

Blood on teens unusual, paramedics say

Arkansas Democrat, Saturday, February, 20, 1988

By Max Parker
Democrat State Desk

BENTON — Two ambulance workers sent to the scene where two Saline County youths were struck by a train last summer said Friday the color of the blood there made them wonder if the boys were alive when hit.

“The blood at the scene was darker in color than I thought it should appear,” said Billy Heath, an emergency medical technician at Saline Memorial Hospital. Heath, along with Shirley Raper, responded to the call for an ambulance.

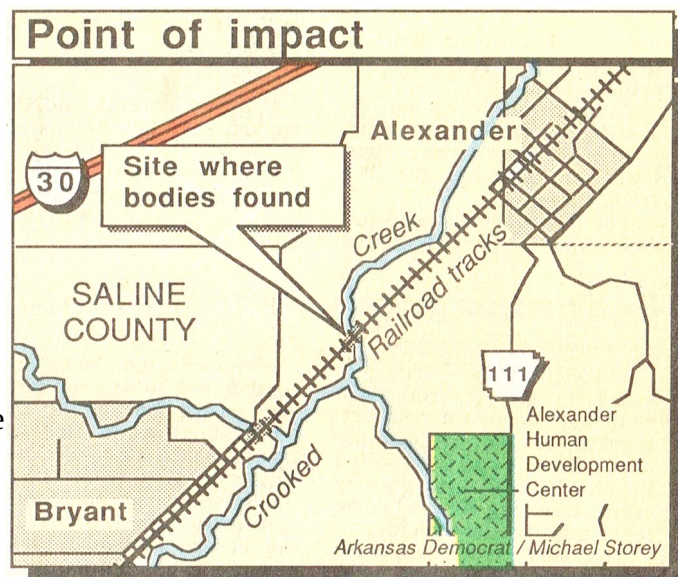
“I wouldn’t say whether they were dead and placed there, or killed when the train hit them. All I’m saying is the blood was darker, but not why it was darker.”

Heath’s statements came on the second day of a prosecutor’s hearing into the Aug. 23, 1987, deaths of Larry Kevin Ives, 17, of Benton and Don George Henry, 16, of Bryant. Fahmy Malak, state medical examiner, ruled Aug. 24, 1987, that the boys were in a deep marijuana-induced sleep at the time of death. The deaths were ruled an accident. The parents of the boys, dissatisfied with the ruling, recently asked for a further investigation into the deaths.

Thirteen witnesses testified Friday, mostly law enforcement officers and medical personnel. Richard Garrett, deputy prosecuting attorney, heard testimony Thursday from 28 witnesses.

Malak, along with a state Crime Laboratory toxicologist, is scheduled to testify when the hearing resumes at 9 a.m. Monday.

In an Aug. 23, 1987, report, Heath and Ms. Raper said: “Blood from the bodies and on the body parts we observed was a dark color in nature. Due to our training, this would indicate a lack of oxygen present in the blood and could pose a question as to how long the victims had been down/dead.”



“It was just a note of interest, something that hit me in the face,” Ms. Raper said. She said that while she had never worked a train accident, she had seen about 25 cases where large amounts of blood were present.

Heath also was asked to describe what he thought the blood would look like if the boys had been dead before being hit by the train near Arkansas 111 at Alexander.

“The blood would be quite dark, very dark, and there probably wouldn’t be very much blood out of the body,” Heath said, adding that he noticed the darker blood primarily at the impact site between the two iron rails.

“I cannot tell you if they were alive or what, when the train hit them,” Heath said.

Ms. Raper said she also thought the color of the boys’ blood was unusual.

“Ordinarily, there is some color at some point or at some place,” she said. “The blood appeared darker in nature than expected.”

Ms. Raper offered an opinion on what caused the darkness of the blood.

“A lack of oxygen,” she said. “That’s just about the only reason I know of. But, I’m not an expert, I’m just a paramedic.”

Ms. Raper said the tissue she viewed was “almost devoid of color.”

“It was just colorless, almost dummy-like,” she said.

Ms. Raper, also revealed two pieces of information omitted from her written report. While searching for a place to drive the ambulance to the impact site, Ms Raper said she picked up a man who directed her to a single-lane road leading into a wooded area.

“He was a black male, average height I guess,” she said. “I didn’t really look at him.”

About quarter mile through the wooded area, Ms. Raper said she saw headlights from a pickup truck. .

“The truck came from off to the side,” she said. “I don’t know where it came from.”

Ms. Raper said she thought there were three people in the truck, but couldn’t tell their color or sex. She never approached the vehicle.

Because the road was getting narrow, Ms. Raper said she left the ambulance and walked around a curve in the road. The man who directed her stayed in the ambulance, she said, and she never asked his name.

When she returned to ambulance, Ms. Raper said the truck was gone.

“I didn’t hear them leave,” she said. “They just weren’t there. It’s real strange.”

Ms. Raper never revealed this information to police, even when she eventually returned to the scene.

“I was never interviewed by anyone from the sheriffs office,” she said. “No one has ever asked me for anything until last week.”

Ray Richmond, chief deputy, with the sheriffs office, said the first time he heard about Ms. Raper’s sightings was last week after she talked to reporters.

Richmond and two other officers all agreed the scene was investigated like any other death.

“My initial response then, and my personal opinion now, is that I felt it was a very strange situation and I do not believe we had two young men lay side by side on the train tracks,” said Cathy Carty, a Saline County deputy. “None of us in our minds could accept that happening.”

Gary Dallas, with the drug section of the state Crime Laboratory, said two plastic bags with 1.9 grams of leafy vegetable material submitted to the lab tested positive for marijuana. The bags were found on the boys.

Although the lab has the capacity to do so, Dallas said it doesn't perform tests on bodies to determine the percentage of tetrahydrocannabinol, the active ingredient in marijuana, that might be present. He said only tests are done to determine that THC is present.

Quotes of interest from Friday's testimony in the prosecutor's hearing into the Aug. 23, 1987, deaths of Larry Kevin Ives, 17, of Benton and Don George Henry, 16, of Bryant:

- "This was a very odd situation from what understand. A very traumatic situation," said George Moore, ambulance supervisor at Saline Memorial Hospital.
- "During a trauma scene, generally you have a bright red blood," said Billy Heath, one of the two medical technicians at the scene that night. "This was not the case. It was darker colored."
- "The amount of blood (at the scene) couldn't be determined because of (the) rock bed," Heath said, "It could filter through and may not be much at all."
- "People said they really didn't believe it was an accident," said Timothy Holloway, 17, of Mabelvale, who had worked with Kevin Ives.
- "It was kind of upsetting, it was nerve-racking," Holloway said, recalling how he felt during his visit to the accident scene. "The whole mound shook (as a train got closer.)"
- "I didn't understand why two boys would be on the tracks, but didn't make any conclusion," said Pat Hawkins, a deputy with the Saline County sheriff's office.
- "I secured the scene for several reasons," said Cathy Carty, a sheriff's deputy. "Mainly because it was a traumatic sight and didn't want an innocent bystander walking up on it. I have personally blocked a lot of it out of my mind."