

Mother cites 'deal' with Steed in probe of deaths

By LYNDA HOLLENBECK
Courier Staff Writer

In a prepared statement released Friday afternoon to *The Benton Courier*, Linda Ives said she and her husband, Larry Ives, made a "deal" with Saline County Sheriff James Steed on Feb. 16. She claims that Steed did not uphold his end of the bargain.

Steed, a Democrat, faces Republican candidate Larry Davis, a former deputy, and write-in candidate Lewis Biggs in Tuesday's election.

Linda and Larry Ives are the parents of Kevin Ives, 17, who, with his friend, Don Henry, 16, was struck by a train Aug. 23, 1987, as the two lay motionless on a railroad track near Alexander. A Saline County grand jury has ruled that foul play was involved.

Steed was informed of Ives' allegations today and issued this statement: "I've said before I thought this was turning into a political issue, which I think is wrong. This coming out one day before the election makes me feel even more that way. I don't have any comment. Everyone is entitled to their opinion. I respect her opinion, but that's the way I feel about it."

According to Ives, the agreement with the sheriff called for the parents of the victims to issue a statement to the press saying they had had no problems with the sheriff or his office in regard to the investigation of their sons' deaths.

This press conference was held a short time before the Democratic primary election, Ives said.

"It seems the publicity about this case was looking bad for him," Ives said, "so the deal was, he would give us his cooperation and the investigation we wanted (had been begging for) for six months. All we had to do was issue a statement to the press saying that we had no problems with him or his office, that the lack of help and cooperation we had been complaining about was strictly with the state Crime Lab.

"He, in turn, was to issue a statement saying that perhaps our case did warrant further investigation by his office and they were going to take another look at it," Ives said.

"He wanted us to make our statement immediately, but he wanted to wait until Dr. Malak had testified at the prosecutor's hearing on Feb. 22, 1988, because 'it would look better.'"

"It didn't take any thought on our part to decide we could do anything and say anything it took to get the investigation that Kevin and Don deserved," she said. "So, on Feb. 17, 1988, we called a press conference and bit our tongues and lied for Sheriff Steed — we said we had no problems with Saline County Sheriff's Office.

"Well, 14 months after the murder, eight months after the 'deal' and two weeks before election, Sheriff Steed finally issued his statement," Ives said.

"I am beginning to understand a lot of things, but I will never forgive Sheriff Steed's actions and obstinate refusal to do anything in the long months since that time, she said."

She referred to a recent statement Steed made to the grand jury and to the press. "He confessed to 'a little white lie' recently, saying the case was never closed — he only told the press that so that he could investigate it out of the public eye."

Ives accused the sheriff of lying when he made that statement. "Reporters are routinely given access to case files that are considered inactive or closed," she said. "I know for a fact that they were given this case file on many occasions to review even long after the grand jury was in session."

Ives said Steed was called the morning of Aug. 23, 1987, "to the scene of my child's murder and he did not respond then. His excuse, in his own words, was his people told him what they had so he did not feel it

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Deal

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was necessary."

According to Ives, the parents of the boys were told by Saline County investigators before noon on Aug. 24, 1987, that there was no foul play involved in the deaths. Tests from Malak's autopsies had not been made.

Ives added, "Sheriff Steed would not even admit it was murder until recently, long after a grand jury had ruled homicide, much less cooperate in the investigation. We have had to waste months of precious time and thousands of dollars fighting the sheriff's office and the Crime Lab because it was politically embarrassing to admit that they did not do their job. I resent the fact that foolish pride was considered more important than the apprehension of vicious killers."

Ives, who has publicly voiced her support for Steed's opponent in the sheriff's race, mentioned that many people believe she is waging a "personal, political vendetta" against Steed.

"While this is just a case to some persons and a political nuisance to others, the murder

of Kevin is a very real fact that we must deal with at my house every minute of every day, and every time I open my mouth to complain about the way things have been done/have not been done, someone calls it something," she said. "So call it what you will. Finding the persons responsible is the one thing left in this world that we can do for Kevin and Don."

Ives, who says she is neither a Democrat nor a Republican, says she voted for Steed in previous years and never had occasion to call on him for assistance until the day her son died.

The grand jury will continue its probe of the boys' deaths in a Nov. 18 session at the county courthouse. Deputy Prosecutor Richard Garrett and Special Deputy Prosecutor Dan Harmon spent last week interviewing persons in New Jersey and North Carolina as part of the probe.

Upon their return, Harmon said, "If a thorough and complete investigation isn't done, we as a community will be sending a terrible message to the drug dealers and thugs and, even worse, a terrible message to our children."

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letters to the editor

Malak, Steed both wrong

Editor,

Kevin Ives and Don Henry were murdered. Dr. Fahmy Malak, State Medical Examiner, ruled their deaths accidental, claiming they were "unconscious in a deep sleep under the influence of THC." In his testimony at subsequent hearings, Dr. Malak said he was "not God, not Quincy." He went on to say that the boys were not the victims of homicide, stating, "were they stabbed? No." Dr. Malak said that he might have made mistakes before, but not in this case. The deaths have now been ruled homicide. Stab wounds were found on one of the boys by Atlanta Pathologist, D. Joseph Burton. Stab wounds which Dr. Malak said did not exist.

Dr. Malak was wrong. He made a mistake. A mistake that could have caused the double homicide of teenagers to be written off as accidental. I don't think such a mistake should be dismissed. Recently a proposal was made for a raise in salary of the state medical examiner. It is outrageous that this could even be considered and an embarrassment to our system that such incompetence could be ignored, much less rewarded.

The funding for the grand jury investigation of this case has come from the Saline County Drug Enforcement Fund. As stated by Joe Musteen in his letter to the *Courier* the Atlanta pathologist only charged for the expense of the tests he ran. Rewards for information are coming from personal sources, no public money is involved. Sheriff James Steed has now decided that "no more of his drug money" is going for the investigation. But, I have to ask, along with many others, Sheriff Steed, can you honestly think of a better use for county funds than putting the murderer of two teenage boys behind bars? I don't think there is one. And a little cooperation would make the investigation go so much faster, and use up less of your drug money.

