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# The End of Security

There are a tremendous number of things that have come out of this tragedy. Perhaps one of the most disturbing is the loss of a sense of security. All throughout their lives, the children have occupied a particularly central place in our moment-by-moment consciousness. Whenever the kids were out of our sight, they were all the more on our minds. If we ever lost track of their whereabouts in a crowd, even momentarily, extreme concern, almost panic, would set in. We have always viewed it as our job to be the protectors of our children.

When you are in a public setting with little kids, vigilance is called for. When the family is at home, however, there is a sense of safety and security that wraps itself around you. The family, and particularly the kids, views the home as a safe haven. It is the one place in the whole world where you are protected.

At noon on June 22, 2003 the feeling of safety in our home was wrenched from us by the callous and reckless actions of Todd Wood and Arnold Terrell. They barged, uninvited (the 911 call was simply for an ambulance, not the police), into our home and shot our 16 year old son to death in cold blood. They have never shown any remorse and offered no apologies for their despicable deed. From that time onward, we can no longer feel safe within our home. Should we move? Why? We would feel no more secure in any other house, particularly knowing that loose canons like Wood and Terrell are still free and armed.

The loss of security is reinforced by the attitude of the Oakland County Sheriff's Department commanders. They blindly took the side of their officers from the very first instant the killing occurred. Objectivity never entered into their investigation. From the get-go their position was that Wood and Terrell were blameless. This statement was made long before the investigation was concluded. The very morning after Christopher was violently gunned down; Oakland County Sheriff Bouchard went on the Paul W. Smith show on the "Great Voice of the Great Lakes", the 50,000 watt WJR radio station. In this interview Bouchard stated flatly that his men were justified in their actions. Once again I need to say that this was less than one full day after the shooting and the investigation was barely begun, yet he had already made up his mind and exonerated his deputies. In case you do not know, the Sheriff's own department did the only investigation despite our requests that the Michigan State Police be brought in. With the Sheriff's mind made up and having him lead the investigation, what other conclusion besides "the deputies are innocent" could be expected?

Throughout the days following the killing, the Oakland County Sheriff's Department proceeded with a thorough disinformation campaign lead by their spokesperson, the Under Sheriff McCabe. The first story that was floated was "suicide by cop". When this would not hold water the tactic changed to "blame the parents". This also does not stand up to scrutiny. The entire goal of the Sheriff's Department is to discredit the family and relieve the department of any

responsibility for their actions. It is ironic that the police preach that the youth of today do not take responsibility for their actions and yet this is exactly the same thing the police themselves did.

The matter of security is tied to this because the same people are running the department and have not made any significant changes to policy. If another of their own is involved in a homicide, guess who'll do the investigating? Yep, the Oakland County Sheriff. The citizens of Oakland County must recognize the arrogance of the department leaders and realize that they are no safer than I was. Prior to this incident I had nothing but support for the department. I need to interject at this point that I still retain respect for the vast majority of the deputies of Oakland County. Their reputations should not be besmirched but the actions of a couple of rouge cops and their superiors.

The security of our home has been violated and will never again be the safe haven it once was. The security of the general citizens is also at risk as long as people with the cowboy attitudes (McCabe in an interview ... It takes time to get dressed and saddle up ...) are running the departments.

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# Sweet and Sour

Now that some time has passed since the killing of Christopher, I can examine better how I feel about this whole event. Sometimes I feel as if my emotions are dining at a Chinese restaurant and feeding on sweet and sour dishes.

There is a tremendous sweetness and warmth that has come from those that know us best ... our relatives, friends, neighbors, parishioners and co-workers. These people know us, know what we have gone through and have provided us with solid support. There is no way that we can adequately repay the kindness that we have received ... the warm meals, the kind words, the inspirational gifts, the masses and prayers. There is great sweetness in these actions.

