her about that. I asked her why did he want you to drink, why do you need a drink to relax with your husband. She kept saying, "I agree, I agree, because every time that I would take a drink, it would not stay down." She

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kept saying that it was so strange. She said, "He just kept wanting me to take a drink. I would take a sip and I would throw it back up." She felt that she became so filled with the Lord's spirit that she just became paralyzed. That was just her thinking. She said that it happened again. She explained the events that happened and she told Vern to let her be at peace. She said that she was praying to God, "Please let this pass." I told her that it didn't sound right and that she needed further testing. I told her she really needed to go to a Neurologist and get checked out.

Q: Did Shelia tell you how long the second period of temporary paralysis lasted?

A: All she said was that Vern asked her was everything okay. She said, "I'm fine, just leave me alone for a minute." He let the water out of the tub. She stayed in the tub about 45 minutes meditating and praying. I am not sure if the paralysis had left, but after that she said Vern came back, ran water in the tub and joined her in the tub.

Q: Did Shelia tell you about an act of vandalism that occurred to her vehicle?

A: Yes, she told me that two of her tires had been punctured and that she felt it was Christy that had punctured them but she didn't have any proof. She told her husband that they had a fatal attraction on their hands and that Christy was just not going to leave them alone. A few days later Shelia said that there was a note on the windshield of her car saying, "Shelia, please forgive me, it is still real hard and keep praying for me." And it had \$120.00 wrapped in it.

Q: How recent was the act of vandalism?

A: It was between August and September of 2004.

Q: Is there anything else that you would like to add to this statement that would aid in this Police investigation?

A: No.

Q: Can you read and write without the aid of eyeglasses?

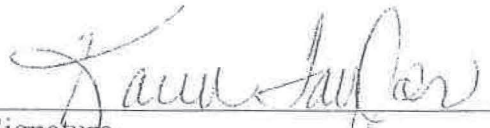
A: Yes.

Q: Was this statement given freely and voluntarily without any promises, threats or coercion?

A: Yes.

Q: I am going to ask you to read this statement and if you find it to be true and correct, initial the bottom of each page and sign and date the last. Do you understand?

A: Yes.


Signature

11/17/04 12:17pm
Date Time