I feel like it is important to notice that if it had not been for the courage and perseverance of the families of the victims, there would never have been an investigation. It took them several months of research and questioning to get someone to listen, and even longer to find someone to help. As a resident of Saline County, I would like to thank Richard Garrett for listening and for helping.

I think it's scary to live in a county where a double homicide slipped right under the noses of the sheriff and the state medical examiner.

Julie May
Benton

Senator speaks at rally

By TOM HALEY
Courier Staff Writer

Democrats drifted into the Tyndall Park Activities Center Monday night as smooth as the melody of the country band playing "In the Mood."

There was a tense, controlled and serious mood among the friendly handshakes, smiles and an upbeat feeling of urgency.

Ray Baxter, secretary-treasurer of the Saline County Democratic Central Committee, got the attention of the rally by saying, "The reason we are here is because of tomorrow. We want more Democrats to vote."

Baxter introduced Carolyn Counts, candidate for Justice of the Peace in District 13. Counts stated, "I'll do the best job I can and I look forward at being on the Quorum Court."

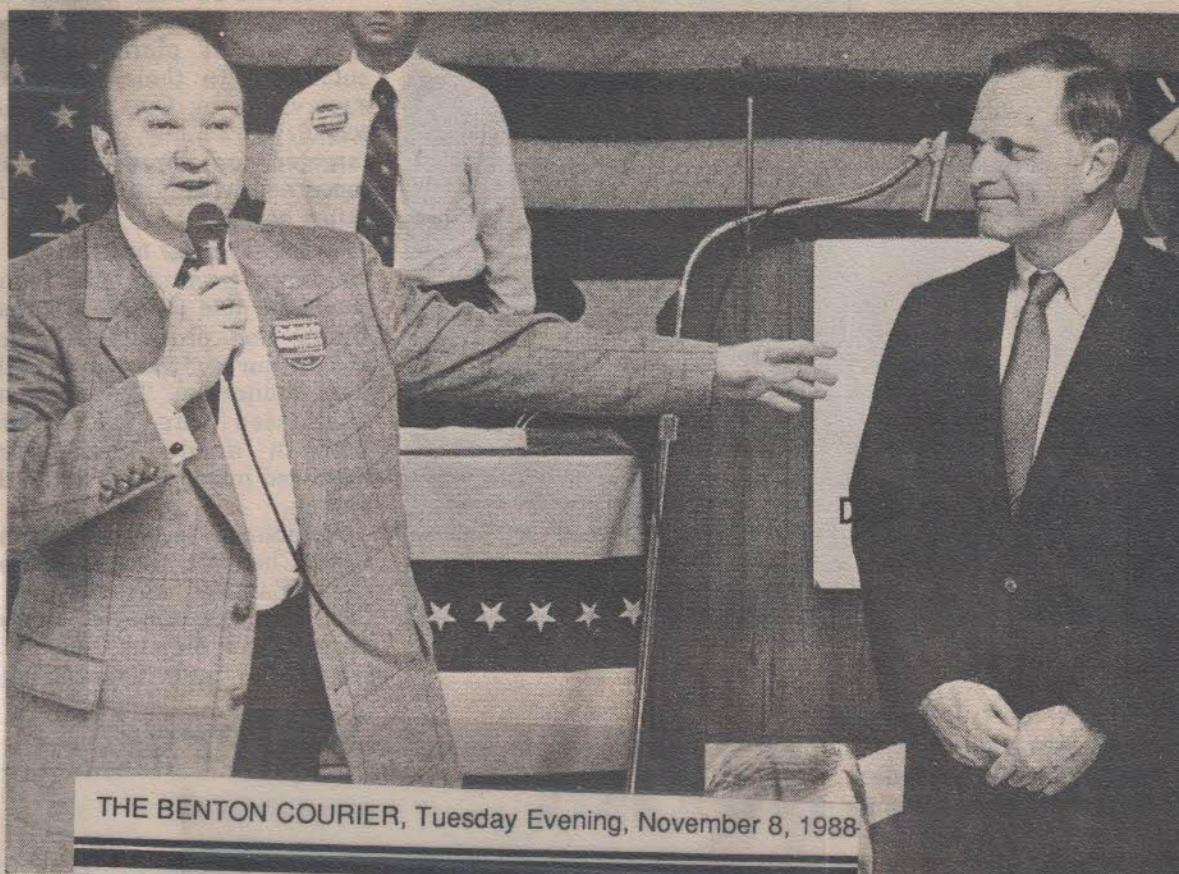
Oris Marie Reed spoke in a concerned tone saying, "I've got a rough opponent." Reed will have served 20 years in December and is hoping to serve 20 more. She is seeking re-election in District 1.

A.Z. Gault was the final justice of the peace to speak. As a fourth-term candidate in District 10, Gault stated, "The hospital is a top priority for me."

Baxter concluded by raising the concern that "these races are terribly important and should not be taken lightly or for granted."

Saline County Sheriff Jim Steed was introduced to a standing ovation. Steed, seeking re-election, stated he had been in office for 10 years.

He thanked the Democrats paign, especially the Young Democrats, he said. Steed said, "The people of Saline County can separate good, hard, honest work from promises that cannot be kept."



THE BENTON COURIER, Tuesday Evening, November 8, 1988

Courier photos by Phillip Felt

U.S. Sen. David Pryor, right, is introduced at Monday night's Democratic rally in Benton by Ray Baxter, secretary-treasurer of the Saline County Democratic Central Committee.

Lib Carlisle of Benton, chairman of the state Democratic Party, was introduced and made several remarks commending Steed and the JP candidates. He ended with a word to the Democrats, "Let's get excited! Let's get concerned!"

The anxious crowd jumped to its feet as U.S. Sen. David Pryor was introduced as "the most liked senator in Congress" and looked upon as a "champion of the people."

