

# THE REGION

## BOY GETS YEAR FOR DAD'S DEATH



SENTENCING: Michael Taylor, 15, and mother Gail Roberts listen Thursday as assistant Public Defender James Nolan recommends a sentence for the teen.

### Judge wants teen to receive counseling

**BY LISA FURUS**  
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PARME could have put Taylor in a juvenile facility until he turns 21 but chose to enter the youngster in a restrictive center that is more dormitory than jail, said Assistant Public Defender James Nolan. Taylor will not be released from the facility until mental health experts and state authorities determine that he is rehabilitated.

Since the murder, Taylor has been living under house arrest at the West Palm Beach home of his mother, Gail Roberts. He will remain there with an electronic monitor attached to his leg until state officials can place him in a juvenile facility, a process Nolan says can take several months.

The sentencing "could have been a lot worse in many respects," said Nolan, adding that state prosecutors could have tried Taylor as an adult.

At Thursday's sentencing, Taylor sobbed and clung to his mother's arm as Furus read aloud emotional letters from Ray Taylor's sister and mother denouncing the boy. Both women sat across the courtroom surrounded by marital relatives.

After Nolan and Furus gave their sentencing recommendations to Furus, Taylor apologized to the court for actions he called accidental.

"I'm sorry I did it, and I wish I never happened," said Taylor, fighting back tears. "I'm also sorry to my dad's family."



SCENE OF CRIME: Michael Taylor was playing video games with friends at the Marathons trailer when his father came home drunk and they began to fight.

Although Nolan had hoped to convince Furus to put Taylor in a juvenile facility for six to nine months, the judge went with Nolan's recommendation, on the promise that Taylor "has a long way" to go to sound mental health.

The killing of his father is not Taylor's first brush with the law, Nolan said. When Taylor was 12, he was involved in a violent fight at school that resulted in a child citation for battery and confinement in a juvenile alternative sanction program. Criminal charges were dropped in that case.

According to police, Taylor was smoking marijuana and playing video games with friends at the Marathons trailer on 6th Street in March when his father came home drunk. The father and son began to fight

after Ray Taylor supposedly made improper gestures toward girls in attendance and Mitchell asked his friends to leave the room.

Taylor then hit his father in the face and kicked him in the ribs as he lay on the floor, police said. One of Taylor's friends returned to the room and attempted to pull him off his father. Soon after, Ray Taylor engaged in a physical fight with Mitchell Taylor and a neighbor's house for help.

The neighbor allegedly told the teenager to "let his father sleep it off" and delayed calling emergency personnel until Ray Taylor began making distress noises. Neighbors administered CPR until an ambulance arrived. Taylor later died at Palmetum Hospital in Marathon.

### Noise limits revisited

Officials search for fair solution

**BY JENNIFER BARON**  
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**KEY WEST** — They are going to give it another try.

Unable to settle on the details — and enforcement methods — of a proposal to crack down on night-time noise, Key West city commissioners Wednesday night directed their staff to devise a plan that would allow police and code enforcement officers to use two different standards when evaluating a noise complaint.

In doing so, commissioners withdrew from consideration another ordinance that they initially approved last month.

For more than a decade now, city officials have been grappling with the dilemma of how to cap excessive noise generated by bars and restaurants in Key West's commercial areas while preserving the tourist dollars that flow from those establishments.

"I have been on the commission for 15 years, and this is probably the fourth or fifth time it's come up," said Mayor James Weekley.

The ordinance commissioners scrapped Wednesday would have required police or code enforcement officers to measure offensive noise coming from a business or residence using a hand-held decibel meter. Evening noise levels would have been capped at 75 decibels in commercial areas, 65 decibels in residential areas. A companion measure would have tied an establishment's ability to renew its entertainment license to noise compliance.

But after enforcement questions were raised Wednesday by commissioner Jeremy Anthony, the panel directed the city attorney to draft another ordinance incorporating Anthony's concerns, and those of police department officials who argue it would be impossible to put the new rule into practice. On Duval Street, for example, music often pours forth at once from various bars, making it difficult to obtain an accurate reading.

And municipal noise cops are often a target for night challenges.

"You start with the unfortunate fact that almost every noise ordinance in the southeastern U.S. has been thrown out of court," said commissioner Tom Oestreich.

A rewritten version of the ordinance will likely include two different standards for determining a noise violation: a decibel meter reading that exceeds the permitted levels, or a determination by a police or code enforcement officer that a verbal complaint has a "reasonable basis" in fact.

The second, more subjective standard, was rejected by a commission-appointed task force that drafted recommendations for the original ordinance. Task force members, a number of whom own bars or restaurants in Key West, said they were striving for a more scientific standard.

"I put a lot of hours into this, tried to make it as bipartisan as possible so it was good for everybody, and now it's back to the drawing board," said Mark Rossi, a task force member and owner of Rick's Bar and Darryl Harry's on Duval Street.

"I'm bewildered."

### Man, 59, accused of molesting girl

**KEY LARGO** — A Key Largo man has been charged with sexually molesting a young girl.

Anthony Francisco Williamson, 59, was charged Wednesday with three counts of sexual battery on a child under the age of 12. The victim told Monroe County Sheriff's Office detectives that Williamson fondled her and committed sexual battery against her numerous times between February 1994 and August 1999. She reportedly told her mother about the abuse, police said, and her mother reported it to law enforcement authorities.

Williamson was booked into the Monroe County Detention Center with bail set at \$500,000.

### Drifter's murder trial postponed until September

**Suspect accused of killing Herald supervisor**

**KEY WEST** — Defense attorneys were granted a delay Thursday in the murder trial of a Massachusetts drifter who police say confessed to abducting and strangling Miami Herald employee Janet Acosta in April.

Michael Anthony Tanti, 24, is charged with first-degree murder and other charges in the death of Acosta, a 49-year-old Herald supervisor.

Tanti's trial was set for July 17 in Key West, but the accused killer's court-appointed attorneys, Nancy Bassel and Stephanie Fleming, were granted a continuance at a pretrial conference Thursday.

Assistant State Attorney Manny Madruga said the trial has been postponed until September to allow the defense more time to interview witnesses and review evidence. Madruga said continuances are routine in drug-dealer murder trials. He did not know the specific date of the trial.

Tanti was arrested on Duval Street in Key West on April 27 near Acosta's 1999 Plymouth Voyager, two days after allegedly kidnapping Acosta in Miami and killing her on Causeway Key. He confessed to the crime, police said, and had detectives to Acosta's body in a thick mangrove cove off secluded Biting Road.

Tanti has been held without bail at the Monroe County Detention Center on Stock Island since his arrest.

Once Tanti is done with the Florida trial, he could be extradited to Massachusetts for first-degree murder charges there for the slaying of a Brockton woman in August.