

Impaled leg forces tricky response

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A bicycle accident at Pine Valley Park around 10:30 a.m. Sunday morning left a 25-year-old Cloquet woman with her leg impaled on a branch stub of a decaying tree. While it sounds horrific, she is OK and left a hospital in good shape Monday.

“Nothing was broken and there’s no nerve damage,” said Morgan Warbalow Wednesday. “I got pretty lucky.”

Warbalow said she was biking on a narrow part of the mountain bike trail with a client from the foster group home where she works when the accident occurred. She doesn’t really know exactly how it happened, but she ended up on top of a dead tree that was about 8 feet long. A spike formed

from a branch penetrated her leg from her calf upward to the back of her knee, just below the skin. Emergency responders had to cut the trunk so she could fit on a stretcher, leaving Warbalow with about a 3-foot section of the moss-covered wood that held the spike. While it went in deep, it did not exit her leg.

According to Cloquet Area Fire District battalion chief Chad Vermeersch, it took paramedics and firefighters 10 minutes to reach the injured biker on one of the upper trails at the park and nearly an hour to get her to the parking lot.

Warbalow’s biking partner made the 911 call.

“He did a great job,” Warbalow said. “He met the paramedics in the parking lot and showed them where I was. He did really well.”

Vermeersch said CAFD para-

medics planned to fly her to a Duluth hospital but once they got Warbalow to the parking lot, they could not fit her into the waiting LifeLink helicopter “because of patient packaging.” She was transported by ambulance to Essentia Health-St. Mary’s Medical Center in Duluth. Warbalow said she remained conscious throughout until they put her under at the hospital prior to surgery Sunday.

Warbalow came home Monday. She’s better, but couldn’t put any weight on her leg as of midday Wednesday. She said she was “a little sore.”

She figured it was the second time for her on a mountain bike trail. She admitted that she wasn’t wearing a helmet. “Yeah, I got super lucky,” she said.

Will she mountain bike again? “Yes,” Warbalow said.



Cloquet’s Morgan Warbalow is feeling fine after a mountain biking accident Sunday at Cloquet’s Pine Valley Park. Part of a tree penetrated her leg after she fell from her bike. There was no permanent damage, she said. *Contributed photo*

5 injured when car is pushed into traffic

Pine Knot News

Following a hit-and-run accident on Midway Road Friday, June 26, a Two Harbors man was charged in Sixth District St. Louis County Court Tuesday. Rodney Scandin Jr., 35, faces a total of five felony counts of criminal vehicular operation — two for great bodily harm and two for substantial bodily harm — in which the driver who causes the collision leaves the scene.

According to the St. Louis County Sheriff’s Office, a car occupied by four family members was stopped on Midway road facing north, waiting to turn west onto Stark Road on Friday afternoon, when they were hit from behind by a pickup truck. The crash forced the family’s Subaru into oncoming traffic, including a full-size truck pulling an 18-foot enclosed trailer. The work truck, trailer and Subaru ended up in the ditch on the west side of the road, and the driver of the Ford F-150, Scandin, fled the scene. Witnesses were unable to keep up with the truck.

According to the press release on the incident, five people were hospitalized after the crash with injuries including broken teeth, collar bones, ribs, pelvis and nose; and internal bleeding. While four were expected to be released by Sunday, one victim was still in critical condition in a Twin Cities area hospital early this week.

After police sent out a press release with a photo of the truck taken from nearby surveillance video, Scandin turned himself in.

At the hearing Tuesday, bail was set at \$30,000 (with no conditions) or no cost with conditions. An omnibus hearing is set for Aug. 18.

Find a GoFundMe page was started for the family.

According to the page, the father/husband was severely injured and will require “months of complete immobilization at a rehab facility” followed by extensive physical therapy before they are able to return to their home in Florida.

About \$30,000 toward a goal of \$50,000 had been raised on the website by the middle of the week.

Officer’s conduct revealed in lawsuit

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A civil lawsuit filed by former Cloquet police detective Scott Holman is working its way through the courts, but the case is also shedding light on the inner workings of the police department he served for 22 years.