On the eve of the election, Pryor's thoughts quickly turned to the presidential race. He produced a letter he had written to Democratic vice presidential candidate Sen. Lloyd Bentsen of Texas, to be delivered later in the evening in Little Rock where Bentsen would make his last campaign stop.

Pryor read: "Dear Lloyd: When you close your eyes tonight, the historians will write, the giant has been Lloyd Bentsen."

Pryor also offered support to the sheriff. He told the crowd, "Jim Steed has done a fine job and did it to the best of his ability."

Turning once again to the presidential race, Pryor said, "Bad leaders are elected by the good people who fail to vote."

"This race has been about fear and lies," he said.

Explaining this observation, Pryor said the Republicans were guilty of distortion of the gun control issue and the issue of the Pledge of Allegiance.

Pryor said, "The people decide. The people speak. Yet, the United States has fewer participants in this democratic process with only half of the voters participating."

Pryor ended on a positive note about his friend and presidential candidate, Michael Dukakis.

"Gov. Dukakis is honest and square shooting," Pryor said. "I have never known him to tell anything but the truth". He then encouraged people to board the chartered bus outside the building to carry them to Little Rock to

Pryor gives incumbent endorsement for sheriff

BY DOUG THOMPSON
Democrat Benton Bureau

BENTON — Saline County Democrats held a last-minute rally for Sheriff James Steed Monday night, bringing in Sen. David Pryor, D-Ark., to help in what they fear is a close race.

"There was a time when a Republican would not have been seriously considered in a race for a major courthouse office," Ray Baxter, secretary of the Saline County Central Democratic Committee, told the audience of about 150 people. But now, he said, "No vote and nobody must be taken for granted."

Pryor told the crowd to support Steed because "James Steed has done his duty as he has seen his duty, and that is the best you can ask of anyone."

Lilburn "Lib" Carlisle, chairman of the state Democratic Party and Benton resident, told Democrats to "turn this election around," refer-

ring to the sheriff's race. "We don't want to lose 10 years of experience in the sheriff's office," he said.

Steed faces Republican Larry Davis, a former deputy. This is Davis' first race for political office. Both candidates have said the Aug. 23, 1987, deaths of two Bryant High School seniors will have a major effect on the election.

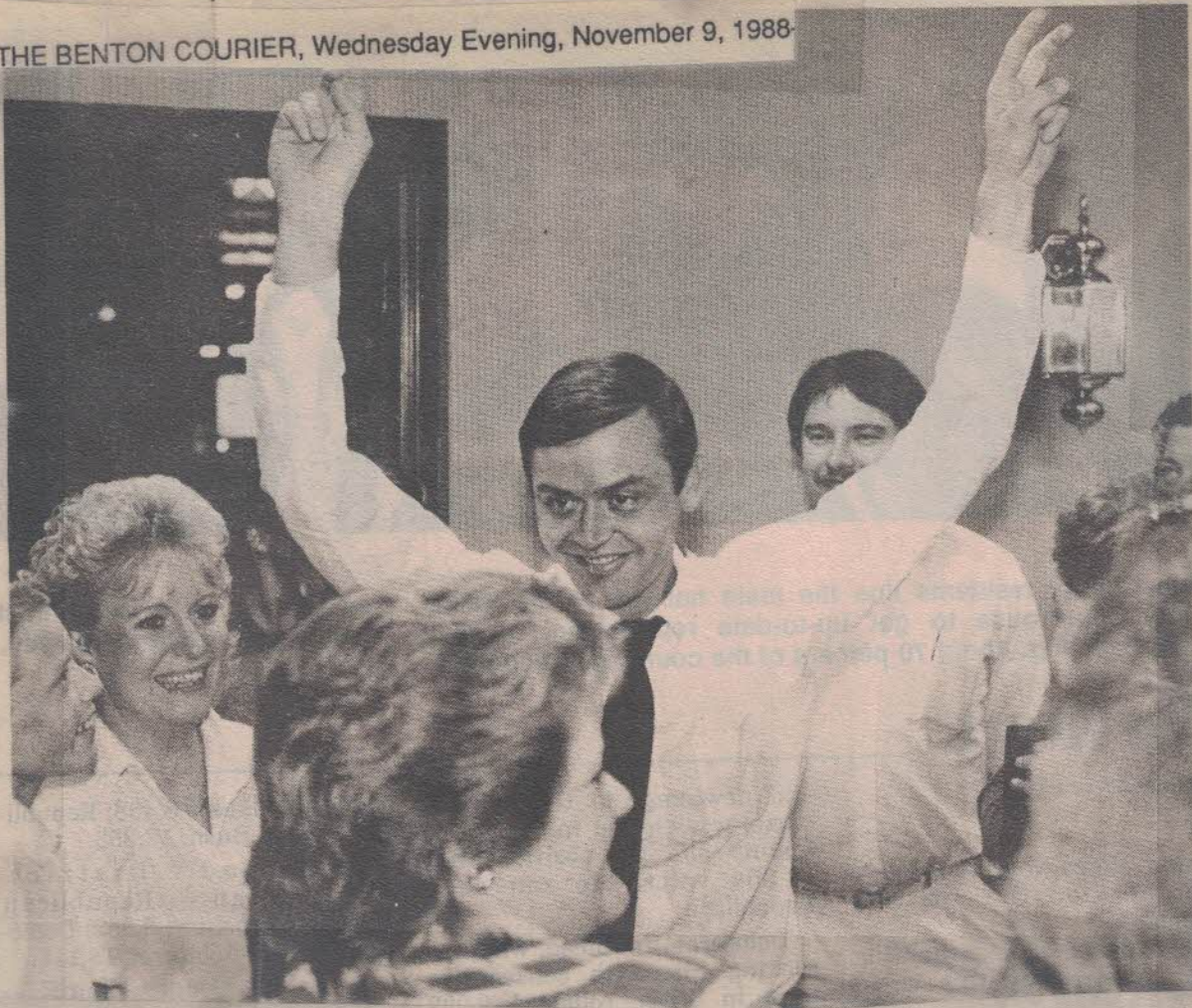
The motionless bodies of Larry Kevin Ives, 17, and Don George Henry, 16, were struck by a train. The sheriff's office, and later the state medical examiner, ruled the deaths accidental. A grand jury has since ruled the deaths homicide.

