

TAYLOR KILLED BY POLICE 1 YEAR AGO -- JUSTICE PENDING



Jerry Ray Taylor was shot and killed on January 17, 1971, by a 22 year old rookie Dallas police officer, J W King. Now, more than one year later the case is going to be taken to court, despite the efforts of CCA officials to hush it up.

Ever since this case was initially thrown out by the Dallas Grand Jury (one week after Taylor was killed), the police department, the entire City Council, the City Attorney Bickley and Mayors Johnson and Wise have tried their best to ignore this case. It is only because of the diligent efforts of the Taylor family and friends that this case will be re-opened so that justice may be done. (Taylor left three children -- all under five -- and a wife.) Taking this case to court, however, does not necessarily mean justice will be done. There may not be justice in this case unless the everyday citizens of Dallas help by writing in to the papers, and otherwise making their voices heard.

To illustrate what the Taylor family is up against, consider the different versions of what actually happened the night of January 17, 1971.

All accounts of the story agree about the way that rookie patrolman J.W.King (who was taking home a youth who had been in a traffic accident) encountered the Taylor vehicle. The Taylor vehicle was detained by King after Taylor had pulled around the corner of the Camp Wisdom access road off R L Thornton and stopped on the apron of a Texaco station on the corner. All accounts also agree that Officer King turned on his red lights after he saw a passenger in Taylor's car -- a hitch-hiker -- starting to get out at the stop sign, sitting back down, and then getting out when Taylor pulled around the corner and stopped on the apron. From here on, the accounts disagree.

The Dallas Morning News and Times Herald both reported that Taylor and a friend had picked up a hitch-hiker and supposedly tried to rob him. Both CCA papers also reported that when the police car turned on its lights, the hitch-hiker jumped out, ran over and told Officer King that he had been robbed. According to the Times Herald, in an article written January 18, 1971 by Ed Spencer, the hitch-hiker "leaped from the car and ran to the police cruiser where he breathlessly told King and [passenger] that the man in the car ahead had taken his empty billfold after giving him a ride."

However, the hitch-hiker told members of the New Bois d'Arc Patriots that this was not what he had told Officer King at all. He gave us a written, signed statement saying that Taylor and Taylor's friend had looked at pictures of girls in his billfold, and that Taylor's friend had "showed one of the pictures to Jerry [Taylor] and said 'Ain't she pretty?' And then he gave me back the billfold." The hitch-hiker, who was hitching to DeSoto, told us that he had originally planned to get out on Hampton and Camp Wisdom and catch another ride from there. But Taylor's friend had told the hitch-hiker he could probably catch a ride quicker at that hour (2:00 am) on R.L.Thornton than on Hampton. The hitch-hiker agreed. He said that Taylor, who was driving and had apparently not heard this conversation, stopped at the stop sign on the access road, turned the corner onto Camp Wisdom and started toward Hampton...

"So as Jerry stopped, I started to get out, but Jerry went on and turned the corner right on Camp Wisdom and went ten or twelve yards before [Taylor's friend] told him I wanted out on R.L.Thornton so I could get a ride easier. I told him that was right, and after he stopped I said thanks for the ride and I started to get out again. As I opened the door [Taylor's friend] noticed the police behind us and said 'Hey, man, the cops are back there.' I said 'Do y'all want me to wait in the car or what?' [Taylor's friend] said, 'No, go on, you hadn't done nothing.'

"As I got out, I walked past the squad car and the cop signaled me to get in. I asked him, 'What. What did you say?' Then he motioned again for me to get in. I got in the squad car, and he [Officer King] asked me if they were trying to retain me, and I said 'No.' Then I told him [Officer King] the story of why they went around that corner. Then I started to get out of the squad car and they [Taylor and his friend] were walking up."

(over)

Here again the CCA papers told a different story. The Dallas Morning News, in an article written January 18, 1971, by Robert Finklea, makes it sound like Jerry Taylor and friend were going to attack Officer King: "Taylor walked to King's side and placed his left hand on the door handle and his right hand in his right front pants pocket.

"King said he ordered Taylor to remove his hand from the pocket, but the man failed to do so. King said he repeated his request three more times.

"King said Taylor then backed away, placing his left hand under his coat on the right side. King kicked the door open, pulled his revolver and fired three times at Taylor..."

But the hitch-hiker told us: "...I heard King say 'Get your hands out of your pockets.' He said it twice, real fast. I wasn't real sure who he was talking to. I thought he was taking to me at first. I looked back in the car [squad car] and he [Officer King] started shooting. He shot three times -- two times and then one more. Then everything happened real fast. I remember [Taylor's friend] said 'You've killed him. You've murdered him.' Then he turned his gun on us, and radioed for help. When the other cops got there, King put his hand over his mouth, and it looked like he went over toward the gas station, and I figured he threw up."

According to the hitch-hiker, Jerry Taylor had no coat on, and appeared to have his hand in his pants pocket because of the cold weather.

Although the passenger in the police car said Taylor pulled a knife with a 4" blade out of his right pocket with his right hand, a later report by police revealed the pocket knife was in Taylor's left pocket and concluded that "it was unlikely he was reaching for it when the fatal bullet struck him." It is also interesting to note that for all the talk about robbery, Taylor's friend was never charged.

Several days after Taylor's death, Robert Finklea of the Morning News went to Taylor's widow to see the knife and said this about it: "It was old and showed many years of use. The blade measured only 2½ inches long and was black with rust and grease. The knife was difficult to open and very dull."

However the investigator of the Internal Affairs Division of the Police Department, Robert O. Dixon, told the Greater Dallas Community Relations Board that he had interviewed Officer King about the incident and had concluded that King *felt* the hitch-hiker was being robbed, and that King *felt* Taylor and Taylor's friend were going to assault him. "Therefore," says Dixon, "His [King's] state of mind was a deciding factor in this case."

There is no doubt that Dixon is right about Officer King's state of mind. But that only explains what King did -- it does not excuse it. Adolf Hitler's state of mind was no doubt a deciding factor in causing the death of masses of people. Preston Smith's state of mind obviously had something to do with the Texas stock fraud. Lee Harvey Oswald's state of mind undoubtedly contributed to his actions on November 22, 1963. Whether insane, drunk or scared, state of mind does not excuse anybody. The killing of an innocent citizen, the resulting poverty of his widow and three children -- these things can never be excused. There is no doubt that reforms are needed for the police department -- ranging from better training and higher pay, to community control and two officers in each car, but when the police department refuses to even admit its shortcomings it is unlikely that it is honestly interested in reform.

Now, if the City, the Police and Officer King would be big enough to stand up and admit they were wrong -- then there would be a possibility of justice. But as long as they hide behind their authority -- as long as they have the option to find themselves innocent -- there will be no justice for any of us. Only if we support ourselves, only if we stand together behind what we know is right -- will there ever be any guarantee of justice.

You can help by writing or calling the newspaper office, Police Internal Affairs, City Council members, the City Attorney's office and your congressman, and tell them what you think should be done in this case. Only if they hear people's voices will they take into account what people are saying. Some phone numbers and addresses are listed below.

Dallas Morning News, Communications Center, Dallas (Letters to the Editor)

Dallas Times Herald, Herald Square, Dallas (Letters to the Editor)

Robert O. Dixon, Internal Affairs, Dallas Police Department - 748-9711, ext. 1166

Officer Jerry W. King, Oak Cliff Substation, Dallas Police Department, 748-9711, ext. 681



NEW BOIS d'ARC PATRIOTS

P.O. Box 45574, Dallas, Texas 75245

Phone: 526-6183