

# Teacher shocked by former student's actions

SHOOTING, from Page 1

I-70 exit in Goodland, saw a different young man. They said he looked “crazy” and “wound up on something.”

Gossard said he was shocked when a former student and childhood friend of Palmer's, a youth named Jeff who now attends Purdue University in West Lafayette, Ind., called him Monday to read him a newspaper article describing Friday's events.

Without using Palmer's name, the article said he rolled his car about 2:30 p.m. on I-70 between the exits in Burlington, Colo., running from the scene and hiding in a group of trees.

When the Kit Carson County sheriff and a Burlington police officer approached him on a county road, he took off. The sheriff grabbed him, but couldn't catch him.

He stole a pickup, crashed it, then stole another pickup near Goodland and ran it into a Sherman County couple's truck. After he took a trooper's car, two troopers wrestled him out of the car and one shot him about 3 p.m., as Palmer allegedly was reaching for the other officer's gun. He died on the way to the hospital.

The article didn't include Palmer's name, Gossard said, but Jeff told him another Carmel High alumnus at the University of St. Louis said the story was about Mark.

“My initial reaction was ‘Mark Palmer?’” he said. “Naturally I don't want to believe he did it, but I guess I have to. It's just so out of character.”

Gossard said Palmer was a charismatic young man who didn't seem to have any major problems in or out of school.

“I'm not trying to sugar coat it,” he said, “but Mark could have done anything he wanted to because of his personality.”

Palmer was a B student, Gossard said, noting that he remembers telling him he had the potential to get As.

“I talked with him one time,” he said. “I told him he had the ability to do better. He just smiled at me.”

Gossard said he doesn't remember talking with Palmer about his social or home life, but always thought the boy seemed well-adjusted and easy-going.

Of course, the teacher had no clue about Palmer's criminal history in Carmel, an upper-middle class suburb on the north side of Indianapolis, with a population of about 37,000.

Tim Green, assistant police chief in Carmel, said in 1997, Palmer and two of his friends were found guilty of breaking into a grade school in August, 1996, and causing \$10,000 worth of damage. He said the boys smashed computers, set off fire extinguishers and broke into candy machines.

Police arrested Palmer on Halloween in 1998, Green said, for drinking under the age of 21 and having an altered driver's license.

Hamilton County Sheriff Joe Cook, who has been sheriff since 1995 and a deputy since 1977, said he doesn't remember Palmer ever getting arrested by county officers or spending time in jail.

## County Attorney will decide what is released

Kyle Smith, Kansas Bureau of Investigation spokesman, said Tuesday the investigation into Friday's shooting in Goodland should be done this week and the results given to the Sherman County attorney, who will decide what to release.

Smith said KBI agents are investigating whether officers were justified in shooting Mark Palmer and trying to figure out why the 19-year-old acted as he did — stealing and crashing three vehicles, threatening and injuring officers and endangering lives during a 30-minute chase.

Dave Albers, a state Highway Patrol trooper, shot Palmer to death on I-70 near the east Goodland exit.

He said it will be County Attorney Bonnie Selby's job to determine whether any charges should be filed and how much information about the incident should be released.

Bob Blecha, assistant director in charge of field investigation, said the KBI is handling the investigation because state and local officers were involved in the melee.

“There is enough erratic behavior here that people are interested in why someone behaved the way they did,” Smith said. “We understand the public has some interest and curiosity.”

Dr. Eric Mitchell, the Shawnee County coroner, performed an autopsy this weekend and Palmer's family identified the body.

Smith said the autopsy results will be filed at the Sherman County District Court office, but most likely won't provide many details. A court clerk said Tuesday that the office hadn't received the report.

“That report is not real detailed,” Smith said, noting that it will probably only tell how Palmer died, not whether he was under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

That will be included in the investigation materials, he said, noting that it will be up to the county attorney whether to release them.

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the teacher said he couldn't picture Palmer vandalizing a grade school.

“I'm surprised and hurt,” he said, “and frankly I wish I didn't know that.”

About 3,500 students attend Carmel

High, Gossard said, noting that he usually has about 180 students in his classes each semester.

He can't keep track of every student, he said, but with 27 years of teaching experience, he can usually spot a kid with troubles.

“I never suspected anything was going on with Mark,” the 48-year-old said.

He said he never met the boy's parents, Theodore and Mary Palmer, because the school didn't have parent-teacher conferences during spring semester at that time.

Palmer was involved in school activities during his first two years of high school, Gossard said, but stopped participating his junior and senior year.

The teacher said that could have been because he got a job.

“I know he worked at the Blimpies sub shop in town,” he said.

There have been many tragedies at the school, Gossard said, and students have been killed, but there hasn't ever been anything like this.

“I'm so hurt for his parents and for the police officers involved,” he said, noting that what worries him most is the thought of having to discuss it with his students, many of whom knew Palmer.

*The Daily Ledger*, the newspaper that serves Carmel, printed a story and obituary on Tuesday and Gossard said most people will know about it by today.

“They're going to ask why this happened,” he said. “I'm just going to tell them what I know.”

He said it's going to add to the stress, anger and sadness everyone has been feeling since the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks in New York and Washington.

Gossard said he'll never forget Palmer.

“No teacher loses a student, especially one that stands out in your mind the way Mark does, and isn't affected by it,” he said.

