



SOUTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

Elizabeth G. Patterson, J.D., State Director, P.O. Box 1520, Columbia, S.C. 29202-1520

Ms. Karen S. Carter
Director, York County

P.O. Box 261
York, South Carolina 29745

To: Charlene Blackwelder
Rock Hill PD

My name is Rebecca L. Herron and I am an investigator with the Department of Social Services. I am writing this for Charlene Blackwelder with the Rock Hill Police Department. This letter is an account of the interview I conducted with Mr. Billy Cope and Mrs. Mary Cope on November 29, 2001 at 3:45pm.

Mr. Cope stated that Amanda had her own bedroom and had for the past three years. He stated that Jessica and Kyla shared a room and he and his wife had the third bedroom. He stated that his room was directly across from Amanda's room and Jessica and Kyla's room was next to Amanda's down the hall from his. He stated that he slept with his door open at night and so did Jessica and Kyla. He stated that the hall light was left on for Jessica and Kyla and that Amanda slept with her door closed due to the light shining into her room. He stated that Kyla went to bed around 9:30pm, Jessica at 10:30pm and Amanda at 11:30pm due to needing to practice her violin after her mom left for work on third shift. He stated that everything was normal on the night of November 28th, and it was just like any other night. He stated that he went to bed shortly after all the girls did. He stated that he has sleep apnea and he was required to sleep with a mask over face that forced air into his nose to keep him breathing at night. He stated that the machine ran constantly all night and was very loud. He stated on the morning of November 29, 2001 he woke up and called from his room for Amanda to get him a glass of water. He stated that he got no response and called for her again. He stated that it was strange because she always answered him with a "yes sir." He stated that he screamed as loud as he could the third time and

with still no response he got up and ran to her door. He stated that he had to kick the door in due to Amanda having her closet door opened against the bedroom door to keep more of the hall light out of her room. He stated that he tripped and stubbed his toe on the bed rail and he saw Amanda lying face down on the bed. He stated that he rolled her over and her shirt was pulled up over the back of her head and her bra was up over one breast. He stated he jerked her shirt down and by that time Jessica and Kyla were at Amanda's door. He stated he told them to go to the living room. He stated that Amanda was cold to the touch, she was purple, her lips were five times their normal size and her tongue was protruding and swollen. He stated that she was stiff and that her arms were up under her chin and hands grasping at the ribbon from her favorite blanket that had been torn away from the edge of the blanket. He stated he moved her arms down and that she automatically went back into the position they were when he found her. He stated that her room was in normal condition except the bed was shifted away from the wall somewhat. He stated that he had not been in her room all week and that he rarely went in there. He stated he then called 911 and the Fire Department was the first to respond. He stated that the blanket ribbon was wrapped around her neck five times. He stated that mom had not been home and was at work. Mom stated that she worked third shift at Liner Health Products. (third shift begins at 11:00pm). She stated that she didn't see how Amanda looked and as dad recounted the story it was the first time Mrs. Cope had heard any details of the events of the morning and the condition of her daughter. Cm observed mom to be very upset and crying and cried out when heard of her daughter's appearance. She stated that everything fine when went to work night of November 28, 2001. Mom and Dad both stated that Amanda was an outgoing and happy child. They stated that she did well in school and was on the honor roll. They stated that she had friends and played the violin. They stated there was no discipline problems with Amanda and that she was a very sweet and giving child. Dad stated he only took blood pressure medicine and Mom had a prescription for Zanax called in earlier that day by her OBGYN Dr. Bajha. Mom and Dad stated that they had completed parenting classes, marriage counseling and family counseling. They stated they had also had a Psychological Evaluation completed earlier due to prior DSS involvement. Dad's DOB-8/13/63, Mom's DOB-10/13/69. Dad and Mom denied any sexual abuse of the children by anyone, denied any mental injury to the children, and stated that normal discipline for the children was time out, grounding, no tv, no phone, can't go places. Dad stated that he feels like the incident was more likely an accident than anything else. He stated that Amanda did have windows in her room, two of them, but that they were shut and locked when he entered the room the morning of November 29, 2001.

Rebecca L. Herron

Rebecca S. Herron

HSSII