

Parents Allege Conspiracy In Meadowlands Death

Youth Was Murdered, They Claim in Suit

By ROBERT HANLEY
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HACKENSACK, N.J., Jan. 28 — The parents of a college sophomore who was fatally injured during a Grateful Dead concert at the Meadowlands Sports Complex in 1989 have asserted that their son was murdered by security guards and charged that New Jersey law-enforcement officials conspired to cover up the crime.

In documents filed recently as evidence in a civil suit in New Jersey Superior Court here, Jay and Linda Katz of South Orange contend that the state officials withheld evidence and obstructed justice to stymie a homicide investigation in the death of their son, Adam, 19, a University of Hartford student, and to make it appear that he either committed suicide or died accidentally after taking the hallucinogen LSD at the Oct. 14, 1989, concert.

Their cover-up accusation adds a surprising new element to a puzzling and controversial case that has lingered unresolved for nearly four and a half years, trapped in a legal limbo by one coroner's finding of murder and another's contradicting report that Mr. Katz's death many have been drug induced. Now Mr. and Mrs. Katz contend as part of a court fight to collect financial damages that the investigative paralysis stemmed from an image-protection plot in 1989 by the state Attorney General's office, the state police and the Bergen County Prosecutor's office.

The couple's lawyer, Beth G. Baldinger, suggested in an affidavit submitted for an upcoming civil court trial here that the state may have tried to cover up the details of the accident "to protect the reputation, integrity and financial value of its Meadowlands Sports Complex.

"The murder of Adam Katz by Burns security guards was a blemish it could ill afford, hence, the cover-up of the truth about Adam Katz's death," the court papers stated.

'It's all nonsense'

Morris Zucker, a lawyer representing New Jersey and the Sports and Exposition Authority, a state agency that operates the sports complex, scoffed at Ms. Baldinger's charge.

"I totally deny there's any cover-up," Mr. Zucker said in an interview. "There are just too many holes in their case in my opinion. There is no proof of a cover-up. It's all nonsense. I believe the Sports Authority is in no way responsible for this young man's tragic death."

The Katzes' suit contends that the cover-up occurred after state officials asked New Jersey's chief Medi-

cal Examiner, Dr. Robert Goode, to review an autopsy report by Dr. Louis V. Napolitano, an assistant Bergen County Medical Examiner. That autopsy concluded that Mr. Katz was murdered, but the suit contends that state officials did not provide Dr. Goode with documents supporting the homicide finding.

Citing witness statements, interviews and an F.B.I. report, Ms. Baldinger argued in her affidavit that guards employed by Burns International Security Services forcibly evicted Mr. Katz from the Byrne Meadowlands Arena during a break in the concert, surrounded him and beat him in a parking lot, drove him from arena grounds in a van and dumped him, mortally injured, in the middle northbound lane of Route 120, a highway that runs between the arena and nearby Giants Stadium. She said an F.B.I. lab exam determined that a red nylon fiber recovered from Mr. Katz's sneaker was similar to fibers in the carpets in two of the vans being used by the guards that night.

A motorist found Mr. Katz, unconscious, about 9:30 P.M. on the roadway, about 10 feet from an overpass. He was lying on his back, his head pointed toward oncoming traffic, in a spread-eagle position.

Mr. Katz died a day later, on Oct. 15. After an autopsy the next day, Dr. Napolitano declared the death a hom-

Did a 19-year-old kill himself, or was he fatally beaten?

icide. The only injury he found was a single linear fracture on the top of Mr. Katz' skull, which, he said, had been inflicted by a blow with a blunt instrument.

At the request of New Jersey's Attorney General at the time, Peter Perretti, Dr. Goode reviewed Dr. Napolitano's report and reported on Nov. 14, 1989, that Mr. Katz died of a fractured skull suffered after he plunged from the bridge — in either a jump or a fall — and hit his head on the pavement of Route 120. Dr. Goode said the teen-ager was under the influence of the LSD at the time.

According to court papers, he said he based that conclusion on two factors — a report that Mr. Katz had "licked LSD and was having a bad trip" during the concert and a laboratory report that Mr. Katz's brain tissue contained 8 nanograms of LSD. A nanogram is one-billionth of a gram.

The Katz lawsuit takes sharp exception to Dr. Goode's finding of a plunge from the bridge, principally because Dr. Napolitano found only one injury — the fracture on the top of Mr. Katz's skull. There was no damage to the youth's neck or spine, which, the suit argues, is inconsistent with someone's falling about 25 feet and landing directly on the top of his head. In addition, Dr. Napolitano said he found no cuts or abrasions on the body and no grit or debris from the highway embedded in the head wound, Ms. Baldinger's court papers say.

In another apparent discrepancy between the two coroners' findings, Dr. Napolitano said in his reports that no residue of marijuana or LSD was detected in the contents of Mr. Katz's stomach, according to court documents.

Last August, during preparation for the upcoming trial, in which the Katzes are seeking an unspecified amount in damages, Ms. Baldinger and the Katzes' other lawyer, Albert Stark, subpoenaed Dr. Goode and asked how he became involved in the case. He said he had received phone calls from a state police detective and the Bergen County Prosecutor at the time, John G. Holl. Then, he said, Mr. Perretti, the state Attorney General in late 1989, visited his office.

Ms. Baldinger's affidavit said the state police, the Bergen County Prosecutor's office and the Attorney General did not provide Dr. Goode a "substantial body of evidence" to review for his report. One document the suit said he did not receive was described as an "accident reconstruction" report by the prosecutor's office.

Statement Is Cited

Another was a 1989 statement by a Jersey City youth, Roberto Ayala, who was 16 at the time, that a Burns guard, Shih Chang Sun, told him that he was present when other guards hit Mr. Katz's head against a van in the arena parking lot and then continued beating him inside the van. Mr. Ayala quoted Mr. Sun as stating that he drove the van from the arena grounds with Mr. Katz and the other guards in it and "they just dropped him off someplace."

Burns International Security Services has agreed to an out-of-court settlement on behalf of several of its officials and guards accused in the lawsuit, including Mr. Sun. Lawyers refused to disclose the amount of money involved or discuss published reports it totaled \$1.5 million.

But the judge hearing the case, Robert E. Hamer, of New Jersey Superior Court, has rejected the Katzes' request for punitive damages from the sports complex on the ground that the complex failed to take action to prevent security guards from physically and verbally abusing Meadowlands patrons.

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