

Birmingham News (AL)
POLICE BLAME ABUSE FOR DEATH OF BABY

November 29, 1997

Section: NEWS

Page: 01-A

Correction: Correction (): Librarian's Note:

Karin Meadows and Maggie Hall Walsh News staff writers
Robin and Douglas Chrisman planned to celebrate Thanksgiving day with their only grandchild, 7-week-old Christian Burnson [See Librarian's Note] of Adamsville.

But instead of turkey dinner and family togetherness, the Georgia couple spent the day at Children's Hospital in Birmingham and watched their 8 pound, 3 ounce grandson die after he was removed from life support at 11:15 a.m.

Police say Christian died from abuse.

No one has been charged in his death.

An adult who was living with Christian and his parents - Bobbie Jackson, 18 and Robert Burnson, 27 - was taken to jail Wednesday on a charge of violating the sex offender notification law.

David Easley, 47, is in the Jefferson County Jail on \$10,000 bond, sheriff's officials said. Baby,
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Christian suffered from symptoms consistent with Shaken Baby Syndrome, including retinal hemorrhaging, bleeding in the brain and bruises on his chest and back, Jefferson County Sheriff's Deputy B.D. Oden said Friday.

He also had four broken ribs, a large bruise on his forehead and a cut on the bottom of his foot, she said.

The child was brought to Children's Hospital early Wednesday morning by his parents, who said they were helping some friends move when some boxes fell on the baby, Ms. Oden said.

But the child's mother told a different story on Friday. Ms. Jackson said her baby boy was injured while she was working the night shift at her job at the Waffle House in Pelham.

She said she left her home on Martin Drive in Adamsville about 7 p.m. Tuesday to buy some shoes before she went to work at 9 p.m. Ms. Jackson said that when she arrived at work she called Burnson to see how Christian was and Burnson said the child was fine. He told her he was going to take a nap and have Easley watch Christian while he was asleep, Ms. Jackson said.

At 4 a.m. she got a call saying Christian was sick and had a fever, Ms. Jackson said. She rushed home and found the child unresponsive and took him to the hospital.

"The last time I saw him he was fine and he was holding my finger and looking around and cooing," Ms. Jackson said.

Mrs. Chrisman said her daughter was an inexperienced mother who once called her and said Christian received a cut on his head when she accidentally hit him against a coffee table when he was choking.

In another incident, Chrisman said he was alarmed to see his daughter tossing the newborn in the air to burp him.

Mrs. Chrisman said the baby had gained less than a pound since his Oct. 15 birth. She said she suspected Christian was being neglected, but didn't recognize the signs that he may have been abused before receiving the injuries that killed him.

"I'm guilty of that baby's death. I thought they were just ignorant. I thought they would figure out how to be good parents," Mrs. Chrisman said.

The Chrismans said Thanksgiving always will bring painful memories of the day they lost their grandson, but Christmas also will be a painful time for them.

"I've already got his Christmas presents here," Mrs. Chrisman said. "I don't have one picture of Christian. I don't have anything. The only thing I have of him is the memory of him in that hospital bed all broken up with a tube down his throat."

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Birmingham News (AL)
PARENTS BURY THEIR DEAD BABY, THEN GO TO JAIL

December 2, 1997

Section: NEWS

Page: 01-A

Correction: Correction (): Librarian's Note:

Chanda Temple News staff writer

Hours after Robert Burnson [See Librarian's Note] and Bobbie Jackson buried their 7-week-old son on Monday, they went to jail.

Burnson, 27, was charged with murder in connection with the death of the couple's son, Christian. Ms. Jackson, 18, was charged with public intoxication, said Jefferson County Sheriff's Sgt. Bob Holley.

Holley said Ms. Jackson's arrest was not connected to the death of her son, but was made after she showed up for questioning Monday intoxicated.

"I couldn't let her walk out the building after seeing her in that condition," Holley said. "She was pretty much out of it."

Ms. Jackson and Burnson came in at about 4:30 p.m. Monday for questioning, Holley said.

The child, who police said had been abused, suffered from symptoms consistent with Shaken Baby Syndrome, a sheriff's deputy said. Christian was taken off life support Thursday morning at Children's Hospital. Baby, Page 2A Page 1A The baby had retinal hemorrhaging, bleeding in his brain and bruises on his chest and back, a deputy said. He also had four broken ribs, a large bruise on his forehead and a cut on his foot, the deputy said.

