

A Night of Blood and Death Recalled for Md. Jury

Canadian Testifies of Struggle With Her Husband Over Knife

By MAUREEN O'HAGAN
Washington Post Staff Writer

She recounted the steak knife at her throat, the struggle on her bed and, suddenly, "blood everywhere." Alpha Patel, the Canadian dentist standing trial for manslaughter, held a Baltimore jury rapt yesterday as she described the night her husband died.

"He was hovering over me with this knife pointed down at my chest," Patel, 28, said from the witness stand. After flipping the much larger man off of her, she said, she wound up on top of him, holding onto his hands and "trying to keep [the knife] away from both of us."

"Viresh, what are you doing?" she recalled screaming. "I just grabbed his hands and ... saw this knife and thought he was about to kill me."

Alpha Patel testified that only after Viresh's mother, who was visiting, flicked on the light after hearing her son's screams did Alpha fully understand what had happened: She had stabbed her husband numerous times. "I felt something warm all over me, and I realized it must have been blood," she told the jury.

As her mother-in-law ran to call 911, Patel testified, her husband came at her again. "All of a sudden Viresh had gotten off the bed, and he was staggering and sort of lunging toward me," she said. Finally, "he just fell on his face."

Viresh Patel wound up with six knife wounds, one to the carotid artery. Alpha Patel, who said she has no recollection of holding the knife, told police that she was not injured in the struggle.

Alpha Patel, on trial for the second time after the jury deadlocked on a manslaughter charge, is accused of killing her husband in the early morning hours of March 24, 1999, after reading him a list of complaints about their marriage. She says she acted in self-defense after he tried to kill her.

Patel's testimony, which lasted more than two hours and is expected to continue today, was the first time the jury heard the defense's version of the case. The jurors craned in their seats to see Patel, dressed in a sari



Alpha Patel, outside courthouse in Baltimore, is on trial a second time after a jury deadlocked on the manslaughter charge in the stabbing death of her husband.

of pure white, talking about her rosary beads and the warm relationship she shared with her husband before his death.

The pair had been wed in an arranged marriage in May 1998. Although they had been alone together only a few times before they exchanged vows, both Alpha

and Viresh Patel seemed thrilled with the marriage at the time.

"He looked at me and said, 'Well, I think my search is over,'" Alpha recalled Viresh saying when they spent their first evening together without family members.

But shortly after the wedding, Patel testified, things soured. It was Viresh Patel's father who caused all their problems, she said. After the wedding, the young couple moved into their in-laws' home, near Buffalo, and quickly found that their lives were not their own. To make matters even more difficult for Alpha, her husband moved to Baltimore two weeks after the wedding to begin a medical residency. Alpha stayed behind in New York.

Alpha Patel testified that her father-in-law prohibited her from spending time with friends. "I was told in a very stern voice that I'm a married woman now, and I'm not supposed to hang around with single people," she recounted. He also would not allow her to move to Baltimore with her husband, even though she was lonely and wanted only to "nurture our marriage."

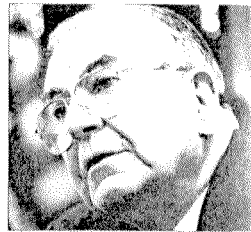
"He said both of us were immature and we were making a decision on an emotional level," Alpha Patel told the jury.

Viresh Patel was killed one day when Alpha secretly traveled to Baltimore to tell her husband that she was distraught, she had decided to stay with her parents in Saskatchewan for a while.

A Canadian professor who studies the role of Indian women testified for the defense that Alpha's situation in the marriage may have been difficult but that it was not unusual. Traditionally, said Sunera Thobani, an Indian bride is expected to move into the family home of her in-laws in what is known as a "joint family" tradition. There, the oldest man—in this case, Nandlal Patel—is typically in charge.

Boistering Alpha Patel's claims of self-defense, Thobani said it is extremely rare for an Indian woman to try to harm her husband. Instead, she might try to harm herself if she has problems with her marriage, she said.

She said some Indian men measure masculinity by how well a man can "control his woman," lending credence not only to Alpha Patel's description of family life with her in-laws but also to the defense theory that Viresh Patel tried to kill Alpha because she was trying to defy family tradition.



Rep. Herbert H. Bateman, who had battled health problems for more than a decade, planned to retire at the end of this term.

