

Investigative Synopsis of the Officer Involved Death (OID) of Rodney J. Freeman Jr.

On Monday, June 29, 2020, the Wisconsin Department of Justice / Division of Criminal Investigation (WI DOJ / DCI) was requested to assist the Monona Police Department (MOPD) with an investigation involving a traffic crash that occurred on Saturday, June 27, 2020 at 6025 Monona Drive, Monona, WI.

On Monday, June 29, 2020, a subject suspected to be in the vehicle that crashed on June 27th was found deceased in a lagoon located behind the Country Inn and Suites (400 River Place, Madison, WI). The subject was identified as Rodney J. Freeman Jr.

On Saturday, June 27, 2020 at approximately 1:09 a.m., Monona Police Officer Hoffman observed a black Chrysler sedan in the Denny's parking lot, located at 1201 E. Broadway, Monona, WI. The Chrysler fit the description of a suspect vehicle to a shooting that occurred earlier in the night in the city of Madison. The Chrysler departed the Denny's parking lot, northbound on Copps Avenue at a high rate of speed.

Officer Hoffman observed the Chrysler continue north on Copps Avenue, passed Femrite Drive. Officer Hoffman knew that Copps Avenue turns into Shato Lane and curves back to Femrite Drive. Officer Hoffman parked his squad on Shato Lane, just north of Femrite Drive in order to start setting up a perimeter in case the occupants of the vehicle park the vehicle and abandon it on foot, or be able to obtain a plate number in case they drive passed him.

The Chrysler drove passed Officer Hoffman at a high rate of speed. Officer Hoffman was only able to obtain a partial plate. Officer Hoffman advised over the radio that the Chrysler had turned onto Femrite Drive and was traveling westbound. MOPD Sgt. Nachreiner was on Femrite Drive, at Roselawn Avenue. The Chrysler drove passed Sgt. Nachreiner at a high rate of speed. The Chrysler continued westbound on Femrite Drive, crossed Monona Drive, drove through the Studio Z parking lot, located at 6025 Monona Drive and crashed through a fence into trees.

MOPD officers arrived at the crash scene. Officer Hoffman observed a M/B, wearing a white t-shirt and blue jeans running in a northwest direction, away from the crash scene. Officers checked the Chrysler and found it unoccupied. Sgt. Nachreiner started a K-9 track. Sgt. Nachreiner's K-9 eventually got tired and another track was conducted by Madison PD Officer Baumgart and his K-9. Officer Baumgart started his track from the area that Sgt. Nachreiner's track ended. Officer Baumgart's track ended at 1:59:28 a.m.

The Chrysler was searched by MOPD and the following items were located and secured from within the vehicle: A Springfield 9mm pistol, a red iPhone, keys and a Visa debit card with the name Rodney Freeman on it.

A homeowner on Interlake Drive called the police advising her outdoor surveillance camera obtained video of a subject walking across her backyard at 1:59:04 a.m. The subject walking

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across the backyard was a male, wearing a dark sweatshirt, blue jeans and a white tennis shoe on his right foot. The subject did not have a shoe on his left foot.

MOPD Officer Schneider spoke to a resident near the crash scene. The resident stated he spoke to police earlier about seeing a subject run between his house and his neighbor's house. Officer Schneider walked the area where the subject was seen running. Officer Schneider located a men's 11 ½, left, white/multicolored Nike tennis shoe in the tall grass. Officer Schneider collected the shoe as evidence.

On Monday, June 29, 2020, at approximately 5:48 p.m., a resident of the Country Inn and Suites (400 River Place, Madison, WI) called 911 after discovering a body floating in the lagoon behind the Country Inn and Suites. The body was recovered and positively identified as Rodney J. Freeman Jr. Freeman Jr. was wearing a white tennis shoe on his right foot and was missing the left tennis shoe. DCI was called to investigate the death as it was believed that Freeman Jr. was an occupant of the vehicle that crashed on June 27, 2020.

DCI responded to the incident with 5 Special Agents (SA with SA De La Rosa being assigned as the lead investigator and SA Hawley was assigned as the secondary investigator. The Wisconsin State Patrol Traffic Reconstruction Unit (WSP TRU) assisted with the investigation/created a scene diagram.

On Wednesday, July 1, 2020, DCI SA De La Rosa made phone contact with the passenger of the vehicle that crashed in Monona, who stated the driver was Rodney Freeman.

The mother of Rodney J. Freeman Jr. was identified, and a death notification was made by the Dane County Medical Examiner's Office. Wisconsin Crime Victim Services forms were also provided to the family.

SA De La Rosa and SA Hawley interviewed involved officers, Officer Hoffman and Sgt. Nachreiner on Monday June 30, 2020. An additional 9 officers from the Monona Police Department were involved in either the crash incident or the body recovery. Those officers wrote their own reports.

The following audio / video recordings were collected: 4 squad dash camera videos, 6 body camera videos, 3 business security videos – 1 from Studio Z and 2 from Tully's Bar, 2 home security videos, 1 city of Madison street video from Copps Avenue and E. Broadway.

Evidence from this investigation included a firearm, a cellular phone and the decedent's clothing. The cellular phone was transmitted to DCI / Digital Forensic Unit (DFU) for forensic examination.

An autopsy of Rodney J. Freeman Jr. was conducted at the Dane County Medical Examiner's Office on June 30, 2020 by Dr. Agnieszka Rogalska and was attended by DCI SA Agnew and

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DCI SA Schoeneck. Dr. Rogalska concluded Freeman's cause of death was freshwater drowning.

On Friday, July 19, 2020, the completed investigative file as of that date was turned over to Dane County District Attorney Ismael Ozanne for review.