Officer Crushed to Death

Grader rams lieutenant's car as he responds to complaint in the Lakeside neighborhood; 4 local teen-agers are charged with murder

By Laura Knight

Teen-agers driving a stolen motor grader crushed and killed a police lieutenant at Lakeside Apartments yesterday morning.

Lt. Aaron O. Tise Jr. of the Winston-Salem Police Department responded to a complaint about people driving construction equipment at the apartments where he met the grader at about 3:30 on East Drive. Officer Dan Dodder was in a car behind him near the corner of State Street.

Cpt. L.D. Petree of the police department said that Tise saw the grader coming toward him and struggled to leave his car through the passenger door. But the grader hit the car and pushed it onto Tise's body, crushing him. Witnesses said that the grader dragged Tise about 16 yards, stripping off his police hat and shirt.

Then, as Dodder tried to escape through his passenger door, the grader smashed his car, spun it around, and kept going

Police arrested four teen-agers yesterday evening and charged them with murder in Tise's death.

Tise Gave Officers His All, Friends Say

By John Byrle

Lt. Ralph A. Johnson, who grew up with Tise, said yesterday:

"He was always falling in on calls — not to take over, but to really supervise. He just wanted to be involved and be a part of what they were doing."

"And I don't think he would have asked anybody in the world to do nothing that he wouldn't have done. And I think that's evidence."

See POLICE, Page 4

See OFFICERS, Page 4
3 of 4 Charged Have Records

I had been convicted last year of firing a shotgun into a police car.

By Will Lingo

One of the teen-agers charged yesterday in the death of Lt. Aaron G. Tise Jr. was sentenced to five years in prison last October after he was convicted of firing a shotgun into vehicles occupied by two police officers.

Tise was killed early yesterday when a grader ran over him in the Lakeside neighborhood off New Walkertown Road. Two of the teenagers who are charged in his death, Conrad Levern Crews and Jamarus Renard Crews, have addresses in Lakeside, and the other two live in northern Forsyth County.

The Crews brothers also are charged with stealing the grader from a construction site at Winston Lake Park.

Conrad Crews, 19, and Jamarus Crews, 16, whose addresses are listed as 251 Harrington Circle and 607 Gill St., respectively, are charged with murder and larceny of a motor vehicle.

Derrick Lamont Frierson, 19, of 1647 Brown Road and Theo Witherspoon, 19, of 231 Pine Tree Road are charged with murder.

Capt. L.G. Petree of the Winston-Salem Police Department said that detectives started questioning the four yesterday afternoon. They found suspects quickly, with the cooperation of residents, she said.

The teen-agers came in for questioning voluntarily, Capt. Petree said. Officers picked up two of them at their homes, and the other two came to the Public Safety Center on Cherry Street when they found out that officers were looking for them.

Police brought them to the Hall of Justice on Liberty Street about 5:30, and the charges were filed. The four were taken to the Forsyth County Jail, where they were held last night with no bond allowed.

District Attorney Thomas J. Keith said it appears that two of the teen-agers were on the grader when the collision occurred. But all four share responsibility, he said.

He said that it is too early to determine how prosecutors will proceed with the case.

All of the teen-agers except Witherspoon have criminal records. Conrad Crews' is the longest.

Conrad Crews was charged with assault with a deadly weapon on an officer, assault with a deadly weapon with intent to kill, and two counts of discharging a weapon into occupied property after a shooting in June 1991.

In that incident, police said that Crews and another man fired a shotgun at an off-duty officer and another officer after the officers stopped the men in the 100 block of North Cameron Avenue on suspicion of armed robbery. Officers did not return fire and arrested Conrad and another man. They arrested two other people in the car and charged them with armed robbery.

A judge dismissed the assault charges against Crews, but he was convicted of the two charges of discharging a firearm into officers' vehicles. He was sentenced on one of those counts and was released early because of crowding in the prison system.

Crews was on probation for a conviction of possession with intent to sell and deliver a counterfeit controlled substance in July 1991.

Jamarus Crews has outstanding felony charges of larceny of a motor vehicle and common-law robbery. Frierson is on unsupervised probation after being convicted of possession with intent to sell and deliver marijuana in March 1991.

Journal reporter Rich McKay contributed to this report.
Crews, 19, and Jamarus Renard Crews, 16, whose addresses are listed as 251 Harrington Circle and 607 Gill St., Derrick Lamont Frierson, 19, of 1647 Brown Road and Theo Witherspoon, 19, of 231 Pine Tree Road.

As the grader headed down East Drive, pulling Tise's car, it pushed two other cars and hit a third. It veered into the front yards of at least two apartment buildings before it returned to the street. It crossed New Walkertown Road, still dragging Tise's car and stopped within inches of a billboard.

All along East Drive, neighbors who had heard the crashes watched from windows and front steps.

At the top of the hill, Reginald Lamkin ran after the grader and stumbled on Tise's body, he said.

"I'm checking the officer's pulse, and I didn't feel nothing. I'm thinking, maybe I'm nervous, so I checked again real slowly, I didn't feel nothing. I said: 'He's dead. Call an ambulance.'"

FROM HER FRONT steps a few buildings down, Ethel M. Alexander saw Dodder lying next to his car. "I heard him saying, 'Somebody please help me;'" she said.

