

Mayor Noel calls Bouton's hand

By Jim Wynn

Abbeville Mayor Daniel Noel says that if former police captain Jimmie Bouton knows the identity of the murderer of Linda Hebert, as he has claimed, according to a quote in another newspaper, he should take his information to the district attorney.

In a story published by the New Iberia Daily Iberian last Thursday, Bouton is quoted as having said: "I know who killed Linda Hebert, but somebody is trying to cover it up."

Mrs. Hebert was murdered on April 9. Bouton, who was still on the force, was in charge of the investigation. Noel blames Bouton's "inefficient job" of investigating for the failure of police to solve the crime.

In a prepared statement, Noel also said he was asking the district attorney to investigate Bouton's allegations that Noel and others tampered with a civil service board, which upheld Bouton's firing from the force after a stormy six-day hearing last November, and other "defamatory" statements made by Bouton in print and in broadcasts.

Noel said if defamation is proved, he will demand that Bouton be prosecuted.

The statement prepared by Noel follows:

Last week Bouton announced that he was circulating a petition to recall Mayor Noel, Chief of Police Kerney Nunez, and John Guilbeau, the city councilman who made the motion several weeks ago to delete the captain position from the city police department and replace it with two lieutenants. Through other media, he has charged the mayor and chief with malfeasance of office and Guilbeau with receiving stolen goods.

The statement prepared by Noel follows:

"For many months Jimmy Bouton has done everything possible to discredit myself and the good and decent members of this administration. He has made repeated allegations of corruption in this administration. These allegations began when his activities as the captain of the Abbeville police force in what has now become known as 'the raid' were discovered, resulting in his termination from the force. It is therefore not surprising that he is trying to intimidate myself and this administration into shirking the duties for which we were elected. His style and manner smacks of the days of Joe McCarthy when many innocent people lost everything they owned because of the reckless and false allegations of one man.

"McCarthy always claimed to have the proof and evidence to convict the alleged 'communists', and everyone believed him but no one ever saw the 'evidence'. When McCarthy was finally pinned down he could prove nothing. His power came from sheer intimidation, created as a result of his absolute disregard for what was true and decent.

"In Mr. Bouton's case, the facts of his misconduct as a classified employee of our local civil service were such that the chief of police, myself as mayor, and all five members of the city council had no recourse but to vote for his dismissal. He had a lengthy hearing before the civil service board and was given every consideration by the board and yet the board upheld the dismissal because Mr. Bouton did not disprove any of the 19 charges brought against him.

"Mr. Bouton has appealed that decision as is his right; but he has absolutely no right to brand innocent people by spreading malicious rumors about them. He will not succeed in intimidating me into foregoing my responsibilities to the good people of this town, nor do I think he will succeed in intimidating the reasonable

members of this administration.

"Not only has Mr. Bouton been making false statements about others, but he has not been telling the truth about himself. He has made repeated allegations that there has been a cover-up of the murder investigation of Linda Hebert. What Mr. Bouton is trying to do with these allegations is conceal the poor and inefficient job he did while running that investigation. During the time of his civil service board hearing, the city agreed to go along with the district attorney office's request that nothing be brought out in the hearing concerning that murder investigation. Those charges were omitted from consideration in the hearing over my objections because I believed the public had a right to know the truth about that investigation and Mr. Bouton's involvement with it. It is now time to clear the air about that investigation, because Mr. Bouton is still making allegations that there has been a cover up and that he knows who the murderer is.

"There were 22 charges originally brought against Mr. Bouton for his dismissal from the police force. Three of those charges arose out of his conduct while running the investigation. Because Mr. Bouton's investigation had turned up nothing to indicate who the murderer was, except sheer speculation, and because other officers refused to work any further with him on the investigation, I asked the state police to enter the investigation to give us assistance. This they agreed to do and did so.

"Prior to the state's entry into the investigation, Mr. Bouton had suspected four different people of having committed the murder. Each of these people were of the white race and each person was subjected to repeated interrogation and lie detector tests. The tests did not indicate that any one of the suspects was guilty of the murder but that did not stop Mr. Bouton's accusations. Each of these people

were forced to get an attorney to protect themselves and yet none of the suspects was ever arrested and charged.

"The state came in and helped turn up a few leads to the case. A man was located who claimed to have been a witness to the murder. However, the man was intoxicated during his interrogation and it was agreed among the officers, including Mr. Bouton, that nothing would be done that night except to let the witness 'dry out' and if he maintained his story the next day, then a warrant would be sought for the man the witness claimed did the murder.

"After the state officers left the station that night, Mr. Bouton got another officer to accompany him to Maurice for the sole purpose of checking out aspects of the witness' story. However, once he got to Maurice he decided to go to Lafayette and arrest the man accused. He did this under his own authority without even giving the state police the courtesy of making his intentions known when it was agreed earlier that evening not to pursue the matter further until the witness could be examined while sober.

"He arrested a black male that night, although he was previously convinced that four separate white people committed the murder. He made the arrest without the chief of police's knowledge and without the knowledge of the state police who had been working on the case. He later had to release the arrested man because he had an alibi that could not be shaken. This action by Mr. Bouton not only caused a man to be arrested when he should not have been, but also jeopardized the city's relationship with the state to the degree that the state threatened to pull their men off of the investigation.

Does this sound like Mr. Bouton knows who the murderer is? When he believed the state was going to make an arrest he prematurely

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arrested a black man who he had not previously suspected. If he is so sure of who the murderer is, then why has he had five different suspects, one of whom is black, and only make one arrest and then have to let that man go? Also, why hasn't he gone to the district attorney with his proof and have someone arrested and charged with the crime instead of going to the news media, who can do nothing about this matter, with his allegations and nothing more?

"As I mentioned above, the allegations of Mr. Bouton are nothing new. At the time of his board hearing he made these same allegations. He had an opportunity at that time to present his case and prove his charges. He was requested by Councilman John Vidos to prove the allegations everyone had been hearing him make about the 'corruption' in the city and he said the proof was coming. However, not once during his hearing did he even offer any evidence whatsoever to support his allegations nor did he give one word of testimony offering the 'proof' he said he had.

"Mr. Bouton likes to make reckless statements about other people but he always seems to leave his own actions out of everything. For instance, he has stated that the civil service board was tampered with by myself, Chief Nunez, and Anthony Fontana.

accountable in a court of law for their actions. I have already retained legal counsel to begin the necessary work to protect my interests and those of the people who have already suffered needlessly because of this matter.