

LG

To:

July 03, 2007

Terry Wilson

Lewis County Coroner

Chehalis, WA. 98532

From:

Connie Todd

1514 Delaware St.

Centralia, WA 98531

Re: Matthew Daarud Jr. Amtrak Accident

Stan Hedwall Park, Chehalis Wa.

Friday afternoon, June 15, 2007

Dear Mr. Wilson,

I am writing this letter to you to call your attention to an incident that has caused me and my family deep emotional distress and irreparable mental damage. I will try to make it brief, although I'm not really sure where or how to start. Forgive me for rambling on about this, but it is so overwhelming that I am having a hard time trying to condense it all.

On Friday evening, June 15, 2007, at approx. 8:15 pm. I arrived at Stan Hedwall Park after being notified by family members of Matt Jr. being hit and killed by the Amtrak train. I was in Lacey when informed and was told everyone was at the park. When I got there, all of the family/friends/officials had left. However, there was a truck in the crowded parking lot that I believed to be Matt Sr.'s. There were baseball games going on in every ballfield and people and children scattered everywhere throughout the park. It was a very busy night there.

I didn't want Matt Sr. to be alone at the accident site so I headed for the railroad tracks. I want to note here the time: 8:15 pm. and the total lack of any kind of official person, vehicle, warning signage, ribboning off or cordoning off of the accident site.

The trail leading to the tracks there is very wide and well used by swimmers, hikers, fishermen, campers from the campground there, etc.-myself included as I fished the river there frequently. While there is a danger sign for the trestle, it is routinely ignored by many people daily. I was not aware of the exact location of the accident and went up onto the tracks. I spotted a man on the tracks south of the trestle and thought it was Matt Sr. Not wanting Matt Sr. to be alone at a time like that, I ran across the trestle to go be with him. I got 3/4 of the way across the trestle and was totally shocked at the sight I saw. Matt Jr. was there, in little pieces, scattered everywhere. I got over the bank towards the river and just crumpled onto the ground and screamed... and screamed... and screamed. I then realized I was laying ON AND IN pieces of Matt Jr. HE WAS EVERYWHERE! HOW COULD YOUR OFFICE LEAVE HIM OUT THERE LIKE THAT??? I had pieces of Matt all over me.

I am a very close friend of the family. My family lived with Matt's family for a few months this last winter while we were between homes after

selling ours. Matt Jr. was like one of my own and here I was with pieces of Matt all over me. I was totally in shock. I could not believe the coroner's office could do such a negligent job of cleaning up an accident site leaving it in the state it was, with no ribbon lines or warning signs, etc. I know Matt Jr. had no communicable diseases but what was left there was a totally bio-hazardous mess. Just imagine the ramifications if he had been HIV positive or something and here I was laying on the ground in hysterics, suddenly discovering myself covered in blood pieces of fat and meat! I will forever have nightmares of discovering this scene without warning... To this day, I cannot drive by the 13th street exit on I-5 in Chehalis without extreme distress, fighting to breathe and stay on the road, and I doubt I ever will.

I spent the next 20 minutes screaming and picking up as much of Matt as I could see through my hysterical tears. The pieces I picked up were in plain sight and larger chunks of bone and meat...-one piece being part of skull with his hair and brains still attached and a larger piece of rib? or leg? bone. There was a piece as big around as a dinner plate and at least 3 to 4 inches thick on the ledge of the trestle I couldn't reach without risking my life if a train came through so I left it. It was meat and fat with skin covering it. I put the items in a plastic sack I found in the bushes and called my boyfriend and long time partner, Pat Scott, in hysterics. He told me to come home with what I had and he would return with me to help me finish the job. He had spent over 10 years on the ambulance crew in Forks, WA. and was better prepared to help me through this.

When I got home, Pat was in complete disbelief at the size and amount of pieces I had and told me we would have to notify someone official to return to the site as this was not something we should handle alone. I had to calm myself down before I could do any calling. I called the coroner's office and left a very nasty message on the answering machine as I was still in shock. Pat considered taking me to the hospital but I refused. I then called dispatch requesting contact so I could get somebody to come and pick up these pieces of Matt Jr. I had and hopefully get somebody out there to the site to finish the job properly.

I received a call from a woman at the coroner's office named Carmen. She at first seemed grouchy, wanting to know WHY I was even up there to begin with but her attitude did change to one of a consoling person. I asked her where to take these pieces of Matt I had and she said she'd call me right back. She called back and informed me there was nobody available to pick him up. I asked her if I could bring them somewhere and she said there wasn't any place available to store him right now and requested I put him in MY OWN HOME FREEZER OVERNIGHT!! THIS WOULD BE THE FREEZER I KEEP MY FAMILY'S FOOD IN!!!