The Complaint was filed by Holman and attorney Mike Padden earlier this year in U.S. District Court following Holman’s dismissal from the Cloquet police department in 2019. Holman’s Complaint claims that the detective’s termination was the result of a Brady policy created by the Carlton County Attorney’s Office for “sanctioning” police officers without due process. The civil action also states that two of the defendants conspired to violate his rights. Holman is seeking \$4 million in damages caused by his dismissal from employment, including defamation and “intentional infliction of emotional distress.”

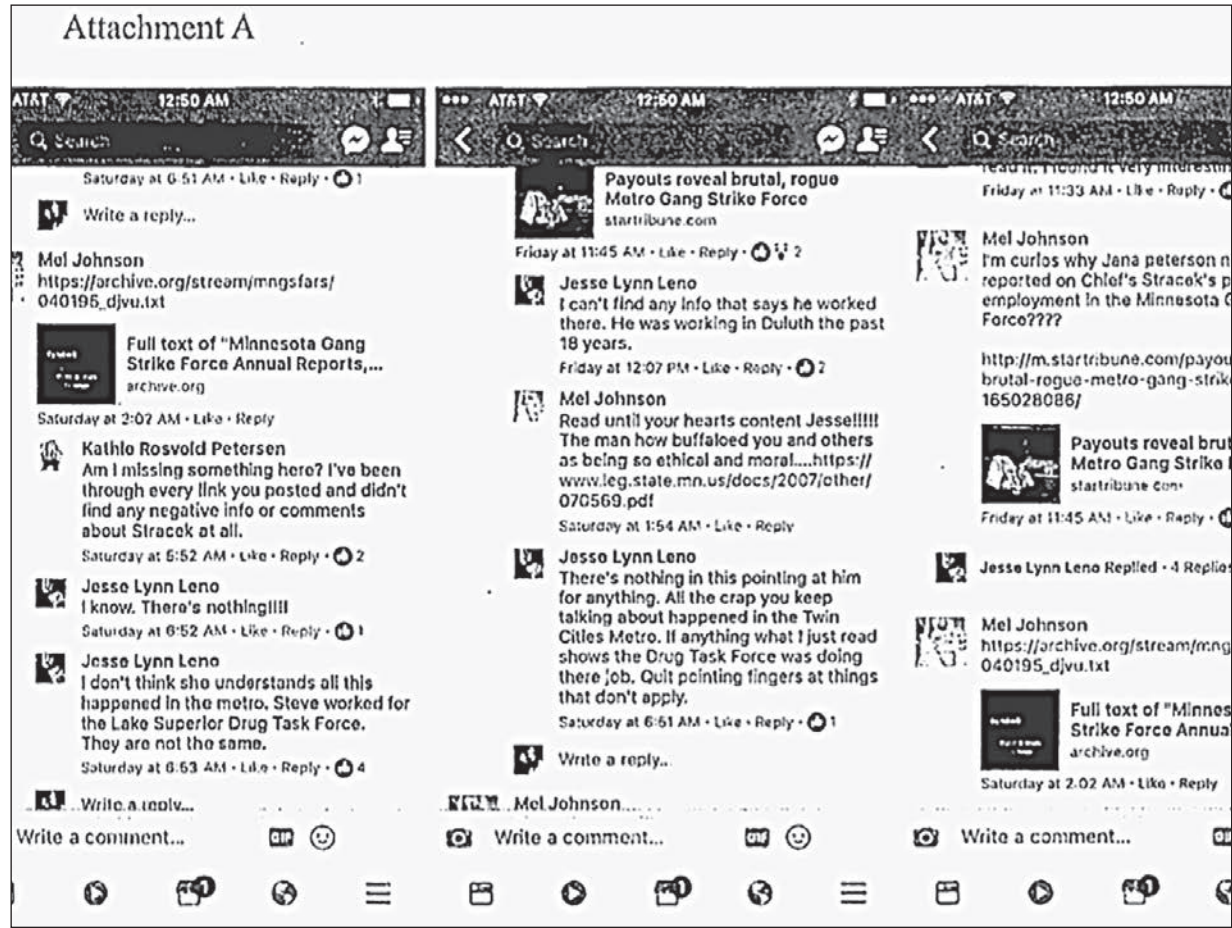
While a federal judge dismissed the claims in the Complaint against the county attorney and Carlton County June 12, the case against the city of Cloquet, Cloquet city councilor Kerry Kolodge and Lauri Ketola — in her former role as a member of the Citizens Advisory Board, not her current role as Carlton County attorney — is still pending.

