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Reader View
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A Professional Investigation

Recently, the media has questioned, and at times attacked, the integrity and professionalism of the Wichita Police Department and the Office of District Attorney Nola Foulston, in their investigation of the BTK serial killer case. These attacks appear to stem from the execution of a search warrant that occurred on December 1, 2004, while investigators were following up a lead that was called into the BTK Tip line.

Early the morning of Dec. 1, WPD investigators received what they believed to be a credible tip on the BTK investigation. Immediately a process was set in motion whereby the information went through an extensive checks and balances procedure to ensure the information was valid. After extensive scrutiny, discussion and research, the decision was made to send a team of detectives to the address on Mt. Vernon to follow up on the tip.

At the residence, detectives repeatedly knocked on the front and back doors, to no avail. Since it was unknown if anyone was inside the house, the detectives decided to monitor the house. While conducting surveillance, the detectives observed a vehicle, driven by a Wichita Eagle reporter, sitting in a dirt surface lot in the area of the gentleman's home on Mt. Vernon.

Late that morning, detectives went to the District Attorney and made an application for a search warrant to obtain the individual's DNA sample. A similar process has been followed on several occasions throughout the investigation when the Department received credible tips.

As the detectives continued to monitor this residence, additional Wichita Eagle employees arrived to sit off the residence. Once the appropriate warrants were signed by the District Judge, the detectives were prepared to execute the search warrant; however, were reluctant to do so with members of the media watching. Thus, the detectives were instructed to wait on executing the warrant.

Early in the evening hours on Dec. 1 when the BTK Investigative team believed the members of the media were no longer in the area, they executed the search warrant. Prior to entering the residence, several plainclothes investigators, as well as uniformed personnel, repeatedly knocked on the front, back and sliding doors, verbally identifying themselves repeatedly. Based on surveillance, the investigators believed that the gentleman was inside the house and was refusing to answer the door.

When they received no response, the investigators forced entry to the residence in order to execute the search warrant. Upon entering the house, the investigators continued to announce themselves. Consistent with any dangerous investigation, the investigators entered the residence with caution and with their weapons drawn.

Once contact was made with the resident, he was handcuffed and shown a copy of the search warrant, which was left at his residence according to procedure. Shortly after making contact, the resident sat down in a recliner and voluntarily gave a sample of his DNA. At no time did Wichita Police Department personnel forcibly open the man's mouth. Unfortunately for this gentleman, he had active arrest warrants in the system so the investigators were obligated to place him under arrest for those warrants.

A few hours later a second search warrant was obtained, as required by the U.S. Constitution, authorizing investigators to search the residence. A copy of this search warrant, listing the items to be seized, was left at the residence. All personal items noted in the search warrant were subsequently returned to the residence.

There have been allegations made that police damaged the residence. Based on photographs of the residence taken before and after the search warrant was executed, there are no holes in the walls due to police actions.

Protection of the Fourth Amendment Constitutional Rights is of paramount importance to all members of the Wichita Police Department. In the BTK investigation, search warrants have been obtained and executed within the framework of the law. Yes, the search warrants and probable cause affidavit are sealed because this is an ongoing investigation and police have an obligation to protect the integrity of the investigation.

The dedicated members of the BTK Task Force, along with District Attorney Nola Foulston and her staff have, and will, continue to demonstrate the utmost integrity and professionalism while investigating this challenging and intense case. This exceptional group of professionals' ultimate goal is to successfully identify and apprehend the BTK serial killer; it is our commitment to the victims, their families and the Wichita community.

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