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TWIN TRAGEDIES, NEARLY 30 YEARS APART

The stories of Adam Toledo and Joey Chlopek are eerily similar. But there's no video of Joey, 12, being fatally shot by a Chicago cop — and his mother still doesn't believe the officer's story.

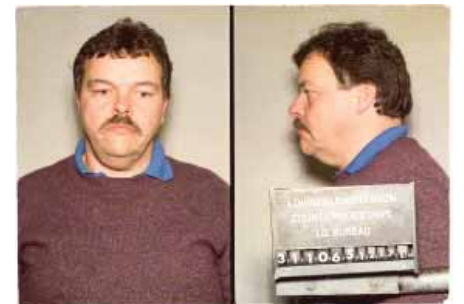
DAVID STRUETT REPORTS, PAGES 6-7



Debra Fahrforth holds a photo of herself with son Joey Chlopek, who was 12 when he was fatally shot by a Chicago cop in 1992.

PAT NABONG/SUN-TIMES

THE WATCHDOGS



TIME AND AGAIN, PASSIONISTS AND CATHOLIC DIOCESES DIDN'T REVEAL PREDATOR DEACON IN THEIR MIDST

ROBERT HERGUTH REPORTS, PAGES 10-13

'Buzz' Palmer, co-founder of Chicago's Afro-American Patrolmen's League, dies at 84

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Suburban couple stuck abroad amid pandemic — and that's just one of their many woes

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What video of police shooting means for mayor **ANALYSIS BY FRAN SPIELMAN, PAGES 8-9**

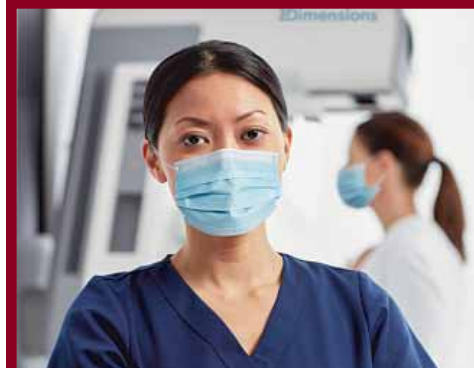
Prosecutor who described video put on leave for failing to 'fully present the facts' **PAGE 23**

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★ TOP NEWS

TRAGIC ECHOES

Nearly 30 years ago, a 12-year-old boy was shot to death by police. Today his mother says, 'When he died, I died.'

BY DAVID STRUETT,
CST WIRE REPORTER

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A young boy is handed a gun by someone older, chased down a Southwest Side alley by a police officer and shot to death.

It's a series of events now commanding the attention of Chicago, which had been anxiously awaiting the release of police body-camera video of the fatal shooting of 13-year-old Adam Toledo.

But a similar scenario played out nearly 30 years ago when an officer shot and killed a 12-year-old boy in Brighton Park — the youngest Chicago police shooting victim in recent memory.

Debra Fahrforth still doesn't believe her son had a gun, as police said, when an officer shot 12-year-old Joey Chlopek the afternoon of June 6, 1992.

"I'll never believe what the cops said about that day. My boy was jumping over the fence" when he was shot, said Fahrforth, 60.

It was nearly three decades ago, but she lives with it every day, surprised it didn't prompt her to take her own life.

"When he died, I died," she said.

The police said Joey was shot after pointing a .22-caliber pistol at a plainclothes officer, David Jarmusz, during a foot chase. Shot three times in an alley, Joey collapsed in a backyard in the 3000 block of West 38th Street. Other than Jarmusz, there were no witnesses.

That 1992 police shooting has parallels with the fatal shooting in March of 13-year-old Adam Toledo, who was also running from an officer — according to the police, with a gun in his hand.

Prosecutors have said Adam was handed the gun by a 21-year-old man who had fired at a passing car minutes earlier. Officers found Adam and the man in an alley and chased them. One of the officers shot Adam in the chest as the boy turned



Debra Fahrforth holds a photo of herself with son Joey Chlopek, who was fatally shot by a Chicago police officer in 1992, in her Wilmette home Friday. PAT NABONG/SUN-TIMES



Joey Chlopek (left) was 12 when a Chicago police officer shot and killed him in 1992. Almost 30 years later, Joey's shooting shares many similarities with that of 13-year-old Adam Toledo. PROVIDED PHOTOS

around by a fence behind Farragut Career Academy High School. According to the video, he wasn't holding a gun when he was shot.

In Joey's shooting, the police said they were searching for an 18-year-old gang member and saw Joey trying to hide a gun as he stood with a group playing basketball outside Davis Elementary School, 3014 W. 39th Place.