The Complaint and various exhibits filed in response to the lawsuit tell both sides of the story in much greater detail than previously available to the public.

Over seven pages and nearly 40 numbered paragraphs, the Complaint summarizes — according to Holman — what happened from the time the police union took a vote of no confidence in former police chief Steve Stracek to the day that Holman was fired more than two years later.

The defendants’ response, included in more recent filings, offers records of disciplinary investigations and actions involving Holman in much greater detail than the city had provided in the past in response to public data requests.

The disciplinary details are rele-



Exhibits in the Scott Homan case include screenshots from a fake Facebook page he ran posing as a female stripper from the Twin Cities area named Mel Johnson

vant because the county attorney’s office decided it would not pursue cases depending on the police detective’s testimony because he had a history of misconduct involving questions of truthfulness and credibility. That’s an issue because previous Supreme Court cases — Brady v. Maryland and Giglio v. United States — require prosecuting attorneys to disclose any material that could help exonerate a defendant of guilt, including misconduct findings involving law enforcement officers. Such officers are sometimes called “Brady cops,” because the identified past misconduct means defense attorneys can bring up the behavior and cast doubt on their testimony.

Previous data requests by the Pine Knot News for Holman’s disciplinary records yielded only minimal details included in the final disposition of discipline, with the specific behavior explained in one sentence in one document and not at all in the other two cases.

The court documents give details of the behaviors that prompt-

ed the disciplinary action as well as records of discussions by the Cloquet Police/Fire Civil Service Commission (predecessor to the Citizens Advisory Board) and letters among the city and police administration and the county attorney’s office in the most recent case.

Alcohol, 911 hangup, gun

The earliest complaint dates back to January 2004, when Officer Holman was disciplined for violating standards including unbecoming conduct, truthfulness and alcohol use off duty.

The three-part complaint that starts with a 911 hang-up call from Holman’s fiancée after he had left the house in the early morning hours to go to his parents’ home. After his fiancée called his mother, he headed back to the house around 3 a.m. and encountered three officers there who were responding to the 911 hangup. According to the officers’ testimony, Holman did not tell them he knew his loaded unsecured gun was in-

side. He also admitted to drinking from noon to 1 a.m. that day, and again after the officers left.

The second part of the complaint focuses on the fact that Holman continued to drink after the officers left until nearly 6 a.m. when he was scheduled to testify in court later that morning. According to the complaint, chief Wade Lamirande and assistant chief Terry Hill went to Holman’s residence that morning after he didn’t show up at the police station prior to the scheduled hearing, only to learn that the hearing had been canceled at 8:30 a.m. According to the complaint, when Holman arrived at work at 1 p.m. that day, he testified he did not have alcohol in his system although he did smell of alcohol when officers went to his home that morning.

The final part of the complaint details Holman interfering with potential witnesses to the investigation, including contacting then county attorney Thom Pertler and police officer Eric Blesener.

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Officer conduct ...

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After initially recommending 60 days off with 30 days suspended, Cloquet Police/Fire Civil Service Commission members (Jim Hagen, Dan Tierney and Bob Ames) changed the recommendation to 14 days off with seven days suspended, a formal letter of apology to the three officers whose safety was at risk when Holman didn't tell them about the loaded gun inside his home, removal from all promotional eligibility rosters for two years, an alcohol assessment by a counselor and a plan of action for conduct and performance as it affects the CPD.

The final disciplinary action in the case is unclear, as the city data only shows that he was "suspended with pay" for a period of time already served.

Calling in sick

A second complaint dates back to December 2004, when Holman was given one day off without pay after calling in sick to miss a cold-weather shoot and then going out drinking that evening.