There is, however, a sour and bitterness I feel whenever I think of how the truth of this story has been distorted by the authorities in an attempt to portray us, the family, as being responsible for the death and being nothing but a bunch of money grubbing lowlifes. Nothing could be further from the truth. We are willing to accept responsibility where it is due, but we will NOT accept any responsibility for the Oakland County Sheriff Department's execution of Christopher. The disinformation campaign waged by under sheriff McCabe has been aimed at destroying our reputation and laying the blame for the actions of his deputies at our feet. This is the picture painted in the media, and this is the only story some people have heard. As a result we have been cursed, sworn at and even condemned by members of the community who have relied on this one sided portrayal of the events. If they could only listen to the shocking police tapes of the open microphone conversations of the officers, recorded as *the killing took place*, their opinion would be different. If they could read the hundreds of pages of sworn testimony they would see that the story of the police is tainted. If they could see the video tapes recorded from the police cars *during the event* they could witness first hand the anguish and pain that we were put through. If they could review this evidence and then realize that the police instigated themselves, they would see the cover up, and that is what is the most troubling.

Yes, there are both sweet and sour feelings that surface. I am glad that we are surrounded by people who support us. This makes the taste palatable.

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# You had to have been there

Have you ever told what you thought was a humorous anecdote only to find nobody laughed? Your reply is likely to be “you had to have been there”.

The same holds true for the happenings of June 22, 2003, except there is nothing funny about them.

There have been numerous commentaries in various opinion blogs on the web about these events. Most of the comments are favorable and supportive. A few, however, are malicious and mean. In some, our family has been told to “rot in hell” because of what they assume (you know what assume stands for) they know based upon hearsay. Other opinions ask the question “How does the family know what happened if they were outside? Were they there?” Although the content of the post was adversarial, the question itself is fair... how DO we know?

Well, to start with, we were on the scene. The presence of the police *was never requested* but, when they arrived on the scene, they assumed control. We parents remained in the house and in the same room as Christopher throughout much of the time the first two officers communicated with Christopher. At this time Chris presented NO threat and did not instill fear in us or the officers present. They spoke to Chris and told him that they could wait all day if they had to. The two officers who initially responded were calm and cool and had the situation under control. They were in the same room as Christopher, within just a few feet of him, yet they never drew their weapons!

It was with the arrival of the two “cowboys” that the situation changed. When Terrell and Wood arrived dressed in their battle garb (protective gloves, bullet proof vests etc.), we were forced outside the house and told to wait in the yard. The demeanor of Wood worried the father very much. Wood appeared edgy and nervous, almost as if he was heading into a situation with a barricaded gunman with hostages. Nothing could have been further from the truth. During this time we (the family) were not present in the house but guess what? There was still a first hand witness to the entire shooting. It was Terrell and Wood themselves!

The deputies were wearing open microphones that recorded the events that transpired in the few short minutes after we (the parents) were removed from the premises until Chris' horrible death. It is the dialogue coming directly off of these official police tapes that are some of the most dramatic and chilling evidence against Terrell and Wood. The tapes recorded Terrell and Wood tossing profanities (F--- him) at Chris. They document Terrell stating “if he comes up here he's dead” following which Wood calls to Chris to “come here” at which point Chris was gunned down with 18 shots! This is first hand testimony *in the killers own voices*.

As this scene was being played out, the family stood helplessly on the front lawn. When the gunshots broke out, they describe the sound as a “string of firecrackers going off”.

To the critics who make judgmental comments without the facts I say “You have had to have been there” We were.

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# CSI - Highland

For the past few years, the "CSI" (Crime Scene Investigation) programs have been among the ratings leaders on television. These shows take place in cities like Miami, Las Vegas and New York. Another real-life CSI took place in Highland Michigan, the results of which directly contradict the results of the "official" investigation.

