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Lucas case gets bizarre twist

Man tortured by Juarez police confessed, city detective says

By Bill Thompson
El Paso Herald-Post

An El Paso police detective testified this week that he watched two Juarez policemen torture a man until he confessed to a murder later linked to Henry Lee Lucas.

The detective, Sgt. Santiago Apodaca, supervisor of detectives in the Crimes Against Persons division, is a nephew of Librada Apodaca, who was ax-murdered in her Lower Valley home in 1983.

Santiago Apodaca said in a sworn deposition that he was present when two Juarez state policemen, identified only as Reyes and Calanche, held an electric cattle prod against the genitals of a Juarez man until he confessed that he killed Librada Apodaca.

According to the deposition, the man, Geovany Chavez, later recanted the confession. Apodaca was asked in the deposition if blood and semen samples from the Juarez man matched stains found on the murdered woman's underwear, but didn't answer. While Apodaca was giving the deposition,

which is a formal court procedure, Doris Sipes, an attorney for Lucas, told Apodaca that he should not give further testimony until he had talked to his own attorney.

"The hairs are rising on my arms," Sipes said in the deposition. "I have a gut feeling that you should not say anything else until you get an attorney. I think you are about to tell me something I don't want to hear."

Apodaca was beaten and killed with an ax in her Lower Valley home on May 27, 1983. Sgt. Apodaca visited the crime scene, then asked Lt. See TORTURE, Page A-7

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Don Lanahan, chief of the Crimes Against Persons unit, if he could stay on the case, the deposition said.

Lanahan asked Apodaca, "Can you treat it like any other case?" and Apodaca told him he could, according to the deposition.

Apodaca testified in his deposition that "there was probably more than one person involved

in the murder," because of things he saw at the crime scene.

"There were various fingerprints that were not identified," he said in the deposition. "That is the reason I think more than one person is involved."

Apodaca testified that Lucas's blood type was different from that found at the murder scene, according to Department of Public Safety laboratory reports.

In January 1986, Apodaca said in the deposition, he went to Juarez to get blood and semen samples from a man named Chavez on the orders of the district attorney's office.

"There was a verbal request from the DA to question Chavez and get the samples," Apodaca said.

But that was not the first

PHOTO

time Apodaca had met Chavez. Sometime before January 1984, Chavez, a Mexican citizen who sometimes visited El Paso, had been a suspect in the murder. Sgt. Apodaca's father, Jim Apodaca, brother of Librada Apodaca, told police that Chavez had done some gardening work for his sister the week of the murder.

Apodaca asked Juarez police to question Chavez and they reported that he denied that he killed the woman, according to the deposition.

Then Apodaca and Detective Joe Bailon went to Juarez to interrogate Chavez, the deposition said.

"The state police arrested him. There wasn't any place in the police station to question him, there were so many people," Apodaca testified. He said the state police loaded Chavez into their car and he and Bailon followed them "to some sand hills near the city dump."

Juarez police asked Chavez if he committed the murder, and Chavez said he didn't, according to the deposition.

"Then they told him to take his pants down and one of the Juarez policemen took an electric cattle prod from the trunk of his car," Apodaca said in the deposition.

"The Juarez officer held the cattle prod against Chavez' genitals and he screamed, 'I did it, I did it, I did it,'" Apodaca testified. "He (Chavez) was in, I guess, call it pain."

Apodaca said he told the Juarez policemen to stop and he asked Chavez for details of the murder.

"I went in through the window," Chavez told Apodaca, according to the deposition. "I went to where the old woman was in bed and I killed her. I stabbed her to death with a knife. Then I got a television set and I left."

"I said, 'that's not what happened. She was killed with an

ax. Did you really kill her?'" Apodaca asked Chavez.

"I did not commit the murder. I swear to my mother, I swear to God, I swear to all the saints," Chavez said.

"We took him back to the Juarez police station and released him," Apodaca said in the deposition.

He said he thanked the Juarez police for their cooperation.

At one point during the deposition, the defense attorney asked Apodaca, "It's true, isn't it, that the DPS lab reports showed that the report on Chavez showed that his blood type and secretor (semen) type is the same as that found on Librada Apodaca?"

Assistant District Attorney Carol Penneck then objected to the question and Apodaca didn't answer.

Apodaca testified that the local investigation was halted

after a Texas Ranger called El Paso police and told them Lucas, who confessed to hundreds of murders nationwide then recanted most of them, had said he killed a woman in El Paso with an ax.

Apodaca told the Herald-Post Friday that Lucas told the Texas Rangers details of his aunt's slaying.

Apodaca said he couldn't comment further on the case. "It will all come out at the trial," he said.

Assistant District Attorney Bill Moody said he didn't think the deposition "will have a bearing on the case," and that the district attorney's office is prepared to take the case against Lucas on Sept. 8. Moody said his office has no intention of dismissing its case against Lucas.

"We haven't seen anything to warrant filing such a motion at this time," Moody said.

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