



Lic# A2600030

Peasley & Peasley, Inc.
Investigations

State Attorney Bernie McCabe,

I am writing this letter to you in the hopes of presenting you with an opportunity to see that justice is served in the unfortunate death of Laura Bowdoin. Laura was a healthy, 36 year old woman found dead in her bed on the morning of June 19, 2008. According to the medical examiner's office, her cause of death is Ambien and the manner of death is undetermined. However, there are many unsettling issues surrounding her death. During the course of this letter, I will touch on many significant situations revolving around her death and the utter lack of a proper investigation.

I feel it is important to briefly familiarize you with the circumstances of Laura's life leading up to her death. Laura was in the middle of a bitter divorce from her husband of eleven years, George Bowdoin. They were living in the same house until the divorce terms were finalized; however, Laura had moved into their guest room in January at the time of her filing. Her husband was resisting the divorce and was obsessed with Laura. Laura had found a GPS locator attached to her car and she had caught him with a camera several times upon exiting the shower. She felt he was trying to catch her in the nude to take pictures of her. She had confided in many people that George's behavior was creepy and she was concerned. She also told friends that George was drinking more and staying out late. Laura had even begun to keep a log of the unusual hours he was keeping. There were fights and at one time she had locked herself and her daughter in the bathroom to avoid his rage. She also mentioned to friends that she was afraid to eat or drink anything because she felt he was trying to poison her. Friends urged her to leave, but she did not want to involve anyone else in her problems. He had been threatening to fight for custody of their 6 year old daughter, while also threatening her. He told Laura that if he could not have her, nobody would.

Laura had begun to engage in a romantic relationship with her business partner, Jim. George was suspicious of her having another relationship and constantly questioned her as to whether or not she was

having an affair. She denied it. As a result, he was always trying to prove that she was and find out who she was involved with. Laura was happy to be getting the divorce and looking forward to her future. She worked in real estate and was also looking for new work to help supplement her income. Laura had planned outings with friends, and had several previously confirmed meetings with clients on the morning of her death. Laura was a devoted mother and Christian, who doted on her daughter and attended church regularly. She had no history of depression or psychological problems. Consequently, her alleged suicide came as a complete shock to her family and friends. There was no suicide note found and no mention to anyone of suicidal thoughts. Laura had not even been prescribed Ambien for difficulty sleeping, her husband George had. Within two days of Laura's death, George was making repeated phone calls to Laura's business partner in order to obtain Laura's laptop. When the family found out, a cousin who knew Laura's passwords tried to access her e-mails and discovered everything had been deleted. I believe it is also pertinent to note that Laura carried a life insurance policy on herself that was over \$1,000,000 (which has already been paid out to her beneficiary, the man who would have very soon been her ex-husband, George).

Unfortunately, none of this information would even come to light until months later because the Pasco County Sheriff's Major Crimes Unit did not follow protocol and respond to the house or the hospital. Corporal Gracie, the patrolman who was dispatched due to the 911 call originated by George Bowdoin upon finding her dead. Corporal Gracie was informed, while at the hospital, by Sgt. Sessa of the Major Crimes unit that he was not dispatching a detective to the hospital or the residence. Therefore, he could release her body to the Medical Examiner. This decision by Sgt. Sessa, regrettably has resulted in the lack of any evidence in this case. Ironically, Ramone a Sergeant with the Clearwater Police Department, and a neighbor of George and Laura's, went to the hospital to pick up *Child* at George's request. Ramone approached Deputy Tucker and advised him that he had a good rapport with George and could get him to sign a waiver to search the residence. He was told he would be contacted if they needed his help at a later time. Ramone's wife had Britney at their house and before George took Britney home, Ramone called Pasco County Sheriff's Department and again inquired as to whether or not they were going to send a detective to the residence. He was told that no one was going to respond to the residence. Needless to say, no one from the Major Crimes Unit ever questioned George about the events that took place before and after Laura's death, nor did they go into the house at that time.

Quite frankly, this was the worst police investigation I have ever witnessed or reviewed.

Four days after the fact, Det. Michelle March was assigned to the case and immediately marked it as "Administratively Cleared pending toxicology reports. Det. March began to receive phone calls from many friends, family, and co-workers regarding the fact that they felt there had to be more to this story. Finally, in response to these phone calls, Det. March began to make a few calls herself. On July 29, 2008, George met with Det. March at the Sheriff's Department. She failed to inquire about many relevant issues. She did however go to the house in August and found prescription bottles for Ambien, Fluoxetine (a generic drug for Prozac), and hydrocodone. All of which were prescribed to George. Det. March wrote in her report that he must have taken the Fluoxetine only when necessary because the prescription was a few months old. The only prescription found for Laura was for hydrocodone that was given to her following a breast augmentation surgery in May of the previous year. Det. March tried to contact George again on September 30, 2008 and was informed that George had hired a lawyer and would no longer be cooperating with the investigation.

In my opinion, Det. March is not even qualified to be conducting this investigation. Many statements in her reports have been manipulated and argued by the people giving the statements. Polygraphs have since been taken, and passed, regarding misinformation in the reports. On several occasions, Det. March did not even write her reports for 6-8 weeks after the interviews. When she did finally write the reports they were incomplete, inaccurate, and most of the time no punctuation was even used.

