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SHAUN STANLEY/Palm Beach Post

Bradley Philip Scott is escorted by Charlotte County Sheriff John McDougall from Palm Beach County sheriff's office headquarters to the Palm Beach County Jail early Friday morning after Scott's arrest on a murder charge.

Audit may have contributed to delay of sewer plant work, observers say

By JANE MUSGRAVE
News-Press Staff Writer

Years of fighting about the way Lee County officials handled millions of dollars that Fort Myers Beach residents pumped into the island's problem-plagued sewage plant appears to have produced one thing: delay.

Long-held hopes that an independent audit would verify persistent claims by Beach residents that incompetent county officials squandered their money were laid to rest this week.

The $165,000 audit of the nine-year history of the Fort Myers Beach Sewage Treatment Plant showed that while the county's accounting system was far from perfect, there was nothing to suggest that money was mishandled or mismanaged. Nor was there evidence that Beach residents paid dearly for sins of elected officials.

Contrary to claims made by Beach residents, those who don't live on the Beach but were allowed to connect to the plant are not getting a cheap ride at the expense of Beach residents, according to the audit by Coopers & Lybrand Inc. The off-Beach customers use roughly 9 percent of the plant and have paid accordingly, auditors said.

In addition, the audit showed that instead of being owed money, Beach customers owe nearly $113,000 to other county utility system customers. Beach resident Mike Yakubik, a vocal critic of the county's handling of the plant, has consistently maintained that money paid by Beach plant customers was used to benefit other utility customers. An audit, he has insisted, would verify his claims.

But, auditors said, they found no such evidence. All the money that was taken from Beach plant accounts and loaned to other county utilities was repaid with interest, said Walter Huelsman of the firm's Washington, D.C., office.

However, he said, auditors found that a $28,220 loan the Beach plant received from the South Fort Myers Sewer District and a $84,689 loan it received from general utility operation funds were not repaid. The firm recommended that the loans be repaid in accordance with policies.

Florida GOP to meet in Orlando

• Republicans will converge at the Orlando Hyatt in June to showcase statewide candidates, hear from presidential contenders and adopt a state party program.

Among the speakers expected at the convention will be Vice President George Bush, U.S. Sens. Paula Hawkins and Robert Dole, U.S. Rep. Jack Kemp, Secretary of Transportation Elizabeth Dole, Howard Baker and Gen. Alexander Haig.

From Charlotte County, 29 delegate-representatives will attend. They are county chairman Ben G. Nordell, state committeewoman Dione D'Andrea, state committeeman David K. Oaks, Glen Sapp, Maureen Saunders, Barbara Scott, Bonnie Taylor, Nadine Sidmore, John O'Connor, Mac V. Horton, Phyllis Smith, C.F. Cline, Emma K. Cline, Floyd Henderson, Shirley Henderson, Thomas M. D'Andrea, Eileen Jacobs, Daniel R. Bethel, Gerrald Bocup, Nicholas Colon Jr., Ted Marcotte, Joan Schmidt, S. Craig Smith, Mildred Thomas, Joe C. Wheeler, Margaret Wheeler, Lois Witte, John Hufnagel and Cecilia Hufnagel.

More than 1,700 official delegates from 67 Florida counties will attend along with several hundred alternates, guests and dignitaries.

• U.S. Sen. Paula Hawkins, R-Fla., has nominated state Sen. Bob Johnson, R-Sarasota, to serve on the National Council on the Arts.

Johnson is chairman of the Florida Arts Council and has been a member of that council since 1981.

This group is the advisory body to the National Endowment for the Arts. Members are appointed by the president for a term of six years.

POLITICAL BRIEFS

Pleasant From page 1B

May. The two spent hours in jail chatting and were card partners in games with other inmate teams.

Andersen describes Scott as "a cool customer, very cunning and conniving."

"He befriended me the day I was brought into the cell block," Andersen said. "He had the respect of all the inmates in the cell block. He's a real talker, the kind of guy that could make you believe just about anything."

During Andersen's stay at the jail, he said, Scott revealed that he was a suspect in the murder of a 12-year-old girl, though Scott never mentioned Pikuritz by name. Andersen remembers that Scott was called out one day to take a lie-detector test about the murder, a memory that remains because "when a prisoner gets called out of the cell block, it's a big deal."

"When he returned, he told me he had passed the test," Andersen said. "He went on to tell me he had taken a few librium capsules (a depressant) before he went in to take the test."

Andersen said Scott always denied being a killer, but often bragged about "flings with younger girls, the typical locker-room talk."