Fake Facebook

The third complaint in Holman's file was the most recent, and involved a series of Facebook posts he made in 2017 under false name, claiming to be a female stripper from the Twin Cities area named Mel Johnson. The investigation of the Facebook posts stemmed from a complaint filed by former Cloquet police chief Steve Stracek on July 24, 2017 claiming that Holman was using the account to publicly post negative and untrue statements, including repeated claims by "Mel Johnson" that

Stracek was a member of the discredited metro office of the Minnesota Gang Strike Force, rather than the Duluth office — which was not a part of the illegal and improper actions by the metro group.

"I'm curious why Jana Peterson never once reported on Chief's Stracek's previous employment in the Minnesota Gang Strike Force," Holman/Mel Johnson posted with a link to a story on illegal payouts to the metro office.

Although Stacek requested an outside investigator, police chief Jeff Palmer assigned police commander Carey Ferrell to conduct the investigation.

Ferrell's report is filed as Exhibit 3 in the lawsuit response. Ferrell wrote that he first learned of the complaint from Holman himself and that Holman told him that acting city administrator James Barclay had spoken to him about the complaint.

In the report, Ferrell writes that he informed Holman he would be investigating the complaint on Aug. 2 or 3, but Holman said he didn't want to receive the formal notification until the next week "so it would not ruin his weekend." He gave Ferrill the username and password for the Facebook account, but also informed him that he had deactivated/suspended the account after speaking to Barclay.

When he filed the complaint July 24, Stracek also requested that a preservation request be sent immediately to Facebook to preserve the data, something that Ferrell said he tried to do the first week of August, without success. With help from the county attorney's office, Ferrell then sent a subpoena to Facebook on Aug. 15. When Facebook sent the information regarding posts from March to August 2017, it included account

open and closure dates and login information with date, time and IP addresses, but no content for the posts. According to Ferrell's report, Facebook said a search warrant would be required for those posts.

Thus, Ferrell appeared to base his investigation on claims posted in nine screenshots of Mel Johnson posts provided by Stracek. The report indicates that he was unaware of the content of any other posts.

As part of the investigation, Ferrell "compelled" Holman to give him a statement, giving him Garrity and Tennesen warnings, which force a government employee to cooperate with an investigation but also offers them immunity from any subsequent criminal proceedings.

In his conclusions, Ferrell said Holman did post false claims about councilor Kerry Kolodge changing the educational requirements for the police chief job to favor Stracek — the requirements were not changed — and implying that Stracek was part of the discredited metro Gang Strike Task Force.

In several instances, Ferrell notes that posts were "opinion" and cannot have a true or false claim; e.g., when Holman posted a link to a Gang Strike Task Force report for the legislature with the comment, "Read to your heart's content, Jessee. The man buffaloeed you and others as being so ethical and moral."

A post accusing another Facebook user of "murdering an Esko firefighter" and "hating cops" was not considered in the investigation because it didn't refer to Stracek specifically.

Regarding claims that Holman made many of the posts while on duty, Ferrell confirmed that Holman was working when nine of the 33 total posts were made

during the timeframe in question. However, he said none of the posts specifically supplied by Stracek were made when the detective was on duty, so he determined that the allegation was not supported. Also, no department computers were used to make the posts.

In his conclusion, Ferrell stated that he didn't think Holman violated state statute on criminal defamation and communicating false information to news media, but said a prosecuting attorney should make the final determination. Holman told Ferrell he never intended to defame Stracek, but rather that he believed what he wrote in the false posts was true.

Ferrell also suggested that Holman may have committed an additional violation by not preserving evidence when he deleted or deactivated the account.

After forwarding the report to interim police chief Jeff Palmer, the end result of the internal investigation was that Holman was given a verbal warning by Palmer for "violating department policy" regarding social media and professional conduct of a peace officer.

There were no other departmental consequences. Although it was never stated publicly that Holman was fired because he'd been deemed a "Brady cop," the dismissal came after the county attorney's office identified the past misconduct issues.

Holman's Complaint characterizes the Facebook posts as "advocacy via social media posts for his agency and fellow officers" and argues that they were in the category of "protected speech for a public employee," although they were made under a pseudonym.