Dodder was later treated for back injuries at Forsyth Memorial Hospital and released.

Farther down the hill, John W. Jones was just getting home from his job at a bottling plant when he heard an engine rumbling.

His mother said she heard the sound of scraping metal. Then Jones saw the grader. Someone jumped from the cab and ran off between two buildings across the street. Jones said:

"I'm breaking down the street when I heard a loud noise. I saw the grader, and its front wheels lost contact with the ground, the driver probably lost control. Dodson said that workers left the grader parked the night before in a cleared area off New Walkertown Road with four other pieces of earth-moving equipment.

VANDALS TAMPERED with all five machines — the throttle on one, Jevers on another, Dodson said.

All but the grader, however, have safety mechanisms and require two ignition keys to start, Dodson said. The grader is more than 20 years old and the ignition could easily be jimmed with pliers or a knife, Dodson said.

As police studied the scene, a crowd of several hundred people gathered, watching police lift Tise's body. Police Officer S.E. Blemings (left) and Sgt. W.E. Hinson at the scene of the accident that killed Tise.
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Several witnesses said they did not see anyone driving the grader down the rest of the hill.

One woman said she saw a man jump from the grader, run and strip off his T-shirt. "Then he came back up to the scene like he didn't know what happened. Avenue, said that sparks flew from the machine as it dragged the car across New Walkertown Road and finally stopped in the ditch.

Grass around the grader ignited, and Allen ran for his fire extinguisher. When he returned, the fire was out and more officers had arrived.

POLICE SAID THAT the grader was stolen from a construction site about a half-mile southwest of Lakeside Apartments where Yates Construction Co. is grading a road bed to straighten Waterworks Road.

Capt. Petree said that a neighbor called the police about 1:30 to complain about people running construction machinery south of the apartments at Waterworks Road.

Police stayed about 30 minutes and found nothing and left, she said.

David H. Dodson, the project superintendent, said that once the grader rolled over the police car night before in a cleared area off New Walkertown Road with four other pieces of earth-moving equipment.

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As police studied the scene, a crowd of several hundred people gathered, watching police lift Tise's body into an ambulance and pick up his shirt and hat.

Edna Saunders, a neighbor, said: "My heart goes out to the family of that officer. He's a human being like all the rest of us."

Journal reporter Phoebe Zerwick contributed to this report.

OFFICERS

Continued From Page 1

in last night — guys out there working and answering calls, and he wanted to be there with them.

Tise, 46, normally arrived for work before his shift started and left long after the shift was over.

Johnson said. He took extra time to make sure that police reports were in order.

Tise's father, Aaron Tise, was a deputy with the Forsyth County Sheriff's Department for 33 years. Tise, the youngest of four children, joined the department in 1968, three years after he graduated from West Forsyth High School.

Tise's brother Mark, 18 years his senior, was also a police officer, but he left the department.

Tise inherited the nickname his brother had earned: Honeybee.

Lester G. Masencup, a retired sergeant, gave the Tises the nickname. He supervised Tise in the department's division of vice and narcotics in the mid-1970s. Even though Tise was a young officer he said, he left him in charge of more senior officers and the safe where narcotics detectives stored money with which to make drug buys.

"When Tise came and you asked him a question ... I knew what would come out would be the truth — whether it would hurt someone or not," Masencup said.

Tise was devoted to his family and to his church, officers said.

HE MARRIED his high-school sweetheart, the former Tanya Mock, and the couple have a 20-year-old son, Michael.

"Honeybee was the type person who spent his time off with his family," Johnson said. "You couldn't have a conversation with him where he didn't have something to say about his wife or his son."

Martha Tise, Tise's sister-in-law, said that Tise also liked to hunt. "He would go hunting, but I don't think he ever killed anything," she said. "He just loved to be outside."

Tise was promoted to sergeant in 1976 and became a lieutenant in 1978.

Jan Culler, the first female officer assigned to vice and narcotics, was Tise's partner in the late 1970s.

"He was always a perfect gentleman," she said. "He was gentle with children. He could lay his hand on a child and make everything right with the world."

Avery Dunn, who worked with Tise in narcotics, said that Tise did not drink — which posed a problem for an officer who was sometimes assigned to buy illegal liquor. But before officers went out to make a buy, he said, Tise would take a sip of liquor and spit it out. The odor convinced moonshiners that he was a drinker, Dunn said.

Tise, who supervised officers in the northern half of the city, helped set up a foot-patrol squad in Kimberly Park Terrace.

Lt. M.L. Branscome said that several hours after Tise died yesterday, a woman troubled by some problems in her neighborhood called the department and asked for Tise.

"He was someone people trusted and knew would do right."

OFFICERS TRUSTED Tise, too. They wore black bands across their badges yesterday to honor him, and the flags at the Public Safety Center flew at half-mast. Tise was the first Winston-Salem police officer to be killed on duty since 1981.

Assistant Chief E.L. Yokley said: "I don't know if people see cops as human beings. People see a uniform and sometimes they forget that there's a man in there, a man like any other man. A man with a family ... if they could have seen the faces of the officers that I saw out there, they'd have no doubts."

Journal reporter Rich McKay contributed to this report.