At just before noon on June 22, 2003 (Corpus Christi Sunday), 16 year old Christopher Drypen was gunned down in the lower level of his home by deputies Todd Wood and Arnold Terrell of the Oakland County Sheriff Department (OCSD). Christopher's parents were present in the house and in the same room as Chris until they were ordered out of the house by the police only minutes before the killing occurred. The timeline of direct observation by the Drypens was uninterrupted until immediately prior to the cold blooded gunning down of the boy.

Immediately after the tragedy the OSCD sealed of the "crime scene" (but nobody was accused of committing a crime). The family members were prohibited from going into their own home. Even the pastor of the family's Catholic parish was denied entrance to the house to administer last rites or to even offer a final blessing over the boy's body.

The "official" investigation of the action of the OSCD deputies was conducted by fellow officers of the OCSD. Detective Clay Jansen of the OCSD was asked by the family to have the Michigan State Police do the investigation so that it would be done impartially. Jansen refused, telling the Drypens that it is county policy that the department conducts all of its own investigations. When asked "how can you investigate yourself and be impartial?" He replied, without really answering the question: "That is how we do it". The Drypens asked a neighbor to telephone the Michigan State Police and request their assistance. The post in Northville was contacted and stated that they were unable to assist unless invited to do so by the local authorities. Since the OCSD decided to proceed without any oversight, the State Police were excluded from participation.

The investigation that was done that afternoon was conducted by members of the OCSD crime lab. It is important to note that the OCSD crime lab holds *no professional accreditations*. The results of their "impartial" investigation drew the conclusion that Wood and Terrell decided that they were in grave peril and shot Chris to death in self defense. This conclusion was given to the Oakland County Prosecutor's office which ruled that there were insufficient grounds for criminal prosecution against the killing officers. This was exactly opposite to the belief of the parents based upon their first hand observations.

The exoneration of the deputies of any criminal wrongdoing by the prosecutor did not square with the situation as witnessed by the parents. The only way that they could arrive at the truth of what happened was to file a civil lawsuit against the

officers and the department. Then, through the discovery process, the truth would come to light.

This is where the “CSI” came into play. A number of professional and certified forensic crime scene specialists were brought in to examine the scene of the killing. The Drypen family did nothing to any of the on-site evidence until these examinations were concluded. This meant that the family had to deal with living in a house riddled with bullet holes and chunks of missing carpeting. It is a good thing too because the evidence told a tale far removed from the prejudiced conclusions drawn by the OCSD.

A number of tests were conducted by the forensic investigators. The paths of each bullet were determined with sensitive laser equipment and each bullet path was traced with string. These “stringings” prove that it was impossible for Todd Wood to have been positioned at the top of the stairs as he demonstrated in photo reenactments and swore to in testimony under oath.

Another test used chemicals to analyze the carpeting and walls of the stairway for any signs of blood. There was no blood to be found on the stairway walls or the carpet of the stairs. The carpet on the bottom two stairs was removed the day of the killing (without permission), so no testing could be done on it.

Photographs taken by members of the OCSD crime lab immediately after the killing show *no blood spatters at all* on any of the walls of the stairway. Photographs of the blood spatter on the floor at the base of the stairs show circular patterns indicating that they fell straight down off of Chris at that spot. The photographs of the ceiling of the lower level show similar circular blood spatters indicating Chris was gunned down while standing on the floor, not on the stairs as reported by Wood and Terrell.

One of the “CSI” investigators at the Huff Place discovery forensic investigation was a doctor of serology. None of the OCSD investigators came even close to possessing such credentials. In fact, some OSCD investigators were actually taught by the “CSI” serologist.

The blood spatter analysis performed proved extremely insightful. Drops of blood tell the height and angle from which the blood fell. The forensic science of blood spatter analysis says that blood which fell perpendicular to the floor from a distance of 0-2 feet would make a circular drop with slightly frayed edges. Drops from a higher distance would have more pronounced tendrils fraying off the edges (a sunburst pattern). A blood smear on the wall or floor tells the direction of force of the blow. The direction of force is always in the direction towards the tail, or smaller end, of the smear, or splatter. In other words, the largest area of the smear is the point of origin (a wave cast-off pattern). Bloodstain patterns tell a lot about position and movement during the shooting. This destroys most alibi and self-defense arguments and, at the very least, trips most suspects up in their explanation of what happened.