She attempted to try to console and calm me. Although I was just numb from shock at this point, nothing could have prepared me for her request to lodge his remains in my freezer overnight. You can bet that if I would have called dispatch to report a domestic violence incident or a drug deal going on down the block or something, they would have found an officer to respond immediately, yet they couldn't respond to remove human remains from my house. Is that how your office regularly handles things? How many homes in Lewis county do you currently have people storing human remains for you?

I reluctantly agreed to honor her request as I couldn't just leave him out on the front porch or something...what else was I supposed to do??? This, I feel, was TOTALLY UNCALLED FOR! People die in this county 24/7. There are wrecks and accidents, murders, and other times when the coroner's services are required

24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year here in Lewis County! WHY wasn't there an individual available to take HUMAN REMAINS from an accident YOUR OFFICE had already SUPPOSEDLY thoroughly cleaned up?? WHY? I DEMAND TO KNOW WHY!?! What is wrong with you and your deputy coroners?

Carmen needs to explain herself both to me as well as you. The things she told me that evening were NOT acceptable to tell a grieving person. Also, there were several lies told, I believe to cover the incredibly shoddy work done by the coroners office under her direction. She told me...

1. "What we really need is a good rain to take care of the rest of the mess out there." WHAT?!? WHAT WE NEED IS A CORONER'S OFFICE THAT DOES IT'S JOB! WHY BOTHER TO PICK IT UP AT ALL WITH THAT ATTITUDE????

2. "Burlington Nothern has been contacted and they are supposed to get their fire train out there to wash the rest of it away." AGAIN. I say WHAT? A mental picture I did not need at that point! AND, TO WASH IT WHERE? INTO A POPULAR SWIMMING HOLE?

3. "We were out there for 5 hours with a crew of 5 people picking it all up. We got as much as we could find." BULLSHIT! As I noted earlier, I arrived at the scene at 8:15 pm. The accident happened at 4:20 pm. I got there 3 hours and 55 mins after it happened. I only bring this point up to highlight the mistruths I was repeatedly being told.

4. When I asked her why and how they could leave so much of Matt out there like that, she replied, "We weren't going to risk OUR OWN LIVES to pick up every little piece!" I called her on that statement, asking her if the rail line had not indeed been shut down to all rail traffic while things were cleaned up and she replied that it had. So I then asked her again why they had left such a mess and she repeated her earlier statement that they weren't going to risk their lives to get it all. WHAT KIND OF A RISK is it to pick up pieces on a rail line that has no traffic????????

5. I mentioned the large piece of Matt (mentioned above) on the ledge of the trestle wall still being out there to Carmen and she stated, "We know it is there but again, we weren't going to risk our lives to get it all." AGAIN, I POINT OUT THE RAIL LINE WAS SHUT DOWN! WHAT RISK????? SOOOO VERY WRONG!!!! AND, SHE/THEY KNEW ABOUT IT!!! If there aren't already laws on the books concerning KNOWINGLY leaving large pieces of human remains at an accident site by officials there to retrieve the victims, there ought to be and I fully intend to research this point. I will get this changed if it is the last thing I do. Might I also point out again that this was above a river at a POPULAR swimming and fishing spot IN A LARGE, PUBLIC, PARK THAT INCLUDES A CAMPGROUND! This was a complete bio-hazardous situation that SHOULD NOT BEEN LEFT if nothing else...not to mention the wrong committed to Matt Jr. himself and the family.

Matt Sr. came to my house that evening around midnight and just stayed with us until daylight, needing the company and support of his closest friends. I had to maintain my composure and be supportive after all that I had gone through with Matt Jr. earlier, knowing all the while that his son WAS IN MY FREEZER ONLY 25 FEET FROM THE COUCH HE WAS SITTING ON!!! How could your office make anybody go through that kind of thing??? What was I supposed to say?? I couldn't tell him, he'd had enough tragedy already and YOUR OFFICE'S NEGLIGENT ACTIONS COULD HAVE PUSHED HIM OVER THE EDGE HAD HE FOUND OUT! I know it almost pushed me over the edge. I CAN ONLY DEMAND AN EXPLANATION.

I started calling the number on my cell phone that Carmen had called me from that next morning. It took the coroner's office until sometime shortly after noon on Saturday to get back to me on meeting me to retrieve Matt's remains. I was told they were going to be there for an hour or so and if I couldn't get there by then, I would have to wait until Sunday sometime. WHAT?!? You guys are elected officials and there is supposed to be somebody on duty 24/7!!!! Do I need to contact the Attny. General for the State of WA. or Governor Gregoire or somebody to get you to do your job?? As it was, I will say that it took me 2 hours to get there due to Matt Sr. arriving right after the office called. I couldn't very well tell him I had to leave to turn his kid over to the coroner so I had to wait until he was ready to leave. The guy on duty that day fortunately waited for me, although he shouldn't have had to because IT SHOULD HAVE BEEN HANDLED THE NIGHT BEFORE!!!! I do wish to thank him for his understanding and patience. You need more people like him in your office. Unfortunately, I didn't catch his name.

