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Trial of former LPD officer begins

29-year veteran officer faces felony assault, armed criminal action charges related to 2007 shooting

From LDR Staff

The trial of a former Lebanon police officer charged with two felonies after he allegedly shot a woman during a high-speed chase got under way today in Laclede County Circuit Court.

Douglas E. Duerden, 57, of Eldridge, was charged Dec. 13, 2007, with a Class A felony of first-degree assault and with felony armed criminal action. Both charges, brought by Special Prosecutor Ted Bruce of the Missouri Attorney General's Office after an investigation by the Missouri State Highway Patrol, alleged that Duerden caused "serious physical injury" to Shannon Rogers when he shot her during a chase on West Missouri 32 on April 21, 2007.

Duerden is represented by Larry Tyrrell of Wright County. Judge William R. Hass of Springfield is presiding over the trial.

Shortly after the chase, on April 23, 2007, the investigation was turned over by Lebanon police to the Highway Patrol. At that time, Laclede County Prosecutor Angie Hemphill Wright recused herself. Duerden was a 29-year veteran of the Lebanon Police Department. He retired with the rank of sergeant from the department Aug. 22, 2007, according to city officials. The alleged shooting came to light when the charges were filed four months later.

Duerden has been free after posting \$5,000 cash or surety bond with special conditions.

According to a probable cause statement from the patrol, Rogers, then 23, was a passenger in a stolen vehicle driven by Roger Speer, then 43, of Camdenton, on April 21, 2007. Speer did not stop when Duerden displayed lights and siren, and a pursuit ensued that involved Duerden and several other officers.

"Sgt. Duerden admitted to his chief, Sam Mustard, that during the pursuit, he fired his weapon several times at the stolen vehicle and that he did so with the intent to kill (inhabitants). Duerden told the chief that 'he felt he was waiting to set someone up to kill them, and that is why he no longer makes traffic stops on (his) shift,'" the probable cause statement said.

Rogers suffered a gunshot wound to her upper arm, the investigator said. A Lebanon police report obtained by The Daily Record revealed that Rogers' 5-month-old son also was in the vehicle at the time of the alleged shooting.

A photograph purporting to show the path of the bullet, taken by Lebanon police, indicated it passed between the bucket seats of the vehicle, an El Camino, beside the console area where the infant's seat reportedly was secured.

Speer was sentenced Sept. 21, 2007, by Circuit Judge Greg Kays to a total of eight years in prison on various charges, including child endangerment and resisting arrest, stemming

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from the car theft and subsequent chase.

Rogers was not charged in the incident.

When the alleged shooting came to light after Duerden was charged, city officials admitted that they left the original incident report incomplete despite learning later that Duerden had discharged his weapon.

Former City Administrator Joe Knapp said, once the investigation was turned over to the Highway Patrol, the incident "became an internal personnel

matter."

The incident report did not mention that a weapon was fired or that a woman was injured. Interviewed in December of 2007, then-Police Chief Sam Mustard and Knapp acknowledged that the city decided not to amend the report after they were told about the shooting.

An investigative report dated May 11 by Chief Mustard says Duerden told him on April 23 that "during the chase Saturday night he had fired several shots at the fleeing

stolen vehicle."

Investigative reports and the incident report were obtained by The Daily Record after a Sunshine Law request, subsequent to filing of charges.

Under the Sunshine Law, police incident reports are to include "date, time, specific location, name of the victim and immediate facts and circumstances surrounding the initial report of a crime or incident." They are open records. Investigative reports become open records when the investigation concludes.