The width and length of a blood spatter can be put into a calculation which results in an angle. This angle determines the direction of the source of the blood spatter. A protractor can be used to illustrate this in 3 dimensions. When this analysis is done for multiple blood spatters in various locations, the directional lines converge at some point in space from which the blood originated. In the case of Christopher Drypen, these lines converged in the lower level of the house, not on the stairs. The "CSI" investigators stated under oath that the evidence conclusively shows that Christopher was not on the stairs when Wood and Terrell fired the 18 rounds into his body.

When confronted with this evidence the OCSD investigators admitted under oath that there was no evidence supporting Christopher being on the stairs as alleged by Wood and Terrell. In fact, it appears that the OCSD investigation the day of the killing was prematurely terminated when the facts began pointing to a conclusion that the investigating authorities did not want reached.

In addition to this team, the scene was also examined by the renowned forensic pathologist Werner Spitz. Dr. Spitz has served on committees investigating the assassinations of President John F. Kennedy and Martin Luther King Jr. He has offered expert testimony in several celebrated cases, including the Preppy Murder Trial in New York, the California Night Stalker case, the wrongful death lawsuit against O.J. Simpson, the case involving Mary Jo Kopechne, who drowned after the car she and Sen. Ted Kennedy were driving in went off a bridge at Chappaquiddick Island, Mass. and most of the high-profile cases in this (Metro Detroit) area. Dr. Spitz examined the scene and declared that based on the position of the deputies and Christopher's location; there was no justification for the excessive use of force displayed by Wood and Terrell.

The Oakland County Coroner, Dr. L.J. Dracovic determined the cause of death to be homicide. He also called the death an "execution".

Had it not been for the "CSI – Highland" discovery investigations, the truth as to what really happened would never have been known. The self-serving conclusions of the OCSD investigators would have been accepted as fact. The scientific proof shows the opposite.

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# The Mystery of the Bible

One of the most perplexing aspects of Christopher's death and resulting police investigation is the whereabouts of a particular book ... Chris' Bible.

On the morning of his death, Christopher was in his bedroom reading the Book of Deuteronomy from his Bible. When he left his bedroom and proceeded to the lower level of the house, he had the Bible with him. The whole time that his parents were with him, even in the presence of the first two police officers, Christopher carried his Bible. It was only a few minutes between the last time his parents saw him alive with the Bible to when he was executed in cold blood by Wood and Terrell.

After the killing and the subsequent department "investigation" (from which Chris' parents were denied access) the Bible mysteriously disappeared. During the investigation, members of the OCSD investigating team took material away from the house in many opaque black plastic bags. When asked by the family what they were removing, OCSD representative Clay Jansen replied "we'll give you a list before we leave". That was a lie. No list was provided until it was demanded from the OCSD as part of the discovery process for the civil suit. This took many months. The department was not cooperative and was not going to make anything easy.

Guess what? Chris' Bible never showed up on a list of articles that the OCSD removed from the house and it was never located. Bibles do not simply vanish into thin air and it is known that Chris has his in his personal possession only minutes before he died. It is the firm belief of the family that Chris was holding the Bible when he was shot and that the Bible was likely riddled with bullet holes and blood from the insane number of gunshot rounds that were fired into Chris. It would not look good for the OCSD deputies to have gunned down a minor, in his own home, on a sunny Corpus Christi Sunday morning while he was carrying a Bible ... so the Bible conveniently disappeared.

It is also odd that the OCSD denied the local Catholic pastor access to the boy's body to say a blessing. Fr. Leo was forced to remain outside the house in the yard and perform the blessing "from afar".

To this day the Bible has never been found. The Mystery of the Bible remains unsolved.