And, the negligence on behalf of your office yet goes on into the FOLLOWING evening of Saturday, June 16, 2007.

Kristen Dailey, Matt Jr.'s older sister, went to the accident site Saturday evening and discovered the very same scene I had...ALTHOUGH I HAD BEEN ASSURED FRIDAY NIGHT THAT FURTHER CLEANUP WOULD TAKE PLACE. She freaked out and had your office as well as other officials, Burlington Northern, her Uncle D.J. Daarud, and her Aunt Lisa Smith, (Matt Sr.'s brother and sister) and 3 cousins called to the scene. They remained at the scene until it was PROPERLY and THOROUGHLY CLEANED to assure that it would be done right! THIS SHOULD HAVE NEVER HAPPENED! AND, THE LARGE PIECE MENTIONED PREVIOUSLY HAD FALLEN TO THE GROUND UNDER THE TRESTLE WHERE THEY FOUND IT!!!! How dare your office commit such an act of negligence! The fact that this tragedy happened to begin with is hard enough on the survivors, but to further damage the family's emotional well being via your office's carelessness and disregard of the accident site is UNEXCUSABLE and UNFORGIVABLE! I pray your family nor any other family on earth, EVER has to go through the added extreme mental distress that this family has endured due to your office's neglect.

Two more points and I will end this letter.

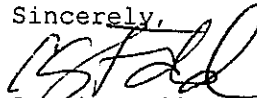
1. I gave my name as Sue Banner (my middle name and my ex-married last name) on that Friday evening for fear that Matt Sr. would hear of this situation and I didn't want him to know I had been the person out picking up the rest of his son. My thought here was that it would be easier for him to deal with if it were a stranger and not so close to home...also, I was completely in shock. My name is Connie Todd. Matt Sr. still is not aware of the way this was handled and Lisa and I PRAY for Matt's sake that he never does find this out. It would be more than he could handle we are afraid. It is almost more than WE can handle. Nobody in the family is going to tell him and a lawsuit is sure to be filed if anybody in your office does. He has been through enough...PERIOD. We don't need to lose another Matt. However, I DO demand a response from your office. I want and need an explanation. I am forwarding a copy of this letter to Harry Green, Lewis County Office of Risk Management, Michael Golden, Lewis County Prosecutor's Office and the Lewis County Commissioners. Please don't ignore me as I would hate to have to forward this to Governor Gregoire or somebody else of higher authority.

2. Carmen repeatedly requested that I didn't mention this incident to anybody. That can only make me believe that she was attempting to cover your office's negligence in this case.

Again, I am sorry for the length of this letter as well as the grammatical mistakes and misspellings. I couldn't bare to proofread it. The emotional distress I have concerning this issue clouds my ability to condense things into a short and to the point letter. And, I feel all things I have mentioned were important for you to understand the whole picture as I see it and how I feel.

Thank you for your attention in this matter and I await your response.

Sincerely,



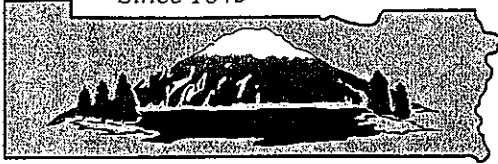
Handwritten signature of Connie Todd in cursive script.

Connie Todd

CC: Harry Green, Risk Manager  
Michael Golden, Prosecutor  
Lewis County Commissioners

Since 1845

# LEWIS COUNTY COMMISSIONERS



Lewis County, Washington

LEWIS COUNTY COURTHOUSE  
351 NW NORTH STREET  
CHEHALIS, WA 98532-1900  
(360) 740-1120 • FAX: (360) 740-1475  
TDD: (360) 740-1480

RON AVERILL  
First District

RICHARD GRAHAM  
Second District

F. LEE GROSE  
Third District

Sheila Unger  
Board Administrator

July 17, 2007

COPY

RECEIVED

JUL 18 2007

LEWIS COUNTY  
RISK MANAGEMENT

Mr. Terry Wilson  
Lewis County Coroner  
360 NW North St MS:COR1  
Chehalis WA 98532

Re: Complaint

Dear Mr. Wilson:

On July 13, 2007, the Board of County Commissioners, the Lewis County Prosecuting Attorney, and the Lewis County Risk Manager each received a copy of the enclosed complaint of Ms. Connie Todd, dated July 3, 2007, which was addressed to you.