Linda Ives, mother of one of the victims, has endorsed Davis. On Monday, Ives released a statement saying the parents had made a political deal with Steed to get the deaths investigated, and that Steed did not honor it.

Ives said the parents called a news conference Feb. 17 — less than a month before the March 8 Democratic primary in which Steed faced two opponents — to say they had no problems with the sheriff's office. In return, Steed was to issue a statement promising further investigation, she said.

"Well, 14 months after the murder, eight months after the 'deal' and two weeks before the election, Sheriff Steed finally issued his statement," Ives said.

"We have had to waste months of precious time and thousands of dollars fighting the sheriff's office and the (state) Crime Lab because it was politically embarrassing (for them) to admit that they did not do their job," Ives' statement said. "I resent the fact that foolish pride was considered more important than the apprehension of vicious killers."



Saline County's new sheriff-elect Larry Davis shows his elation at a victory celebration Tuesday night at Brown's Country Restaurant in Benton. For a listing of the unofficial returns, by precinct, see pages 10-11. Related photo on page 2.

Courier photo by Phillip Felton

Davis to be new sheriff

Saline County will have a new sheriff for the first time in 10 years when Larry Davis assumes the post he won in Tuesday's general election.

Davis, who ran as a Republican, defeated incumbent James Steed, a Democrat, by 3,282 votes, according to unofficial returns released by Saline County Clerk George Ramsey.

Davis received 12,304 votes, or 57 percent of the total, to Steed's 9,022, or 42 percent. Write-in candidate Lewis Biggs received 75 votes, or less than 1 percent of the total, Ramsey said.

"I feel like the people of Saline County want true law enforcement," Davis said immediately after learning of his victory.

"The people of Saline County have put their trust in me, and now I've got to come through for them," he said.

Davis said he plans to reorganize the sheriff's office and "place people where they're best suited."

He does not plan a lot of personnel changes, he said. "I feel like they'll work under new leadership," Davis said of existing sheriff's office employees.

"There's no need to go in and make a lot of changes that will just cost the taxpayers a lot of money," he said.

Steed had been expected to make a statement this morning on the outcome of the race, but did not do so. A spokesman for Steed said shortly before noon that the sheriff had no comment on the race.

Davis said he had expected to carry 53-54 percent of the vote. The turning point in the race, he said, was Steed's Oct. 26 press conference following an appearance before the county grand jury investigating the 1987 deaths of two Bryant teenagers.

"That raised me 10 points," Davis said of Steed's statements about telling "a little white lie" concerning the investigation into the Aug. 23 deaths of Don Henry, 16, and

Kevin Ives, 17.

The boys were stuck by a train at 4:25 a.m. as they lay motionless on a railroad track near the Shobe Road crossing. Two days after they died, Saline County investigators said there was no sign of foul play.

Dr. Joe Burton, an Atlanta forensic pathologist, provided the grand jury with evidence indicating the boys were dead or unconscious when struck by the train, and the grand jury has ruled the deaths homicide. The grand jury is still seeking the killer or killers.

During Steed's Oct. 26 press conference, he was publicly critical of Malak's ruling for the first time. Prior to that date, he had consistently referred to Malak as an "expert" whose opinion he fully accepted.

In talking with reporters, Steed said he told "a little white lie" in his earlier public announcement stating the case was closed based on Malak's findings.

Democrat State Desk

Steed and his supporters were trying to regain momentum as late as Monday night, when a Democratic Party rally was held for the sheriff. By that time, 1,595 absentee ballots — more than 10 percent of the expected vote — had already been cast.

Saline sheriff-elect cites mandate for change

By Chris Day
GAZETTE BENTON BUREAU

Larry Davis said Wednesday that his easy victory in the Saline County sheriff race was a mandate for change in the sheriff's office.

The race between Davis, 31, of Benton, and five-term Saline County Sheriff James Steed was expected to be close, but Davis rolled to an impressive win with a 3,282-vote margin. Write-in candi-

date Lewis Biggs wasn't a factor. The complete but unofficial vote was:

James Steed.....	9,022	42 pct.
Larry Davis.....	12,304	58 pct.
Lewis Biggs.....	54	0 pct.

Davis beat the odds by running as a Republican against an incumbent Democratic opponent.

Steed, 43, of Benton, refused to comment Wednesday about the election, the campaign, his future plans or the transition from Steed

to Davis in the sheriff's office.

Davis said he thought he would win but expected the margin to be less than 1,000 votes.

During the campaign, Davis criticized Steed's drug enforcement policies as well as the manner in which Steed conducted the investigation into the deaths of two Saline County teen-agers, who were run over by a train.

A grand jury is investigating those deaths. The mother of one of

the boys endorsed Davis and was critical of Steed.

Davis said his top priority in January will be to build morale in the sheriff's office and to increase the aggressiveness of his officers.

He doesn't foresee any major changes in personnel, but he may shuffle some officers into spots that best suit their talents and training, Davis said. He said he wants to send all his deputies and investigators to as many training

schools as possible.

Davis also would like to implement:

- ★ Increased drug enforcement in Saline County. His plan calls for cooperation with the North Little Rock, Little Rock and Hot Springs police to bring undercover agents into the county to purchase drugs and make cases against the dealers.

- ★ Strengthen patrols in rural areas of Saline County to reduce vandalism and burglary.

- ★ Establish neighborhood watch programs in rural areas to help reduce vandalism and burglaries.

- ★ Utilize the 12 constables in Saline County to provide "extra sets of eyes" and increase the department's visibility.

Davis said he would ask Steed to help ease the transition from Steed's administration to his, but he didn't know if Steed would be willing to help.