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# Haiku for Chris

Christopher is dead.  
We miss him more than you know.  
We hope for justice.

His death was not moral.  
He was killed by bad men.  
They hide behind badges.

He was a good kid.  
All who knew him would agree.  
He was robbed of life.

He was killed by bullets.  
He should not have died like that.  
Cowards shot him dead.

Rest in peace my son.  
God will see you get justice.  
God's judgment is harsh

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# Three Year Memorial

2.	In Memoriam	06/22/2006
<p>In Loving Memory CHRISTOPHER EDWARD DRYPEN March 16, 1987 June 22, 2003 After 3 years our hearts remain saddened over the violent and unexpected loss of our son, brother, grandson, nephew, cousin and friend. We find no place for vengeance but we will never abandon the cause of justice. The taking of a life so young has left a hole in the lives of all he touched. We take comfort in the last words to his parents "Everything will be alright. Just trust in God." This is the wisdom imparted to us by Chris which we try to follow. Chris, we love you and look forward to our reunion. Save us a place at the table. Requiescat in pace. <a href="http://www.drypen.net">www.drypen.net</a></p>		

The memorial shown above was published in the Detroit News, the Detroit Free Press, The Oakland Press and the Milford times.

It is hard to believe that 3 years have already passed since one so young was robbed of his life by a couple of out of control "cowboys". Never does a day go by that we do not miss Chris and wonder why this had to happen.

As the memorial states, we have no place in our hearts for vengeance. The Catholic faith which we follow does not condone revenge, but it does recognize the existence of justice.

We will not abandon the cause of justice. We strongly feel that justice was denied when the Oakland County Prosecutor rendered his original decision based upon insufficient evidence that the pursuit of criminal prosecution against Todd Wood and Arnold Terrell was not warranted. Unfortunately the Prosecutor did not possess all the facts when the decision was made. During the discovery process, dozens of sworn depositions were taken from the killers themselves, family members, members of the Oakland County Sheriff's Department, forensic experts and others who hold credentials pertinent to the investigation. The results of this investigation were truly shocking and disturbing.

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# Heroes

In light of the terrible events which resulted in the taking of the life of Christopher at the young age of 16, it is easy to see why some people may assume that this has hardened our hearts towards the police and other civil authorities.

This is not the case.

It has been our experience that the vast majority of police officers are good and courageous people who dedicate their lives to the pursuit of public safety and protection of the citizen's civil rights. All too frequently they do not hear the thanks that they have earned in their selfless protection of the innocent. It often takes an event like the terrorist attacks of 9/11 to focus the public's awareness on the service they perform. There are many heroes in law enforcement.

No occupation, however, is devoid of cowards and wrongdoing. Some sports figures defile their bodies with illegal substances to gain an edge on the competition. Some businessmen "cook the books" for profit. Clergy in various denominations have been found guilty of different forms of misconduct. Even the high office of the President of the United States has not been immune to unsavory deeds and cover-ups. No form of livelihood is exempt of offensive behavior and law enforcement is no exception. It is when this fact is not acknowledged that prejudice rears its ugly head.

We count among our fiends many police officers from a wide variety of different departments. Both acting and retired members of law enforcement know us well. In fact, an active officer of the Oakland County Sheriff Department was welcomed by us at Christopher's funeral viewing with open arms. We do not paint with a broad brush.

It is our nature as followers of Christ to look for the best in everyone. Forgiving someone for the death of our youngest child is a heavy cross to bear but, nonetheless, it is something we are called to do. We struggle with this each and every day and know that if we are faithful to the Gospel teachings, we will be reunited with Christopher. There is no malice in our souls, only the wish that justice is served.

We would like to offer a sincere and heartfelt "Thank You" to the members of the law enforcement community who strive to do their honorable best. We also want to thank those courageous officers who testified under oath during depositions at personal risk of being viewed as traitors and treated as outcasts. All of you truly are heroes!

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