Rep. Herbert Bateman Dies at 72

Congressman Praised For Support of Military

By STEVEN GINSBERG
Washington Post Staff Writer

Rep. Herbert H. Bateman, who planned to retire at the end of this congressional session after serving Virginia's 1st District for 18 years, died in his sleep early yesterday.

The 72-year-old congressman did not respond when his wife, Laura, tried to wake him about 6:30 a.m. He was officially pronounced dead at 7:31 a.m. at Loudoun Hospital Center, press secretary Dan Scandling said.

Bateman was staying at the Lansdowne Resort in Loudoun County, where he was scheduled to play in a golf tournament hosted by Rep. Howard P. "Back" McKeon (R-Calif.).

Bateman (R), who had battled health problems for more than a decade, announced in January that he would retire at the end of this term after learning he had a cancerous lymph node in his neck. Bateman also had a mild heart attack in 1995 and had surgery last year to clear a partial blockage of an artery.

Scandling said that Bateman died of natural causes but that the exact cause was not known.

Bateman first won a U.S. House seat in 1982 after serving in the Virginia Senate for 15 years. He was a senior member of the Armed Services Committee and the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee.

Bateman was described yesterday by friends and colleagues as a tireless worker

Officers' Morale, Residents' Trust Eroded in Pr. George's

POLICE, From B1

George's Police Chief John S. Farrell asked Johnson to present the DNA report to the grand jury "as soon as possible," Holloway said. In response, Johnson told the police chief that he would present the new evidence to a county grand jury on Friday, according to Holloway.

Citing the lab report, police officials postponed a hearing scheduled for yesterday on whether to suspend Catlett as a result of his indictment. Catlett will remain on the county payroll for the time being, Holloway said.

whether a few officers are trigger-happy, or whether a deep-seated problem pervades the department.

"It's the number one topic on people's minds everywhere I go," said state Sen. Nathaniel Exum (D-Prince George's), whose district includes Capitol Heights and Glenarden. "You want to know why there are all these shootings with the police. They're asking is it the police that are protecting them or doing something to them."

Catlett was in uniform while working as a security guard at a dance at the West Latham Hills fire station when he shot Hopkins in the chest during a confrontation about 2:24 a.m. on Nov. 27.

The announcement of Catlett's indictment came a week after an undercover narcotics detective fatally shot an unarmed man after tailing him to Virginia. Fairfax County authorities said Cpl. Carlton B. Jones, 32, fired 16 rounds at Prince C. Jones, 25, as Prince Jones rammed his Jeep into the officer's unmarked Mitsubishi Montero. Prince Jones was hit in the back by five of the rounds. The two men are not related.

Riverdale lawyer Terrell N. Roberts III, who won a \$647,000 jury verdict against county police in an unrelated incident, said the Jones shooting reflected a sense among narcotics officers that they can take liber-

ties with suspects.

"That seems to be typical of officers assigned to this particular squad," Roberts said. "They seem to think they can do what they want and aren't accountable, and they can use any excuse that comes to mind with the expectation that it will fly."

But while Prince Jones's shooting has sparked scattered protests of outrage and captivated talk in courthouse hallways, the rash of shootings—five of which have been fatal—has also left many people numb.

It shows in the attitudes of police officers,

who report a drop in morale, according to Bartlett. And it shows in the attitudes of residents who believe police misconduct is business as usual.

"It's kind of like, 'Here we go again,'" said Beverly Mamone, a 40-year-old medical assistant who lives in Brandywine. "Sad to say, but you get immune to all this stuff."

"In interviews with Mamone and about a dozen others at the Prince George's County Fair last weekend, residents expressed conflicting opinions about the police department. Some offered support, and others were critical.

But several agreed that the latest incident was all too familiar.

"The chief needs to resign—some sort of housecleaning needs to take place," said Hope Umama, an Upper Marlboro resident who works as a defense attorney in the District. "Twelve shootings in the past 13 months? Something's going on. What I'd like to hear is, what is the chief doing. It's getting to be the way of life around here. The police are taking the law into their own hands. It's jungle justice."

Darees Moore, 30, of Forestville, said she is so leery of police she would go to a well-lit area before she responded to a county officer's order to pull off the road. "It's outrageous," Moore said. "It seems like

[Prince George's] cops aren't being trained enough. They're shooting first, then asking questions later."