Teen's death cited in loss for sheriff

BY DOUG THOMPSON
Democrat Benton Bureau

BENTON — The death of her son definitely played a part in Tuesday's defeat of the incumbent Saline County sheriff, but it was not the only factor, Linda Ives said Wednesday.

"I think it is obvious that the deaths played a part, but what really showed was that people were ready for a change in a sheriff's office that just wasn't responsive," Ives said Wednesday.

Republican newcomer Larry Davis defeated five-term incumbent Democrat James Steed Jr. in that race. Steed's actions in the investigation of the Aug. 23, 1987 deaths of two Bryant High School seniors became a campaign issue.

Larry Kevin Ives, 17, and Don George Henry, 16, were struck by a Union Pacific train about 4:25 a.m. The sheriff's office and the state medical examiner ruled the deaths accidental.

The boys' parents refused to accept that ruling. A grand jury investigation and review of the case by an out-of-state medical examiner lead to the deaths being ruled a definite homicide.

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Sheriff

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Steed has never said he believes the deaths are definitely a homicide. Less than three weeks before the election, he was refusing to pay the grand jury's bills from out of his drug enforcement fund, although Saline County had few other resources.

Saline County had 71 percent voter turnout Tuesday, with voters almost certainly drawn to the sheriff's race, County Clerk George Ramsey said Wednesday.

Davis won the race with more than 58 percent of the vote, receiving 12,304 to 9,022 for Steed. Write-in Lewis Biggs received 77 votes.

Tuesday night, Ramsey said, extra ballots had to be rushed to Bryant because of the heavy turnout. Steed was heavily defeated there.

"I'm not sure that we've ever had a Republican elected sheriff in Saline County before," Ramsey said. Ramsey said he would research the matter.

Informant in 2 teens' deaths slain

Benton's first murder in 4 years; Malak to do autopsy

BY DOUG THOMPSON
Democrat Benton Bureau

BENTON — An informant in the investigation into the deaths of two Saline County teen-agers was found murdered Thursday morning, the first slaying in Benton in at least 4½ years.

Dr. Fahmy Malak, the state medical examiner whose ruling of accidental deaths in the teens' case was rejected by a grand jury, will perform the autopsy today of Keith McKaskle, 44, in Little Rock. The grand jury investigating the deaths of Larry Kevin Ives, 17, and Don George Henry, 16, is scheduled to meet again Nov. 18.

"Nothing at this point in the investigation has led us to believe that this is connected to the Henry and Ives case," Rick Elmendorf, Benton police chief, said Thursday. "We are at the very beginning of our investigation, and I do not want speculate about the motive. Should information develop which has some connection with the Henry and Ives case, it will be passed on to the appropriate people."

Elmendorf said he had no qualms about Malak doing the autopsy. Two Arkansas State Police investigators, Dave Dillinger and Don Birdsong, are assigned to the case. Birdsong is also assigned to the grand jury investigation of the teen-agers' deaths.

McKaskle was found stabbed to death and covered with what appeared to be a curtain in the carport of his home at 815 Fernwood St. in Benton.

Elmendorf said because of reports "one room was protected with explosive devices," a bomb squad was summoned from the Pine Bluff Arsenal. No explosives were found, Elmendorf said. The inside of the house was undisturbed and robbery apparently was not a motive, Elmendorf said.

McKaskle's body was discovered at 10:30 a.m. by a female friend of the victim, Elmendorf said. McKaskle's body was near the front of his carport, but was not visible to neighbors because three vehicles

Slaying

• Continued from Page One

and shade from the yard obstructed the view into the carport.

McKaskle had multiple stab wounds, Elmendorf said, declining further speculation about the number of wounds and time of death. Elmendorf said he will meet Malak at the state Crime Laboratory at 7:30 a.m. today and will release any details afterward.

McKaskle was manager of the Wagon Wheel Lounge, a bar off Interstate 30 on the Pulaski County side of the Saline-Pulaski county line.

The victim was "a big man in his 40s ... strong, who has personally prevented any incidents in establishments he has managed," Elmendorf said. "He was well-known in the county-line community." The victim was unarmed, Elmendorf said.

The nature of the victim's work and the numerous people with whom he had contact could have played a part in McKaskle's death, Elmendorf said.

McKaskle has assisted Richard Garrett, deputy prosecuting attorney for Saline County, and Dan Harmon, special deputy prosecuting attorney, in investigating the deaths of Ives and Henry, Garrett and Harmon confirmed Thursday night. Garrett described McKaskle's role as "keeping his ears open."

Ives and Henry were struck by a Union Pacific train about 4:25 a.m. Aug. 23, 1987, yards from the Pulaski County line and near the Wagon Wheel Lounge.

The Saline County sheriff's office ruled out foul play within two days of the bodies being found. Elmendorf was chief deputy at the time.

Within a week, Malak ruled the boys were asleep on the tracks under the influence of marijuana.

Dr. Joseph Burton, medical examiner for Atlanta, later found what he described as a stab wound in Henry's back and a fracture on Ives' face. Both boys were probably either incapacitated or dead before the train hit, Burton ruled.

The grand jury ruled the deaths homicides.

The train's crew unanimously testified that the boys were partially covered by what appeared to be a white tarp. No such cloth was found by investigators. Neither boy moved as the train approached, the train crew testified, and the boys were lying in identical positions side by side.

In previous conversations about the Ives-Henry case, Garrett called McKaskle an extremely intelligent and knowledgeable man, able to communicate with all levels of society.

McKaskle was a man of many talents, Garrett has said. McKaskle undertook roles ranging from a bouncer at bars he managed to a nationally recognized expert on and author of magazine articles about the Civil War.

After McKaskle's body was found, Garrett was questioned at FBI offices in Little Rock on Thursday.

The murder came two days after Sheriff James Steed Jr. was defeated in a landslide by Republican newcomer Larry Davis.

Both sides in the sheriff's race have said that Steed was hurt by what was perceived as either ineffectiveness or inaction in the Ives-Henry case. Davis received the endorsement of Ives' mother, Linda.