Court records show that from jail, Scott wrote to then-Circuit Judge Richard Stanley, asking the judge to reconsider his sentence for battery. In his letter, Scott offered to drop his court appeal for a new trial if the judge would reduce the sentence. Scott said he was sure that the judge wanted to "save the embarrassment to the family" of the young victim having to sit through another trial.

Stanley apparently ignored the plea and the verdict was upheld on appeal.

In the letter, Scott also said his girlfriend was eight months pregnant, and he wanted to be released from jail to divorce his wife and marry the girlfriend.

Scott was born in Canada but has spent most of his adult life in Florida, said Sgt. Ken Burton, who has worked for the past year on linking Scott to the Pikuritz murder. From 1976 to 1978 Scott moved around a lot, residing for short periods in Hillsborough, Palm Beach and Charlotte counties.

Scott worked in construction and at a movie theater in Tampa in 1976 in Tampa, at two Palm Beach County restaurants in 1977 and at the Holiday Inn in Punta Gorda in 1978, according to his Holiday Inn job application.

Motel manager Bill Webster said Scott was fired in September 1978 for cursing at two fellow employees.

At the time of his arrest in December 1978, Scott worked as a foreman for Stanley Steemer Carpet Cleaners in Port Charlotte.

Lawmen said that after his release from jail, Scott moved to West Palm Beach. Scott told a judge Friday that he has worked for Conway Maintenance, a landscaping business, the past five years.

Court and police records show Scott has been arrested 36 times for charges ranging from drunken driving to assault and battery. Twenty-five of those arrests have occurred since 1980.

Scott was convicted in February of soliciting for prostitution in Lantana and paid a $125 fine.

Neighbors in the quiet suburban West Palm Beach community of Boulevard Estates, where Scott and his wife, daughter and 2-day-old baby live, said they were surprised by his arrest for murder.

A neighbor said Scott agreed last month to take care of an injured rabbit she had found lying in her yard. The woman said Scott had told her he was saving money to move his family out of their rented duplex and into a house.

"He seemed like a real nice family man," she said. "This is a real surprise."

Another neighbor said the Scotts "seemed like such a nice couple.

"Never in a million years would I think of him doing something like this," she said. "It's scary. You just don't know."

Detective From page 1B

He's very knowledgeable in the area of criminal law and constitutional law.

"He's also a very organized investigator, which was extremely crucial in this case," Alessandroni added.

Burton said that he's found "it pays to be very methodical and use a regimented approach" in his investigating.

It also pays to have an understanding wife. Diane Burton typed every word of the 2,000-page report sent to the state attorney's office, he said.

He said although the divorce rate among police officers is high, working with Diane "created a closer bonding between us because we were working toward a common goal."

Burton might still be stationed in Englewood if sheriff's Det. Michael Gandy had accepted the Pikuritz investigation offered him first by McDougall. But McDougall said Gandy refused to take the job because he felt he would be betraying former Sheriff Glen Sapp, who was suspended by Gov. Bob Graham from office in April 1985 after he was indicted on a grand theft charge. Burton said he never discussed the Pikuritz case with Gandy.

Burton was born in Warsaw, N.Y., an upstate town between Rochester and Buffalo, where he lived until moving to the Englewood area in 1971.

He worked three years as a security officer for the Ringling Brothers-Barnum & Bailey Circus in Venice until he joined the Sheriff's Department in September 1975 as a radio dispatcher in Englewood.

He was transferred to road patrol duty in January 1977 and became a deputy in October 1981. He was promoted in October 1983 to the department's criminal investigation division as an agent, and was promoted again to special investigator in September.

Burton's personnel file contains numerous letters of commendation from Sapp, as well as a letter from Alessandroni written in February 1984. "You can be confident that in Ken Burton you have a very good man," Alessandroni wrote.

Burton received an associate degree in criminal justice in April 1982 from Edison Community College.

Board From page 1B

velopment Corp. "In the next few days" on property north of U.S. 41 in the Peachland area of Port Charlotte for the school in that area.

That land is expected to cost approximately the same as the Rotonda site, McKinley said.

Bedford has said the two schools are needed to alleviate overcrowding.

More than 400 Charlotte County students are attending Englewood Elementary School in Sarasota, Bedford has said.

Those students, as well as students in Rotonda, Boca Grande and Placida, would attend Vineland Elementary School.

The Port Charlotte school will help overcrowding at Neil Armstrong and Meadow Park elementary schools, Bedford has said.

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