Holley said Burnson's arrest came after officials reviewed findings from the Jefferson County coroner's office, talked to the parents and interviewed a man who had been staying with the couple in their home on Martin Drive in Adamsville.

David Easley, 47, was arrested Wednesday after officials discovered that he was a convicted sex offender from Illinois, but he had failed to register with local authorities as required by state law. Easley remained in the Jefferson County Jail on \$10,000 bond Monday night.

Holley said it was coincidence that the couple was arrested immediately after their baby's funeral.

"It just worked out that way," he said.

Burnson was jailed without bond, and Ms. Jackson remained in jail Monday night on a \$500 bond.

Holley said Ms. Jackson and Easley are still suspects in the case.

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Birmingham News (AL)
MOTHER, MAN ARE CHARGED IN DEATH OF INFANT

December 3, 1997

Section: NEWS

Page: 01-B

Chanda Temple News staff writers

The mother of a 7-week-old baby who died at Children's Hospital on Thanksgiving Day has been charged with child abuse and a convicted sex offender living in the same house has been charged with murder.

Bobbie Jackson, 18, was in the Jefferson County Jail on Tuesday night charged with child abuse in connection with the death of her child, Christian Burson.

The child's father, Robert Burson, was charged with murder Monday, and roommate David Easley was charged with murder Tuesday, said Jefferson County Sheriff's Sgt. Bob Holley.

Holley said Christian had prior abuse in addition to the injuries that put him in Children's Hospital last week, and any of the three adults could have stopped it.

"I think any of the three could have looked at that child and stopped the abuse," he said.

Christian showed symptoms consistent with Shaken Baby Syndrome, including retinal hemorrhaging when he arrived at Children's Hospital on Nov. 26, said sheriff's deputy B.D. Oden.

Christian also had four broken ribs, a large bruise on his forehead and a cut on the bottom of his foot, said Oden.

The parents told hospital workers that bruises on the baby were there before Nov. 26, Holley said. However, the parents first reported they were in a car accident, and boxes in the car fell on the baby, Holley said.

"But since that time, they retracted that and said they are not sure," he said.

He said Ms. Jackson, who has dated Burson off and on since she was 16, was not home when the child was injured and taken to the hospital during the early hours of Nov. 26.

Easley, a convicted sex offender from Illinois who lived with the couple, occasionally babysat.

"There were periods of time in there that they said they were asleep and Easley was watching the child," he said.

Holley said Easley failed to notify authorities when he moved to Alabama six years ago as required by state law. Police arrested him last week for the violation.

Holley said the case has been tough for him.

"I've worked homicides before but not on a 7-week-old child. It just tore me up," he said. "It just ruined my Thanksgiving, to tell you the truth."

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Birmingham News (AL)

PARENTS, SEX OFFENDER JAILED IN BABY'S DEATH

March 12, 1998

Section: NEWS

Page: 05-B

Vickii Howell

A dead baby's parents and a convicted sex offender who lived with them were ordered to jail after a Jefferson County district judge sent their case to a grand jury Wednesday.

They are charged in the death of 7-week-old Christian Burson, whose body bore signs of abuse and neglect, according to medical testimony. The child died in November 1997.

The infant's father, Robert Burson, and David Leigh Easley, a convicted sex offender from Illinois who lived with them, were charged with capital murder because of the victim's age.

Easley also is charged with failure to register with authorities as a convicted sex offender. The child's mother, Bobbie Jackson, was charged with child abuse.

Defense attorneys tried to have Judge O.L. "Pete" Johnson dismiss the cases, saying prosecutors could not show that the shaken-baby type injuries that damaged his brain were inflicted a few hours before the child died in Adamsville.

But prosecutor Mike Anderton said Christian died while in the care of Burson and Easley. He said bloodstains were found on the baby's crib and on Easley's pants. He said telephone records suggest that Burson didn't call Ms. Jackson, his commonlaw wife, to tell her that the baby was ill, as he told authorities.

Anderton also argued that medical testimony indicated that Christian was malnourished, dehydrated and bruised all over his body. Jefferson County Medical Examiner Robert Brissie testified that the child had relatively old bruises on his head, four cracked ribs that were healing and cuts on the soles of his feet.

Anderton said Ms. Jackson should have been aware of the abuse. "She put up with it and apparently tolerated it for some time," he said.

Johnson ordered Burson and Easley to be held at the county jail without bond. He set Ms. Jackson's bond at \$60,000.

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