Prosecuting Attorney Joe Kelly Hardin said there have been no murders in Benton since he took office Jan. 1, 1985. Curt McCormack, Benton public safety director and former police chief, said there had been no murders in the city for at least 4½ years.

Benton resident stabbed to death; managed nightclub

By Chris Day
GAZETTE BENTON BUREAU

BENTON — The body of a Benton man was discovered in his garage Thursday morning. He had been stabbed several times.

The police have identified him as Keith McKaskle of 815 Fernwood. His age was unknown, but he possibly was in his 40s.

McKaskle managed a nightclub near Interstate 30 and the Pulas-ki-Saline County line, Police Chief Rick Elmendorf said.

Elmendorf described McKaskle as a "strong man who ran a club and prevented a lot of problems at the club."

A woman who came to visit McKaskle Thursday morning discovered the body at 10:30 a.m., Elmendorf said. He said someone had covered the body with a curtain.

A dog's barking awakened Jerry Grimes at about 1:30 a.m. Thursday. Grimes, who lives across the street from McKaskle's house, said he heard a scuffle outside.

"I heard some groaning, but just about as quick as it started, it quit," Grimes said. "It almost sounded like someone had drank too much and was vomiting."

Grimes said he looked out his window but didn't see anything unusual. He went back to bed.

Many people visited McKaskle in the early morning hours, neigh-

bors said.

"He had a lot of traffic coming in and out of his house," Grimes said.

The state medical examiner's office will be conducting an autopsy to determine the exact cause of death, Elmendorf said. He said he expects to have preliminary autopsy results this morning.

Arkansas Highway Patrol Investigators Don Birdsong and David Dillinger have been called in to help with the investigation. Requesting aid from the State Police is standard procedure, Elmendorf said.

Birdsong has worked with Saline County Deputy Prosecuting Attorney Richard Garrett and Dan Harmon, special prosecutor in the investigation of the deaths of two Saline County teen-agers hit by a train in August 1987.

Saline County Prosecuting Attorney Joe Kelly Hardin said Thursday night that McKaskle had been interviewed recently by Garrett, but wouldn't say what the interview concerned.

Apparently, McKaskle was attacked in the garage, Elmendorf said. He was wearing a blue shirt and khaki pants.

Authorities said they ruled out robbery or burglary as a motive because the house and its contents were not disturbed.

"We have no leads whatsoever," Elmendorf said.

No weapon was found.

Police believe deaths unrelated

By LYNDA HOLLENBECK
Courier Staff Writer

A Benton man found murdered at his home Thursday had recently given information to prosecutors leading a grand jury investigation of the deaths of two Bryant teen-agers struck by a train last year. However, authorities today believe the two events are unrelated.

Deputy Prosecutor Richard Garrett said Keith McKaskle, 44, had the role of "keeping his ears open" in the probe of the deaths of 17-year-old Kevin Ives and 16-year-old Don Henry.

McKaskle was manager of a nightclub located near the Saline-Pulaski county line.

Garrett would not comment on the type of information McKaskle may have supplied to Garrett or Dan Harmon, special deputy prosecutor.

"At this point, we don't think there's any connection between the deaths," Garrett said today. He believes McKaskle's death is a coincidence.

"That's the assumption we are going on at this time," Garrett said.

"As far as we're concerned right now there is no connection between the two cases," he said. "Right now the police department is doing their job."

According to Garrett, McKaskle was "not a potential witness for the grand jury. I have visited with him, but the information he gave me was not earth-shattering."

Garrett said McKaskle "was not a big informant or anything of that nature."

Police Chief Rick Elmendorf said McKaskle assisted the Saline County Sheriff's Office with cases in the past. Prior to January 1988, Elmendorf served as chief deputy for the sheriff's office.

"If he had information, he would step forward and give it to us," Elmendorf said.

State Police criminal investigators Don Birdsong and Dave Dillinger are assisting Benton police in the investigation. Birdsong is also involved in the Ives-Henry investigation but is actually assigned to another county.

McKaskle's body was found at 10:30 a.m. Thursday near his garage entrance by a female friend. The body was not easily visible from the street because of several vehicles blocking the entrance to the garage.

Several neighbors reported hearing someone scream between 1:30 and 2 a.m., but did not report the incidents to police. They attributed the noise to possible "partying," one said.

An autopsy was being performed by the state medical examiner today, but authorities at the scene said it appeared McKaskle died of multiple stab wounds. Results of the autopsy were expected to be released later today, Elmendorf said.

The body was "covered with what appears to be a curtain in an apparent attempt to conceal it," Elmendorf said Thursday at the scene.

"We have no leads," the chief said, "but we really haven't gotten started with our work. We haven't even left the scene."

The victim's body was fully clothed when the woman discovered it, Elmendorf said.

Dr. Fahmy Malak, the state medical examiner, performed the autopsy. Malak's accidental ruling in the deaths of Ives and Henry has been dis-

puted by the grand jury, which has stated the deaths were the result of foul play. His ruling sparked widespread concern and the boys' deaths were the focus of a nationally broadcast television program, "Unsolved Mysteries."

"We've discovered nothing that links this death with the deaths of Ives and Henry," Elmendorf said today.

"If it (the homicide investigation) produces any information toward any other investigation, we will let the proper authorities know," Elmendorf said.

The police chief described the murder scene as "gruesome." He speculated Thursday that more than one person could be responsible. There were definite signs of a struggle, he said.

A trail of blood could be seen from the garage opening to the door leading into the house and blood was splattered extensively throughout the garage.

There was no sign of forced entry into McKaskle's home, Elmendorf said. Robbery is not believed to be a motive in the slaying, but authorities have not said what they are considering for possible motives. The interior of McKaskle's home did not appear to have been disturbed, but Elmendorf said it would be difficult to determine if something were missing.

"Keith collected everything," he added.

Elmendorf described the victim as "a big man ... strong, who has personally prevented any incidents in

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Homicide

Continued from page 1

establishments he has managed." He said McKaskle was well known in the area near the Pulaski-Saline county line.