Many residents, who know firsthand the dangers that officers encounter in some neighborhoods, said they don't know what to think any more, as they balance a growing distrust of police with sympathy for officers on patrol.

"I just feel like they're trying to protect the streets, which are tough these days," said John Nadell, 38, a Calvert County resident who works as a salesman in Mitchell-

ville Plaza.

Both Farrell and Fairfax County Commonwealth's Attorney Robert F. Horan Jr. have been criticized for releasing too little information about the Sept. 1 shooting. Lawyers for Prince Jones's family also accuse Horan of already having made up his mind about not charging Carlton Jones.

Rep. Albert R. Wynn (D-Prince George's), an outspoken official and critic of the string of controversies that have plagued the Prince George's police department during the past year, said yesterday that he met with the chief and that some of his concerns have been calmed.

Wynn met yesterday morning with Farrell and the two discussed, and sought solutions to, the many criticisms that the community has about the police department.

"We talked about what we can do to fix this, what can we do to stop these things from happening," Wynn said. "One thing I do not like, and I agree with the defense attorney on this, is that the prosecutor is making sound like there is much more information out there but then he won't release it."

Staff writers Ruben Castaneda, Hamil R. Harris, Paul Schwartzman and Ian Shapiro contributed to this report.

friends and colleagues as a tireless worker and strong advocate for the military, particularly in regard to the large shipbuilding industry in Newport News.

"Certainly I think he's going to be remembered as a vigorous defender of Virginia's interest in maintaining a strong military presence," said Robert D. Holsworth, director of the Center for Public Policy at Virginia Commonwealth University. "During the four rounds of base closings that took place during the last decade, his district was essentially entirely spared and in a couple instances actually gained jobs."

Colleagues also said Bateman made his mark as chairman of the subcommittee on military readiness, through which he headed an investigation of military preparedness.

Military readiness "is in the news these days, and a lot of that belongs to Herb Bateman," said Rep. Norman Sisisky (D-Va.), who also is on the Armed Services Committee. "He knew before the Pentagon knew they had trouble with readiness and, of course, he's been trying to rectify it since."

Bateman was one of the first of a wave of Virginia Democrats to switch to the Republican Party, moving in 1976.

"He was a historic figure in Virginia's political evolution," said Ed Matricardi, executive director of the Republican Party of Virginia. "He helped pave the way for lots of Democrats to become Republicans and for an old Byrd Democratic state to become a Republican state."

Gov. James S. Gilmore III (R) said in a statement: "The loss of Congressman Herb Bateman is sad news for all Virginians. With his more than 30 years of elected public service, he was a true Virginia statesman and a true friend."

Bateman's district forms a crescent that includes Stafford County and Fredericksburg in the north, along with the Northern Neck, Williamsburg and parts of Hampton and Newport News in the south. It also envelops Virginia's Eastern Shore.

Del. Jo Ann S. Davis (R-York) and former Fredericksburg mayor Lawrence Davies, a Democrat, are vying for Bateman's seat in the Republican-leaning district; analysts said yesterday that his death would have little impact on the race.

Bateman was born in Elizabeth City, N.C., and had lived in Newport News since childhood. He received a bachelor's degree in 1949 from the College of William and Mary and a law degree in 1956 from Georgetown University Law Center.

He served in the Air Force during the Korean War before becoming a high school teacher and lawyer.

Bateman is survived by his wife, Laura Yacobi Bateman, and their two children, Herbert H. Bateman Jr. and Laura Bateman. Funeral arrangements were not announced yesterday.

"It's a real loss for the country, and it's a real loss for the state," said Rep. Frank R. Wolf (R-Va.). "He has served Virginia very, very well for the past 30 years."

Attorney for Victim's Family Disputes Officer's Account

SHOOTING, From B1

gun—but not his badge—and say twice: "Police. Get back in your vehicle."

Before the officer could move his Montero, the Jeep moved forward, then sped backward into the Montero. This happened a second time. When the Jeep backed toward him a third time, Carlton Jones fired repeatedly.

"He's not a cowboy in any way," Leigbig said. "He's upset about the shooting. He certainly had no intention of anybody dying. He truly, that night, was in fear, and he shot in self-defense."

