

Friday, July 9th, 2004 – Front page

## **Mother: Baby Was Ruining My Life Affidavit Reveals Several Examples Of Abuse Against 6-Month-Old**

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HARLINGEN — For the last four and a half months, a baby endured abuse that included two fractured bones in his left arm, another fracture in his right arm, a broken leg and bruises to his jaw, abdomen and thighs.

Now the boy's mother and her boyfriend are accused of causing those and other injuries to the infant, as well as feeding him spoiled, raw meat.

According to court records released Friday, Veronica Martinez, 18, said she wanted her 6-month-old boy dead because he "ruined her life".

The boy was released from Valley Baptist Medical Center Friday into the custody of Child Protective Services.

A probable cause affidavit released Friday contains several incidents of abuse toward the baby at the hands of Martinez and her boyfriend Brian Martin, 19, since January.

Martinez told police that in January she punched the baby three times as hard as she could because he was crying a lot, the affidavit said.

Just before that incident, Martin asked Martinez to tell the baby how much she loved him. She refused, the affidavit said.

When Martin attempted to kiss the baby, Martinez pushed him away and started punching the baby.

She told the baby that he ruined her life, the affidavit said.

On July 3, Martinez allegedly took some raw ground beef from her refrigerator, put it in her car and drove with Martin to the Harlingen Wal-Mart parking lot.

Martinez left the meat in the heat so it could spoil, the affidavit said.

Martinez told police she fed the child the spoiled meat so he would get an infection from E. coli bacteria that would have grown in the spoiled meat, the affidavit said.

On July 6, after the 6-month-old was crying during a visit to Valle Vista Mall, the couple returned to their car, where Martin allegedly grabbed the boy's arm and broke it, the affidavit said.



Martinez



Martin

The affidavit goes on to say that Martin then grabbed the baby by his legs and dropped him on his back so he would hit the center hump on the floorboard of the backseat.

Martinez laughed as Martin dropped the baby, the affidavit said.

At one point, to stop the baby from crying, Martin held his hand over the baby's mouth until the child turned blue, the affidavit said.

Martinez told police Martin did it for a couple of seconds, but no longer than a minute.

The child was taken to Valley Baptist Medical Center that night.

According to police reports, Martinez was arrested July 7 and Martin was arrested July 8 at his Palm Valley home.

Both were charged with first-degree felony injury to a child, a crime punishable by anywhere from five to 99 years in prison and a fine not to exceed \$10,000.

Martinez and Martin remain in custody at the Carrizalez-Rucker Detention Center in Olmito.

Bond for each has been set at \$100,000.

Sgt. Richard Turner with the Harlingen Police Department said the boy's recovery was fortunate.

"We've had a number of baby deaths, we've had a number of babies seriously injured ... some that will never be the same," he said.

"This is the first case we've had where you have a child broken up like this, other than a traffic accident."

According to a Harlingen police report, the boy is described as having blonde hair and blue eyes.

"This little guy is a 'pumpkin,'" Turner said. "He's absolutely beautiful."

Turner said the boy's father is serving in the military and has already been contacted by CPS about the incident.

Valley Baptist spokesperson Irma Saenz said hospital staff routinely report suspected abuse to CPS and police.

"It is the duty of CPS to best determine who the child should be released to once the child can leave the hospital," she said.

CPS spokesperson Marina Yzaguirre said the baby was in the agency's custody Friday.

Martinez was reported to the agency for another incident of abuse in January, but the agency did not find anything that would indicate abuse or neglect at the time, Yzaguirre said.

"It was correct for the baby to be removed from (the mother's) custody," said Brenda Heredia, executive director of the Family Crisis Center. "This is a terrible, terrible thing."

"They (Martinez and Martin) need extensive long-term counseling," said Heredia.

"They shouldn't be allowed around children because the probability is high they will abuse again."

Heredia said among the cases she has seen, the first time a parent hits a child is the hardest.

"Once you've broken that taboo ... crossed the line ... it gets easier the next time and the next time after that," she said.

Both Heredia and Yzaguirre said parents who feel they are having problems should seek the help of the Family Crisis Center, Maggie's House, Monica's House, Tropical Texas or CPS.

Under the state's Baby Moses Law, a mother can leave a child younger than two months to be placed in state custody at designated centers.

Yzaguirre said adoption is an option for mothers who feel overwhelmed by the responsibility of raising a child.

Mothers, she said, can also use referrals from CPS or the services of local agencies to place their child up for adoption.

"If someone came to our office and said, 'Take him, I can't take care of him,' we would," said Yzaguirre.

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