SENIOR DINING MENU

Arrowhead Senior Nutrition Menu

Friday, July 3

Closed

Saturday & Sunday, July 4-5

Frozen meals available

Monday, July 6

Chicken strip dinner, fresh fruit

Tuesday, July 7

Pork loin dinner, strawberry-rhubarb sauce

Wednesday, July 8

Meatballs and gravy, fruit

Thursday, July 9

Penne Italian sausage, fresh fruit

Friday, July 10

Ham loaf or alternative entrée (call 24 hours in advance), strawberry shortcake

Call the Senior Center from your car for curbside meal pickup: 218-879-5870. Meals are served Monday-Friday at 11:30 a.m. Registered customers are offered meal service for a \$4 contribution, \$7.50 for under age 60. Menus subject to change without notice. AEOA is a private, nonprofit, nongovernmental agency. It is located at 1100 Olympic Dr. in Cloquet.

OBITUARIES

Denise Elizabeth Mullen

Denise E. Mullen, 79, of Cloquet passed away April 13, 2020, at St. Mary's Hospital in Duluth.

She was born April 24, 1940, in Breckenridge, Wisconsin to Vilas and Angeline (Mrotek) Woodward.

Denise graduated from Cloquet High School in 1958 and was married to Dale Mullen on April 4, 1959, in St. Casimir's Catholic Church. She worked at the Johnson Company, Medich Drug, and at Churchill Elementary School as a teacher's aide for 25 years. Denise was a member of Queen of Peace Catholic Church, a line dancing group, and the Wood City Ramblers RV Group, spending 20 years wintering in Apache Junction, Arizona with Dale. She enjoyed baking, and made numerous wedding cakes for family and friends; she also enjoyed sewing blankets



and gardening. Denise loved spending time with her family, especially with her grandchildren.

Denise was preceded in death by her parents, and brother Dan Woodward.

She is survived by her husband of 61 years, Dale; three sons, Kevin (Deirdre) Mullen, Kirk (Susan) Mullen, and Kenny (Amy) Mullen; grandchildren, Erin, Ryan, Ben, Derrick, Abby, Michael, Thomas, Elizabeth, Sabrina and Valanie; three great-grandchildren, Kai, Behrett and Vera; brothers Sidney (Linda) Woodward, and Claude (Jeanne) Woodward; and numerous nieces and nephews.

Visitation: 10 a.m. until the 11 a.m. memorial service Saturday, Aug. 15 at Nelson Funeral Care. Inurnment will be in Old Calvary Cemetery in Cloquet. See the family guest book at www.nelsonfuneralcare.net.
Pine Knot News, July 3, 2020



Harriet O. Grondahl

Harriet O. Grondahl, 89, of Duluth passed away peacefully June 24, 2020 at Sunnyside Health Care in Cloquet.

She was born July 25, 1930 in Duluth to Arvid and Elsie Anderson.

Harriet was preceded in death by her husband, Ray; a daughter, Darlene; and her parents.

She is survived by her son, Ken (Alice) Grondahl of



Mahtowa; granddaughters, DaeLynn Stoeckmann, Melissa (Roger) Bolos and Kendra (Pete) Robinson, all of Cloquet; and great-grandchildren, Kylee, Destiny, Jordan, Bryce, Bailey and Sophija.

Due to the coronavirus a private service will be held. Burial will be at Oneota Cemetery.

Arrangements entrusted to Bell Brothers Jarvi Dowd Funeral Home.

Pine Knot News, July 3, 2020

DEATH NOTICES

Beverly May St. Germain (Erdmann), 55, of Cloquet, passed away peacefully in her home on June 24, 2020. A graveside service was scheduled for 1 p.m. Thurs-

day, July 2 at Maple Grove Cemetery in Cloquet. Arrangements by Nelson Funeral Care.

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Obituary policy

The cost for obituaries in the Pine Knot News is \$75 for up to two black-and-white photos and obituaries up to 800 words. Death notices with just name,

date of birth and death, city of residence and service information are printed at no cost. Email death notices and obituaries with attachments to obits@pine-knot-news.com or stop by the office at 122 Avenue C, Cloquet, by 2 p.m. Tuesday.