It should be noted that Laura's mother, Mary Rinnier, had contacted Sgt. Sessa to question him as to why no one ever responded to the house. The phone call was a 3-way call with Investigator Peasley listening in. Sgt. Sessa lied to Mary and told her he did not receive the case until four days later; when in fact, he was the one that made the decision for no one to respond. If you were to read the reports of this investigation, you would be appalled. The supervisors in the Major Crimes Unit are standing by their investigation. They want everyone to believe and have stated that they have done all they can do. No one is accepting responsibility for this unbelievably shoddy police work.

In October 2008, after conducting my initial investigation, I contacted Sheriff White and asked for a meeting. After hearing the particulars, Sheriff

White agreed they should have gone to the house the day of Laura's death. He also admitted there were problems with the investigation and in the Major Crimes Unit. When told that if something was not done about it, I would be meeting with the media, he said he would read the reports, and have someone else conduct the investigation from that point on. He asked me to submit a list of questions and issues I felt needed to be addressed. Later that night, at approximately 8:30 p.m., I received a phone call from Sheriff White asking me to please keep this away from the attorneys and the press until after the election. After the election, I requested to meet with Sheriff White again. He again admitted it was a poor investigation and said he wanted to see George put in jail and asked me how we were going to get that accomplished. I said I felt another autopsy needed to be conducted. He said he would agree to another autopsy and cover the charges incurred. He asked me to submit a list of tests that needed to be run so that he would not have to resort to a third autopsy.

Most recently, I received a phone call from Lt. Corbin who requested to meet with me. He came to my office and proceeded to ask me what I had uncovered regarding this case. When I answered his question with the same question, he began to speak ill of Laura, said she had been having an affair, and that she committed suicide by overdosing on Ambien. He further insisted the medical examiner was standing by his conclusion. I responded by telling him that this was unacceptable and the worst investigation I had ever seen. I told him to leave my office and immediately called Sheriff White's assistant, Terri. She was unaware that Lt. Corbin had requested to meet with me. Upon reflection of the meeting, I thought it was interesting that Lt. Corbin felt a woman involved in a divorce and looking forward to a new relationship would commit suicide.

In regard to my investigation, I have consulted with several prominent doctors in their fields and all of them strongly disagree with the medical examiner's conclusion. They argue that it is highly unlikely that the level of Ambien found in Laura's system would result in a fatality. The first physician contacted was Dr. Steve Mitchell, an Emergency Room doctor with several Bay Area hospitals. Dr. Mitchell has also testified in court. I discussed the case with Dr. Mitchell and after reviewing the autopsy and toxicology reports, he felt

that it was improbable that a healthy 36 year old female would die of an overdose of Ambien based on the level found in her system. He further added that it would have to be combined with other substances in order to cause a fatality. However, since there were no co-ingestants found in her system, he suggested that it would be more likely that the Ambien was used to subdue Laura in order to possibly suffocate her.

Dr. Mitchell then referred me to Dr. Gerald F. O'Malley, the Director of Research and also the Director for the Division of Toxicology at Albert Einstein Medical Center in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Dr. O'Malley frequently lectures nationwide and sees approximately forty patients a day. Dr. O'Malley also reviewed the autopsy and toxicology reports upon my request. Dr. O'Malley provided a detailed report supported by medical journal research on the potential for lethality of Ambien which includes documentation from the latest report provided by the American Association of Poison Control Centers from 2007 (see attached report). His report states that "What is remarkable is that given the widespread availability and utilization of zolpidem it remains a very safe drug, even in overdose. Given the number of prescriptions written (over 25,000,000 in 2006) there are very few cases of death or serious morbidity associated with zolpidem". Dr. O'Malley further states in his report that "the level of zolpidem (Ambien) in Ms. Bowdoin's heart (0.93mg/L) at the time of her autopsy was actually very low compared with levels that have been reported in the medical and forensic literature. In conclusion, he felt that "a description of the condition of her surroundings and environment in which she was found at the time of her death would be helpful in discerning if another explanation is more plausible or other elements contributed to Ms. Bowdoin's death". During my conversation with Dr. O'Malley he said he was inclined to believe the death was caused by some other means. He also responded with his offer to help in this case in anyway.

The third physician contacted is Dr. Thomas Richard Beaver, a forensic pathologist from Texas, who has also testified in court. Dr. Beaver also reviewed the autopsy and toxicology reports. He questions the medical examiner's conclusion in this case. He feels that by conducting a more thorough examination and further testing of tissue samples, a more likely cause of death could be determined. He would also like to perform the second autopsy and specifically examine the possibility that Laura was strangled.

In conclusion, I pray that you give this case the time and attention it deserves. For the sake of her family, I would like nothing more than to restore their faith in the justice system and give Laura back her dignity. I strongly believe George Bowdoin is responsible for Laura's death. The least we can do at this point is to conduct a more thorough investigation and autopsy. The Pasco County Sheriff's Department's idea of a thorough investigation was to call a Walgreens and speak to a pharmacist. The family and I are committed to seeing this through until some reasonable sense of closure is achieved.

Thank you,

Michael S. Peasley