

All evidence pointed to justified shooting at Log - Batavian, The (NY) - May 10, 2018

May 10, 2018 | Batavian, The (NY) | Howard B. Owens

By the time Deputy Ryan Young arrived at the Log Cabin Restaurant in Indian Falls at 11 p.m. on April 11, he knew a customer had caused a disturbance in the restaurant and that the customer had fired at least two shots from a firearm.

As Young and other deputies arrived in the parking lot that Wednesday night, they heard another shot being fired.

Keith Kent, a 61-year-old logging company owner from Albion, spotted by deputies in the parking lot carrying a handgun, did not respond to verbal commands to drop his weapon.

At a press conference today about the shooting, First Assistant District Attorney Melissa Cianfrini said, "He began to advance in the direction of Deputy Young, raising and ultimately pointing his revolver at Deputy Young. Deputy Young fired several rounds and Mr. Kent was shot."

Kent was hit in his neck and grazed by a bullet across his back. He was pronounced dead at the scene.

Following a month-long investigation by State Police -- that District Attorney Lawrence Friedman characterized as "thorough" -- a Grand Jury reviewed the evidence and returned what is known as a "no bill," which means the Grand Jury found no reason to charge Young with a crime.

Friedman said the Grand Jury ruled the shooting was justified.

While Friedman and Cianfrini are prohibited by law from discussing anything that happened during the Grand Jury hearing, they are free to discuss what the State Police investigation uncovered.

The narrative of events starts with Kent trying to talk with a woman at the bar of the Log Cabin.

"He was talking with the woman at the bar and she was not receptive, I guess you might say, to what he was saying to her," Friedman said. "He was asked to leave her alone and ultimately was asked to leave the bar and was removed from the bar under protest."

After he went outside, either patrons or employees or both continued to observe him as he walked to his truck.

By this time, a person at the Log Cabin had already called 9-1-1 and remained on the phone with an emergency dispatcher providing updates as "the situation quickly escalated," as Cianfrini put it.

Investigators were not able to determine if Kent retrieved a revolver from the truck or if he already

had it on him when he left the bar. He was a valid permit holder for the revolver, Cianfrini said.

After reaching his truck, he started to walk back to the bar and fired two shots into the air.

"Patrons at the restaurant and employees went down into a basement and began to arm themselves with materials in the basement while hiding," Cianfrini said. "Mr. Kent did re-enter the restaurant and threats were made."

There is no evidence that Kent fired his revolver while inside the restaurant.

He walked back outside.

"He was given multiple directives by sheriff's deputies to drop his weapon," Cianfrini said. "He did not comply with those directives."

Young was armed with his duty AR-15. As Kent pointed his revolver at Young -- who was 50 to 80 feet away from Kent -- the deputy fired 15 shots, which did not empty his magazine, Cianfrini said.

No other deputies fired their weapons during the incident.

"I believe that the reason why other deputies may not have discharged their firearms was because of the concern that there may have been patrons in the restaurant area," Cianfrini said. "They weren't fully aware where the patrons or employees in the restaurant were, and so under their standing orders, they were not in a position where they could safely discharge their firearms."

The narrative of events was established by witness statements, body camera recordings, 9-1-1 recordings, and the available forensic evidence.

"What I can tell you about the body-worn camera footage is that this incident took place during the night," Cianfrini said. "It was dark. There was limited lighting. There were no body-worn camera recordings that directly caught the incident."

Friedman said, however, the recordings were useful to the investigation, especially the audio portions of the recordings.

Asked if Kent made any statements before being shot, Friedman said he doesn't believe he did.

Friedman expressed confidence that the shooting was justified.

"I would say, in addition, that throughout this very thorough investigation, interviewing of everyone who was there, there was never the slightest hint that would indicate that this was anything other than justified."

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