

# The Day REGION

SATURDAY, APRIL 12, 2008

SECTION B

## Police: Men came downtown to shoot Marshall

Warrants show how videotape from Ernie's used to identify suspects

By **KAREN FLORIN**  
Day Staff Writer

New London police had a videotape of the murder of Vernell Marshall, who was shot in the head outside Ernie's Café on June 21, 2007.

The Bank Street bar has been the scene of

other crimes, and Ernie's management was rolling surveillance tape that night. Cameras recorded the shooting from a couple of different angles, and now police had to identify the players.

Arrest warrants recently unsealed in New London Superior Court show how the detectives built a case against the three New Haven men they arrested in January. A description of the tape was included in the warrant.

Kurtis Turner, 19, is the alleged gunman and is charged with murder. Curtis McGill, 24, and Jonathan Fuller, 19, are charged with

conspiracy to commit murder.

The warrants indicate police used the videotape and "cooperating witnesses," some of them customers from the bar, to identify the three men who allegedly had come downtown to kill Marshall.

The video shows the three men coming into the bar's rear entrance about 12 minutes after midnight. The man later identified as McGill ordered beers. McGill and Turner left and returned twice through the front door. Turner left a third time, and the two others began to follow when the shooting occurred, according to police. The video shows Turner

reaching into the front of his waistband with his right hand as he approaches the door, police said.

"Contemporaneously with him stepping outside, you can see the victim fall to the ground on the sidewalk, in plain view of the open front doors of the bar," the warrant says.

Turner stepped around or over the body and headed south on Bank Street, the warrant says. McGill and Fuller both started to turn back to the bar, but lingered momentarily, looking out the front door, before leaving from the rear door.

The police learned of two possible motives for the shooting as they interviewed witnesses: money that Marshall's sister owed McGill for PCP and Marshall being upset about McGill talking to Marshall's ex-girlfriend.

Witnesses told police that McGill, who is also known as Shawn, sometimes stayed at a friend's house on Williams Street in the city. They said he had been seen arguing with Marshall twice in recent days about Marshall's ex-girlfriend, Felicia Lincius, and about money owed to McGill by Marshall's sister for the sale of PCP.

See **VIDEOTAPE** page **B2**

## This reduction cuts like a... rescission?

Money that Rell thought the state lost, it really never had, says Highway Administration

By **KARIN CROMPTON**  
Day Staff Writer

The governor's assertion this week that Congress cut millions in federal highway funds to Connecticut, including nearly \$22 million in bridge funds, is incorrect, according to the Federal Highway Administration.

Instead, the state will receive almost \$42 million more in transportation funds in fiscal year 2008 than last year. Gov. M. Jodi Rell's figures came from what the federal agency described as "potential or theoretical cash," but did not represent cuts in the total amount delivered to the state.

In a letter sent Monday to the seven members of the state's congressional delegation, Rell wrote that she was disappointed and concerned that the state's share of Federal Highway Administration funds in fiscal year 2008 was reduced by \$45.55 million, including \$21.9 million in bridge program funds.

"Connecticut knows only too well of the dangers of a bridge collapse and the failure of the I-35 bridge in Minneapolis just eight months ago should have confirmed for everyone in Washington how crucial this funding is for each and every state," the letter said.

Rell wrote that Congress "must keep its end of the bargain it has traditionally maintained with the states for these critical infrastructure requirements." She asked to work with the delegation and the Administration during the 2009 budget process and as

See **HIGHWAY** page **B3**

## Town weighs third lawyer in contract for manager of school construction

By **MEGAN BARD**  
Day Staff Writer

**Griswold** — The fate of the construction manager's position for the \$70 million school building project could again be in legal, and political, limbo.

As the selectmen consider whether to approve a revised contract between the town and FIP Construction of Cheshire, one selectman already has pledged to reject the agreement if the legal firm that drafted the original contract does not review the amended version.

FIP Construction was identified as the low bidder for the position in December. Since then company officials, School Building Committee members, selectmen and attorneys have debated and dissected a proposed contract between the firm and the town.

To protect the town, attorney Michael Zizka said his associate used a conservative approach when he wrote the agreement so it would adhere to a legally untested new state law governing school construction contracts.

When school building officials received the document in February they opposed some of what they described as repetitive and burdensome language. So did members of FIP.

This, and an underlying personality conflict between members of the committee and the attorney who wrote the contract, led First Selectman Philip Anthony Jr. to get a second opinion. In March, the

See **GRISWOLD** page **B4**

## A HERO'S WELCOME



■ HM1 Curtis Thaxton of Gales Ferry returns home from an eight-month deployment in Iraq on Friday. He was greeted by his wife, Melissa, and son, Bailey, 8, as well as friends, neighbors and other members of the community. Thaxton, who is stationed at the Naval Submarine Base in Groton, had been deployed with a Marine unit since September.

Photos by **ADENA STEVENS/The Day**



## East Lyme state trooper moving on, moving up

*Richard Crooks takes second-in-command post at state police Troop E*

By **M. MATTHEW CLARK**  
Day Staff Writer

**East Lyme** — During his stint as this town's resident state trooper, Master Sgt. Richard Crooks was the lead investigator on a number of major crimes, the supervisor of the triple-fatal accident on I-95

that snarled interstate travel for an entire day in November, and a force of change within the town's police force.

"He's a cop's cop and a true gentleman," said Richard "Dick" Morris, the town's fire marshal and public safety director. He and Crooks worked together closely on a number of cases. Morris said the 20-year state police veteran has great management skills and has been "a real asset to the community."

But that stint is over now.

Crooks was promoted earlier this month to serve as the executive officer for

the Troop E state police in Montville, the second in command at the barracks.

The soft-spoken Crooks recently recalled the past 18 months he spent in East Lyme as a tumultuous time both in the police department he oversaw and the town he was protecting.

It was Crooks who handled the cases of egregious vandalism in which local teenagers broke into several homes and threw parties that caused more than \$20,000 worth of damage last year — and the arson case of Richard Shenkman, the man who was charged with torching his

Victorian home in Niantic. Crooks also played a role in the arrest of Curtiss Nichols, the alleged drug dealer who had a veritable arsenal of weaponry at his Edge Hill Road home.

"All of them solved, by the way," Crooks noted with a smile.

Besides the on-the-street turmoil, Crooks also dealt with strife within the department. Longtime officer Joseph Dunn was placed on paid administrative leave in December pending an internal investigation. And Crooks led an inquiry of

See **TOWN** page **B2**

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INSIDE REGION

**COURTS**

**15-Year Commitment**  
A man found not guilty by reason of insanity in a near-fatal stabbing will be confined to a psychiatric facility. **B2**

**NORWICH**

**A New Contender**  
Alderman Christopher Coutu, a Republican, plans to run for the 47th District seat. **B3**

**STATE**

**Death-Row Demands At Issue**  
The ACLU is advocating for death-row inmates who allege their Constitutional rights are being violated. **B5**

**STATE**

**FOI Decision Stands**  
Yale University officials say they will abide by a ruling to open disciplinary records in the arrest of a black teenager. **B5**

**INDEX**

Police Logs . . . . . **B2**  
Obituaries . . . . . **B4**  
Connecticut & R.I. . . . . **B5**  
Weather . . . . . **B6**