Leigbig said Prince George's police have ordered Carlton Jones not to speak about the case pending the outcome of both the Fairfax criminal investigation and the Prince George's internal probe. He is scheduled to give a formal statement today to Prince George's investigators, and Leigbig said he has fully cooperated with Fairfax detectives.

Hed J. Williams, an attorney for Prince Jones's family, immediately disputed Leigbig's account. "Here we go again with another spin on the case," Williams said. "We now know, from the officer's own mouth, that he pulled his gun in Virginia, where he had no jurisdiction whatsoever, and technically assaulted a person. From the time Prince Jones got off of the car to the time he got back in, the officer could have left that scene. This officer could have left that scene. This officer, as a result of this dangerous situation, mur-

dered Prince Jones."

The incident stirred immediate outrage in Prince George's County, where police have shot 12 people in the past 13 months, and the FBI soon announced that it would investigate. Leigbig said Carlton Jones was particularly upset over the national attention the case has received, including reports that civil rights activists such as Al Sharpton and Martin Luther King III were considering protesting the shooting. The officer was inspired by Martin Luther King Jr. to join the police force, Leigbig said. Both Joneses are black; they were not related and had never met.

Although Williams and others have questioned whether deadly force was justified, Leigbig said, "the shooting is justified if he felt in fear of his life, and he did. He was not shooting at the vehicle because he feared the guy would get away. He shot because he felt the person was using the vehicle to harm him, and he felt his life was in danger."

Leigbig, who is hired regularly by police unions to represent officers, added: "It's awful hard for a person who isn't there to determine if he [Carlton Jones] was in fear for his life. Professionals in this field would view the overall situation as a valid case of self-defense. I think the prosecutors view it that way. I think most people would view it that way."

Fairfax County Commonwealth's Attorney Robert F. Horan Jr. said that he hopes to make a decision this week on whether to prosecute Carlton Jones and

that physical evidence recovered so far "is consistent with the officer's claim that he was being rammed by the vehicle when he fired the shots."

Leigbig, who was called into the case within hours of the shooting, said Carlton Jones and his sergeant went to Kennedy Street in the District looking for a man allegedly involved in both drug dealing and the theft of a Prince George's officer's gun. They hoped that by following the man, they could learn where he lived or where he operated, Leigbig said.

The man they were looking for drove a black Jeep Cherokee with tinted windows, and when Carlton Jones spotted such a car on Kennedy Street, he jotted down the Pennsylvania license plate. Leigbig said the two police officers followed, then lost the Jeep.

The Prince George's officers decided to return to Hyattsville, to a reputed associate of the man they were looking for. "The same Jeep showed up there," Leigbig said, again with a Pennsylvania plate. The officers checked the license through the dispatcher, found no warrants, and waited to see where he would lead them. Sometime after 2 a.m., the driver reappeared and headed back to Washington, then through the city and into Fairfax, Leigbig said.

When Prince Jones reached Beechwood Lane, he pulled into a nearby driveway and turned his lights off, Leigbig said. The officer didn't see the Jeep and drove past the driveway. The Jeep then pulled

out of the driveway, and Carlton Jones stopped, backed into the driveway, and was moving forward when the Jeep backed so close to the officer's door that the door couldn't be opened, Leigbig said.

"The driver of the Jeep got out of the car," he said. "He didn't say anything. Carlton [Jones] removed his weapon from his holster, held it up and said, 'Police. Get back in your car,' twice."

Leigbig said Prince Jones still said nothing, returned to his Jeep, pulled forward, then reversed into the Montero. Pulling further forward, he reversed into the Montero a second time, Leigbig said. The officer was unable to get his car in gear to avoid being rammed.

"Each time, it was coming back faster," Leigbig said of the Jeep. As it approached a third time, Carlton Jones fired 16 shots, with glass from the Jeep's rear window spraying into the Montero, Leigbig said. He said the officer didn't think the Jeep hit him a third time. After the shots, the Jeep drove away. Carlton Jones briefly thought about pursuing the Jeep, but instead stopped. Leigbig said two witnesses were outside watching, and Horan has said there are independent witnesses to the incident.

Leigbig also clarified that Prince George's police policy allows officers to fire at another vehicle when "the other vehicle is operated in a manner to strike an officer or citizen," Leigbig provided a copy of the policy, which Prince George's police would not release.