A team from the Explosive Ordnance Disposal Control Center in Pine Bluff was called to the murder scene Thursday night to check a room containing an extensive collection of Civil War artifacts. According to Elmendorf, McKaskle had

informed several people that the room contained explosives set to go off if the room were disturbed.

"They set off a remote charge to blow the lock off the door," Elmendorf said.

No explosive devices were found, Elmendorf said.

After McKaskle's body was discovered, Garrett and Harmon met with FBI investigators in Little Rock, but would not say whether the meeting had any

direct bearing on the murder or the Ives-Henry case.

No homicides have occurred in Benton for several years. Prosecuting Attorney Joe Hardin assumed office Jan. 1, 1985, and has not investigated a murder in the city during that time.

Elmendorf and Curtis McCormack, director of public safety and former police chief, could not recall when the last murder occurred in Benton, but said it had been several years.



Authorities prepare to move the body of Keith McKaskle, who was found murdered at his home at 815 Fernwood Drive. From the left are Benton Police Lt. Jim Berry, Police Chief Rick Elmendorf, Pat Callahan of the state medical examiner's office, Saline County Coroner Sam Ballard and police detective Jimmy Holliman. Kneeling is an unidentified technician from the Crime Laboratory.

Special prosecutor in train case resigns civil service position

BY DOUG THOMPSON
Democrat Benton Bureau

BENTON — Dan Harmon resigned without explanation Monday from the city Civil Service Commission.

"He didn't give his reasons, although I'm sure it had something to do with his dual roles as special prosecutor and commission member," Benton Mayor Rodney Larsen said.

Harmon is a special deputy prosecutor in the grand jury investigation of the August 1987 deaths of two Bryant teenagers.

Larsen said he was inclined to accept the resignation.

As a commission member, Harmon sponsored a resolution demanding speedier action by the Benton Police Department in an internal investigation under way since July.

Harmon had no comment on his abrupt resignation from

the commission. It came immediately after a meeting with Police Chief Rick Elmendorf on Monday morning.

Monday afternoon, Elmendorf, Larsen, City Attorney Robert Parker and Prosecuting Attorney Joe Kelly Hardin met in a hastily called session to discuss the internal investigation, which involves Robert German, a former Benton police lieutenant.

German has been linked to an allegedly improper release of drugs from the Police Department's evidence locker.

German allegedly obtained the drugs from Sgt. James Smyth, who was in charge of the evidence locker. The drugs then were handed over to FBI informant Teddy Carter, who was to sell them in an undercover operation, Elmendorf has said.

Smyth and Lt. Bob Holladay



Dan Harmon

have been suspended because of the incident. Holladay's role has never been explained publicly. German had left the force before the investigation began. He is studying law in Indiana.

The grand jury, which is investigating the Aug. 23, 1987, deaths of Larry Kevin Ives, 17, and Don George Henry, 16, previously has subpoenaed all ranking members of the Benton Police Department.

Teen-ager to be arraigned on Benton murder charge

BY DOUG THOMPSON
Democrat Benton Bureau

BENTON — Ronald Shane Smith, 19, will appear for arraignment for capital murder at 9 a.m. today in the stabbing of Keith McKaskle, 44, the slain manager of the Wagon Wheel Lounge.

Smith will plead innocent in Saline County Circuit Court, said his attorney, Ray Baxter of Benton.

"He did not commit this crime, but he was a witness to it," Baxter said Monday.

"This is a 19-year-old boy weighing about 160 pounds who allegedly attacked a street-wise man who was a credible bouncer at his own night club and who regularly defended himself quite effectively," Baxter said. Baxter declined further comment.

McKaskle's body was found in his carport about 10:30 a.m. Thursday in Benton's first murder in at least 4½ years.

Smith, the son of a neighbor, was arrested at 6 p.m. the next day. Police have not revealed

the alleged motive in the slaying, except that it apparently does not involve McKaskle's contacts with an investigation into the deaths of two Saline County teens.

In preceding weeks, McKaskle was in contact with Deputy Prosecuting Attorney Richard Garrett. It was Garrett who requested the grand jury investigation into the deaths of Larry Kevin Ives, 17, and Don George Henry, 16, who were hit by a train as they lay on tracks near Alexander in August 1987.

A grand jury has ruled the deaths a homicide.

McKaskle had not provided anything to the grand jury worth being killed over, Garrett said. Don Birdsong, an Arkansas State Police investigator assigned to both cases, said no link was ever uncovered between the two.

Smith apparently has no previous criminal record or history of mental disorders, Benton Police Chief Rick Elmendorf said Friday.

Dan Harmon quits Civil Service post

By LYNDA HOLLENBECK
Courier Staff Writer

Benton attorney Dan Harmon has resigned from the Benton Civil Service Commission.

Harmon hand-delivered his letter of resignation Monday to Benton Mayor Rodney Larsen.

The letter does not state any reason for the resignation, but the action followed a conversation with Police Chief Rick Elmendorf.

Harmon would not say today if his resignation occurred because of the exchange with the police chief. The discussion took place at the Saline County Courthouse.

Larsen said he was unable to discuss the resignation with Harmon because there were people in his office when Harmon brought the letter to him.

"I didn't want him to resign," Larsen said. "Dan has done a good job on the Civil Service Commission. He led the commission's efforts to revise rules and regulations that needed changing."

Larsen said he is "inclined to accept it (resignation) if it's offered." He said he trusted Harmon's reasons for resigning.

The mayor speculated that Harmon's resignation could be because of his role as special deputy prosecutor in a grand jury investigation into the deaths of two Bryant teen-agers.

As part of the grand jury probe, an internal affairs investigation at the police department came to light.

"Danny had more knowledge

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Harmon

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than the other commissioners," Larsen said. "Because of his role as special deputy prosecutor on the grand jury, it put him in a tough spot."

The investigation at the police department has involved three officers, one of whom is no longer employed there. Mentioned in the investigation are Lt. Bob Holladay, who was suspended with pay several months ago; Sgt. James Smyth, who received a 30-day suspension without pay, but is now back on the job; and former detective Robert German, who is presently attending law school in Indiana. The probe involves alleged improper action in a reverse drug buy.