As the officer approached Joey, the child began to run, leading to the chase. The police said the pursuit wound through several alleys into a partially paved gangway and that Jarmusz entered the gangway from the front, identified himself and ordered Joey to stop, but the boy pointed the gun at the cop, who started shooting, hitting Joey three times.

Joey fell dead in a backyard be-

tween the front gate and a peach tree. He'd had to hop a fence to get into the yard. The police said Joey's gun was found in a vegetable garden in the yard.

A 14-year-old boy was later charged with handing the gun to Joey at the school before the chase began.

Fahrforth says she still isn't sure what to believe about what happened that day, pointing out that



Pallbearers, five of them wearing baseball jerseys, carry Joey Chlopek's coffin to a hearse after Mass at St. Pancratius Church on June 11, 1992. SUN-TIMES FILE



Debra Fahrforth (center) and her husband, Edward, march on June 8, 1992, with community members through the area on the Southwest Side where her son was shot to death by a Chicago police officer. SUN-TIMES FILE

the officer had shot and wounded two other people at that point in his then-19-year career with the Chicago Police Department.

The lack of video in Joey's shooting is the most striking difference with Adam's shooting and a source of Fahrforth's doubt.

"I wish they had a camcorder. ... I'm still very doubtful" about what happened, she said.

She watched the video of Adam being shot and wonders whether that was how her own boy was killed.

"I thought: That's my son running, not knowing what to do, scared to stop, scared to run," she said. "And the results are: He's gone. I feel so bad for that family. It does remind me of Joey running out of the park. It really does."

Fahrforth filed a federal lawsuit against the officer and the city, saying Joey couldn't have had a gun when he was shot. A judge ruled in favor of the city and the officer in 1995.

According to the lawsuit, Joey couldn't have been holding a gun because the police said he had it in his right hand, but he was lefthanded. The suit also said Joey couldn't have been pointing the gun at the officer because an autopsy showed the three bullets entered Joey's side. There were no fingerprints

on the gun that matched Joey's, though the police said that about half of recovered guns didn't have usable prints.

Fahrforth said she believes the police planted the gun on Joey, who she said was running home and had a key in his hand when he was shot. She thinks that, had there been video, it would have vindicated her son.

"If there was a video, we would've won," she said.

The officer didn't respond to a message seeking comment.

"DO I THINK ANYTHING'S CHANGED? NO, I THINK IT'S EVEN WORSE TODAY. I THINK THERE'S MORE TRIGGER-HAPPY OFFICERS OUT THERE." DEBRA FAHRFORTH

Fahrforth thinks Joey was portrayed unfairly in news reports, which she said exaggerated parts of the story and painted him as a bad kid. They said Joey had a gang tattoo on the inside of one of his fingers, which the police cited as proof he was in a gang. Family and friends

disputed the meaning of the tattoo.

Fahrforth said she didn't know about any gang connections her son had, that relatives hid that from her. She said she did her best to supervise Joey but was working two jobs.

Of Adam Toledo's mom, Fahrforth said: "I feel for this mother. You don't think your baby can be doing anything wrong or would be doing anything wrong. You think the streets grabbed him. I don't know. The streets are powerful, I will say that."

Nearly 30 years later, Fahrforth said she thinks police culture hasn't improved. And she remains bitter about the way she thinks the police treated her even after an officer shot and killed her child.

"It's something taken from you that you think you would never have to go through," she said. "Do I think anything's changed? No, I think it's even worse today. I think there's more trigger-happy officers out there."

Fahrforth said she learned of her son's death at work.

"I said to my boss, 'My son's

dead.' ... But I never thought it was a cop. In my wildest dream, I thought it was a gang shooting. ... Never thought it was an officer until I got there. And when I got there, I tried to go to my son and they wouldn't let me. They said, 'Cross the line, and we'll shoot you next.'"

Fahrforth said she asked for police protection at her house during Joey's wake but didn't get it.

"We were treated like garbage," she said. "You know, I'm still bitter with the police department."

"I know all the money in the world couldn't bring my son back. No mother can get over this. You never get over it. You learn to live with it. I know God says to forgive, but the only thing it makes me do is accept death now."

Fahrforth said the death of her son has been "the hardest thing" in her life.

"I'm surprised I didn't commit suicide, to tell you the truth," she said. "When he died, I died. Part of me went with him. I have to live with this every day. Does this officer have to live with it? He's taking his pension right now."

"There's three answers and only one right one," Fahrforth said. "There's [the officer's] story and my thoughts, and then there's God that knows what happened."



Debra Fahrforth shows a tattoo of her son Joey Chlopek on Friday. PAT NABONG/SUN-TIMES