After discussion with the Prosecuting Attorney and the Risk Manager, we jointly request that you send a copy of your response to Ms. Todd's complaint to the Board of County Commissioners, the Lewis County Prosecuting Attorney, and the Lewis County Risk Manager.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

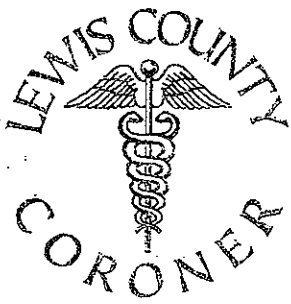
Sincerely,

Board of County Commissioners

Richard Graham

F. Lee Grose

Ron Averill



# Office of the Lewis County Coroner

Terry L. Wilson, P.A.- C., Coroner

360 NW North St., MSCOR01  
Chehalis, WA 98532-1900  
(360) 740-1376  
After hours: (360) 740-1105  
Fax: 740-1436

Connie Todd  
1514 Delaware St.  
Centralia, Washington 98531

July 18, 2007

Dear Mrs. Todd,

I was quite shocked to get your letter of complaint regarding the death of Matthew Daarud Jr. on 6-15-07.

The Coroner's Office responded to the scene of death along with Law Enforcement, the Local Fire District, and the railroad officials. Matthew was hit by the train at a high rate of speed, killing him instantly. When he was hit, the impact caused tremendous body destruction, throwing body tissue all over the scene, including up onto the overhead railroad bridge.

The Coroner's Office, along with Law Enforcement officers, and Fire District Personnel searched the scene, and picked up as much of the tissue and body parts as possible. This was confirmed by group agreement that there was nothing else that could be retrieved from the scene. There was a lot of blood and very small tissue that could not be picked up.

These scenes are very difficult to deal with for all involved. When we have a scene there is always an agreement by all agencies involved that all tissue is removed as much as possible.

We always make a second visit to the scene one to two days later to retrieve any additional tissue that had fallen from the overhead bridge. In this case, there was some tissue that had been thrown onto the overhead bridge and we knew it would drop down.

We also asked that the railroad would supply a fire train to wash the scene down. This is usually done by the local fire district, but was impossible with this scene.

I am sorry that you had to deal with tissue parts that you picked up. When you called Carmen, my Chief Deputy Coroner, she was willing to come and pick up the tissue that you had retrieved, but you said you were too distraught to deal with it at the time. She also offered you the opportunity to bring them to the coroner's office which you did not do. To this day, you have not turned the tissue parts over to the coroner's office. If you have any tissue parts, why are you holding on to them?

CM

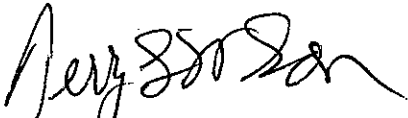
You were told by Carmen Brunton, if you could not bring these parts to the Coroner's Office, or have us pick them up, to put them into the freezer. If you leave them on the porch or other places, they can be removed by dogs or other wild animals. This can create another crime scene for Law Enforcement to investigate if they are found.

The Coroner's Office, Fire Dept, and Law Enforcement take these deaths and scenes seriously. We always attempt to do the best we can to pick up body parts and clean the scene as much as possible. We do this together.

I know this has been very traumatic to you and Matthew's family. I am very sorry for the loss you have to deal with.

I will be happy to meet with you and discuss this further, if you would like to.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Terry L. Wilson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Terry" being the most prominent.

Terry L. Wilson PA-C  
Lewis County Coroner

Cc:  
Harry Green, Risk Manager  
Michael Golden Prosecutor  
Lewis County Commisioners

# Office of the Lewis County Coroner

Terry L. Wilson, P.A.- C., Coroner

360 NW North St., MSCOR01  
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After hours: (360) 740-1105  
Fax: 740-1436

July 18, 2007

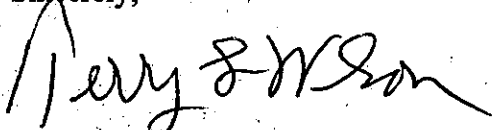
Connie Todd  
1514 Delaware St.  
Centralia, Washington 98531

Dear Mrs. Todd,

Jamie Parks my Deputy Coroner just reported to me on his return to duty, that he did receive a small amount of tissue from you on 6-16-07. He was waiting at the office for over 2 hours for you to bring in the tissue. He called Chief Deputy Carmon Brunton and said that you did not come in and he was going to go home. He decided to try calling you one more time. When he called he apparently got an answer, and you subsequently brought the tissue in. He went off duty and did not report that you had come in.

I am sorry for this misunderstanding.

Sincerely,



Terry L. Wilson PA-C  
Lewis County Coroner

CC: Harry Green, Risk Manager  
Michael Golden, Prosecutor  
Lewis County Commissioners