In referring to complaints about Holladay continuing to receive full pay during the investigation, Larsen said, "I agree that action is needed. I've

pushed for it every way I can, other than outright ordering his (Holladay's) dismissal."

The mayor said he has discussed the investigation with State Police investigators and with representatives of the U.S. Attorney's office. "The information I receive is that they have been investigating. They have the files and I've been told what is in the files.

"They anticipate there will be charges filed," Larsen said. "I don't want to take my judgment and speed this up," possibly jeopardizing the outcome of the case.

Larsen mentioned that psychological tests have been administered to high-ranking police officers, including Holladay. After reviewing the results of these, a second round of tests was ordered to make certain the results are conclusive, he added.

Larsen said he has instructed investigators to take the probe "as far as it can go. One lead goes to another lead. I want the police department investigated to the fullest extent they can."

However, he said he does not feel he should "just order things to happen."

"My orders are to get everything out that they can get and let the chips fall where they may," he added.

Jury report set for December

By LYNDA HOLLENBECK
Courier Staff Writer

Dan Harmon, special deputy prosecutor for the Saline County grand jury investigating the 1987 deaths of two Bryant teen-agers, believes the mystery will eventually be unraveled.

"I think every day we've got to be getting closer," Harmon said following a half-day session of the grand jury.

"We've done too much work," Harmon added. "It's a process of elimination before we get to the right one (suspect)."

The grand jury scheduled another session for Dec. 2 and will meet later during December to prepare a final report to be released to the public, Harmon said.

However, the report will not end the investigation into the Aug. 23, 1987, deaths of Don Henry, 16, and Kevin Ives, 17, who were struck by a Union Pacific train at 4:25 a.m. as they lay motionless on a railroad track near the Shobe Road crossing.

Harmon said he has confidence the State Police will continue its investigation into the boys' deaths after the grand jury has been dismissed.

"I have the utmost confidence in Don Birdsong," Harmon said. Birdsong is the State Police investigator assigned to the case, and was present today to review his progress for the grand jurors.

Harmon said the grand jury has come a long way in the months it has been in session. "It has been proven beyond a reasonable doubt it was a homicide," Harmon said.

For months after the deaths, Saline County investigators contended the deaths were accidental. Two days after the boys died, Rick Elmendorf, who was chief deputy at the

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Courier photo by Phillip Felton

State Medical Examiner Fahmy Malak, right, and the examiner's Chief Deputy Stephen Dillon, wait this morning to be called to testify before the grand jury.

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time, announced there was no sign of foul play. When results of an autopsy report were released by the state medical examiner's office, Dr. Fahmy Malak ruled the deaths accidental.

In a public investigative hearing in February, Malak testified that he could not have made a mistake. He said the boys were not stabbed, shot or beaten and that they died as the result of the injuries they sustained when they were struck by the train. He said they were in a marijuana-induced sleep, making them unable to respond to the sounds and vibrations of the train.

Dr. Joe Burton, a forensic pathologist from Atlanta, Ga., determined through computer enhanced photographs that

Henry had been stabbed in the back and that Ives had sustained a facial beating.

Malak testified today before the grand jury, but neither he nor Harmon would reveal the nature of his testimony.

When Malak was leaving the courthouse, he was asked if this investigation had jeopardized the credibility of the state Crime Laboratory. Malak replied that the Crime Lab has the highest credibility of "any in the United States."

Harmon said Malak's credibility has been questioned, but he did not criticize the Crime Lab itself. "I can't say I'm as pleased with Dr. Malak, but I don't think any reasonable person would be."

Also testifying today was

State Police Investigator Dale Swesey, who has been in charge of an investigation into alleged wrongdoing by officers of the Benton Police Department.

Harmon said today the grand jury has a "dual focus" now and that anyone who needs to be charged in that investigation will be charged, even though the grand jury will be dismissed soon. The probe stemmed from an undercover drug investigation involving three police officers and others.

Earlier this week, former police detective Robert German was charged with two counts of possession of a controlled substance, two counts of delivery of a controlled substance and one count of theft of property.

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Prosecutor predicts arrest in rail deaths

By Byron McCauley
GAZETTE STAFF

BENTON — Someone will be caught eventually for killing Don Henry and Kevin Ives, Special Prosecutor Dan Harmon said Friday.

"It's just the process of a process of elimination," Harmon said.

The grand jury met for about three hours Friday and heard testimony from investigators, two unidentified teen-agers, and state crime lab officials, including Dr. Fahmy Malak, the state medical examiner.

Harmon said "we've got to be getting closer" to finding out who killed the boys, "we've done too much work."

Grand jury hears more testimony

Malak, who testified for about 15 minutes, reluctantly answered a reporter's question about the credibility of the examiner's office after he emerged from the courtroom.

"We have the best credibility in the United States," he said.

When told of Malak's statement, Harmon said Malak's credibility "has been exposed without the grand jury."

Malak initially ruled the teen-agers' deaths accidental, but two out-of-state pathologists told the grand jury that the boys were murdered.

One was stabbed, the other was

struck with a blunt instrument, they said.

The Bryant youths were struck by a Union Pacific train Aug. 23, 1987, as they were lying on tracks near Alexander.

2 officers investigated

The jury is also evaluating testimony involving a Benton Police department internal investigation. Two Benton police officers and a former member of the department are being investigated for allegedly removing drugs from a police locker.

Harmon indicated that the grand jury could issue indictments in the

case.

The state attorney general's office has said the grand jury must disband Dec. 31 because under state law a grand jury can only continue to meet during the calendar year in which it was convened. It began meeting in April.

Harmon said the jury would reconvene Dec. 2 to hear more testimony from other officials involved in both investigations. The jury will then deliver a final report between Christmas and New Year's Day.

Harmon said he doesn't feel that indictments in the deaths have to be issued before Dec. 31, and that an investigation of the case will continue after the jury stops meeting.