The teacher said he realizes the officer who shot Palmer was only doing his job.

“One of the first things I thought about is that I can't imagine what that officer is going through,” he said. “That man had to do something I hope I never have to do.”

He said he plans to contact the officer to tell him that. He added that he might call Palmer's parents.

“I'm debating about calling his parents,” he said. “I want to reach out, but at the same time I'm not sure now how they would react.”

A fellow church member who answered the phone at Theodore Palmer's home on Tuesday said “he was a good kid.” She said the family is having a hard time.

“It's a very bad time and they are very preoccupied by things,” she said.

Gossard said everyone he has talked to is shocked and saddened.

He said Jeff, who had known Palmer since he was 4, told him he didn't think Mark could do something like that.

“He couldn't believe it either,” he said. “He called me to make sure I knew about it before I had to read it in the paper.”

# Mail officials concerned about contamination

ANTHRAX, from Page 1

Jersey accountant who contracted the less serious skin anthrax, complicated the investigation by raising new worries that tainted letters are contaminating other mail or that the spores are sickening people by means other than the mail.

Dr. Anthony Fauci of the National Institutes of Health said worries about “cross-contamination” — anthrax spores sticking to pieces of mail at postal facilities — have grown with the new cases.

“We really need to do — the public health officials, the forensic group — has to do a real full court press on trying to track this down. This is critical,” he said on NBC's “Today” show.

The inspector in charge of the U.S. Postal Inspection Service's main forensic laboratory told The Associated Press today that investigators were confident there have been only three anthrax-tainted letters sent through the mail, despite concerns from medical experts that not all envelopes containing anthrax had been found.

“I still think we're dealing with three letters,” said Roy W. Geffen, who runs the lab in suburban Virginia. “That's the best information we have.”

The latest victims raised the number of confirmed anthrax cases to 17 nationwide since the outbreak began in early October. Ten have the inhaled form, including the four who died. The others have less-severe skin infections.

Four of those skin-anthrax cases — and two more suspected cases — are linked to city media outlets.

Nguyen, an immigrant from Vietnam who lived alone and commuted to

the Manhattan Eye, Ear and Throat Hospital by subway from the Bronx, worked in a basement supply room. Until recently, the space had included a mailroom, but there was no evidence of any suspicious letter.

Fleischer said preliminary tests at the hospital and at Nguyen's home were negative for anthrax. He cautioned, however, “these are preliminary negatives. There have been changes in the past” from other preliminary test results.

“Clearly in the case of Mrs. Nguyen, we do not know how she contracted the anthrax,” he said.

Thomas Rich, a co-worker of Nguyen, said “almost everyone in the hospital came in contact with her,” because she delivered supplies to various departments and offices.

Up to 2,000 hospital workers, patients and visitors who have been to the hospital since Oct. 11 are being offered antibiotics, officials said Tuesday. The hospital was closed and other hospitals in the city were alerted to take precautions and report any suspicions.

Nguyen had been too sick to help the health and criminal investigators try-

ing to find the source of her infection by reconstructing her social life, commute and routines at the hospital.

Word of Nguyen's death came with the nation already on highest alert after warnings of more potential terrorist attacks. Just a few miles away from where Nguyen worked, President Bush threw out the opening pitch in Game 3 of the World Series at Yankee Stadium, where fans encountered especially tight security.

Today, the outbreak came up at a White House meeting between Bush and congressional leaders of both parties. Senate Majority Leader Tom Daschle said afterward that Congress is committed to improving the nation's ability to respond to bioterrorism attacks.

“There's a lot there that has to be addressed,” he said, pointing to the need to boost the availability of vaccines, improve health care responses and protect the nation's food supply.

The spread of the disease — from mail carriers in New Jersey and Washington to media employees in New York and Florida and now apparently unrelated people — is giving investi-

gators and researchers alike a painful real-world case study.

Contamination of postal facilities in Washington, New Jersey and Florida has altered investigators' assumptions about how easily the spores can be spread. Postal Service equipment and procedures, too, are under re-examination.

The latest suspected case of skin anthrax in New Jersey came in an employee at the Bellmawr regional mail facility, about 35 miles from the mail-sorting center near Trenton, N.J., which processed at least three anthrax-tainted letters sent to Daschle's office in Washington, NBC anchorman Tom

Brokaw and the New York Post.

Officials investigating the infection of a New Jersey accountant were searching for a link to earlier cases. The 51-year-old accountant identified with skin anthrax on Monday does not remember opening any suspicious mail. She has been successfully treated and released from the hospital.

FBI Agent James Jarboe acknowledged Tuesday that the agency had not yet tested quarantined mail on Capitol Hill for possible cross-contamination with anthrax from the Daschle letter. Lawmakers from both parties criticized the bureau after hearing Jarboe's testimony.

But Daschle praised health care and law enforcement officials for their response to the discovery of anthrax in a letter sent to his office.

“We all recognize that given what we've seen in the last several days that left unattended this situation in the Senate could have been a lot worse,” Daschle said Wednesday.

Experts at the Postal Inspection Service lab who specialize in handwriting and fingerprint analysis have been helping the FBI trace the letters. Postal inspectors have arrested 16 people across the country in anthrax-hoax cases, and they're investigating about a dozen others, Geffen said.

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