

Chattanooga Times Free Press (TN)

April 15, 2000

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Grundy Deputy Shoots, Kills Truck Theft Suspect

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Article Text:

ALTAMONT, Tenn. -- A Grundy County man was shot and killed by a county deputy Thursday and the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation is calling the incident self defense. Jesse C. Smart, 27, died at Riverview Hospital, in McMinnville where he was taken after the incident. The Grundy County Sheriff's Department said there had been a series of car thefts in Warren County, and some of the vehicles have been found in the Big Pond Road area in Altamont. According to reports, at 5:30 p.m. CDT Thursday, Grundy County Sheriff Robert Meeks and Deputy Larry Hale responded to a call reporting a stolen truck from Warren County in the Big Pond area. The two officers noticed the truck after arriving in the area and identified it as the black, 1989 Chevrolet Silverado pickup with pink and purple stripes, identified as stolen. The driver of the truck, sped away at a high-rate of speed down a logging road and onto Highway 56 in the direction of Warren County. "I was notified by Warren County that the truck had turned onto Northcutt Cove Road and ordered Deputy Dennis Womack to set up a roadblock," said Sheriff Meeks. The sheriff was notified minutes later by radio that the stolen truck had been involved in an accident. When they arrived at the scene the sheriff spoke with Deputy Womack. "He said he was set up at the intersection when the stolen truck came into view," said Sheriff Meeks. He said the suspect used the truck to assault the deputy, striking the driver's side of the squad car. The sheriff said Deputy Womack said he fired one shotgun blast, hitting the rear cab of the truck, which then ran into a ditch. Tennessee Bureau of Investigation Supervisor Richard Brogan said his agency has no reason to believe the shooting was not a proper action on the part of the deputy. An investigation is under way to attempt to find out more information about Mr. Smart's actions and the stolen truck. Deputy Womack has been placed on administrative leave pending the outcome of an investigation by the TBI, Tennessee Highway Patrol and the Grundy County Sheriff's Department.

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