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DeSoto

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Victoria G. Marsey, Bureau Chief, Bureau of Standards
Medical Examiners Commission
PO Box 1489
Tallahassee, FL 32302

RE: Murray Cohen

May 31, 2005

RECEIVED

JUN 08 2005

FL DEPT. OF LAW ENFORCEMENT

Dear Ms. Marsey,

I am writing this letter to address concerns raised by Mr. Steven Esdale regarding the investigation by my office into the death of his father, Murray Cohen. As you are aware, Mr. Cohen died in Sarasota in January of 2003. The District 12 Medical Examiner's Office investigated the death, including performance of an external examination of the body and sampling of vitreous fluid and pulled head hair for toxicology testing. Dr. William R. Anderson, at that time an Associate Medical Examiner with this office, certified the death as being natural and due to heart disease. Mr. Esdale had contacted my office on numerous occasions in the months following the death to relay his concerns regarding the circumstances surrounding the death. Toxicology testing subsequently performed on the samples revealed no drugs or elevated levels of heavy metals. When I began my tenure as the District Twelve Medical Examiner, I reviewed all of the case file information and arrived at an opinion similar to that already promulgated.

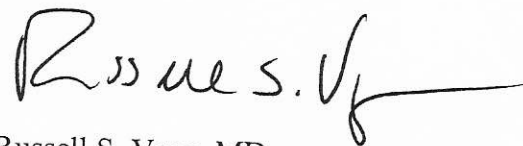
Mr. Esdale's continued review of the case information led him to suspicion regarding the presence of an empty vial marked "Corazol" at the scene of the death. While my initial impression was that this was an unusual but reasonable cardiovascular medication, subsequent investigation revealed that it does not appear to be licensed in this country and is of questionable utility and availability for this purpose. As some vitreous fluid remained following the initial toxicology work, I subsequently had this analyzed for the presence of pentylenetetrazole, the chemical constituent of Corazol. This analysis

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revealed no evidence of pentylenetetrazole. No other analysis is, in my opinion, likely to be of value in further investigating this issue.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you need additional information regarding this matter.

Sincerely,



Russell S. Vega, MD
Chief Medical Examiner
District Twelve of Florida

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Though he considers it unlikely, Vega has never ruled out the possibility that an exotic poison could have killed Cohen. So when the rare drug was brought to his attention, Vega had Cohen's eye fluid re-tested in May to see if Corazol was present.

~~X~~ The results were negative, but Vega said there is no way to know how the methanol in the embalming fluid affected the test.

"This is not as definitive a result as anybody would like to see," Vega said. "We're sort of where we were before."

Not Esdale, who says the Corazol is the final detail that proves what really happened to his father. He doesn't care that law enforcement officials don't support his theory, or that his scenario relies on imagination more than fact.

Esdale thinks his father was working out in the yard that afternoon. With his hands still dirty, Murray went to check the mail shortly before 5 p.m. He opened up an account statement and found out that Maria had added herself to one of his bank accounts.

Murray went inside and confronted Maria. They got into a heated argument, and Maria realized their relationship was over.

"She had to kill him," Esdale said. "So she poured him a cup of coffee with a mega-dose of the Corazol."

Esdale said Maria and his father continued to argue before the Corazol kicked in, and Beninati called during the fracas. When Murray finally succumbed to the drug, and Maria thought he was dead, she called 911.

But Maria underestimated how much Corazol was needed to kill a man as large as his father, Esdale said. Murray, groggy from the drug, came to during the call and spoke loud enough for the operator to hear him. Maria finished him off by suffocating him during the time she left the phone before getting CPR instructions, Esdale said.

Investigators don't buy it.

"Esdale's allegations have not been supported," Hallisey wrote in his investigative report. "After a thorough review of this case by the Sheriff's Office and the Medical Examiner's Office, Murray Cohen's death is regarded as natural."

Case closed?

Monday might be Esdale's last chance to convince a Sarasota judge that he deserves more time to prove his father was murdered and that Maria shouldn't get Cohen's estate.

If he fails, Maria may get the estate and Esdale could be on the hook for more than \$100,000 of her attorney's fees.

It's questionable whether Esdale will attend the hearing with his lawyer

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FORENSIC AUDIO DIVISION

TRANSCRIPT OF TELEPHONE CONVERSATION BETWEEN STEVEN J. COHEN ESDALE AND DR. GOLDBERG (MAY 6, 2005)

PREPARED FOR:

Steven J. Esdale
1363 Springside Dr.
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DATE PREPARED:

May 9, 2005

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STEVEN J. COHEN ESDALE AND DR. GOLDBERG
MAY 6, 2005

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- Goldberg:** Hello, Doctor Goldberg here.
- Esdale:** Hi, good afternoon, this is Steve Esdale.
- Goldberg:** Mm hmm.
- Esdale:** Um, I didn't call to discuss any results with you, I just had a question that after your testing if you had any vitreous fluid left that I could obtain under the proper process.
- Goldberg:** Mm hmm. Yes.
- Esdale:** Okay. Then, would...would that stay in your possession?
- Goldberg:** Uh, it does, yes.
- Esdale:** All right.
- Goldberg:** But, but the only policy we have here is that, uh, we only, uh, release specimen to...to, uh...qualified laboratories that...that are certified.
- Esdale:** Yes.
- Goldberg:** So, so we can't release it to you personally here to a lab that...that we don't know about.
- Esdale:** Mm...and the results and all that would come from Dr. Vega? Of your findings?
- Goldberg:** Yes. Mm hmm.
- Esdale:** Okay.
- Goldberg:** Mm hmm.
- Esdale:** And it... you also did a study on, ah, what embalming fluid does to Corazol?
- Goldberg:** No I did not.
- Esdale:** So, basically all you're doing is just testing to see if Corazol is in my Dad's vitreous fluid?

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Goldberg: That's right.

Esdale: All right, 'cause I don't know who it was that told me that there was no case study on the effects of Corazol mixed with embalming fluid.

Goldberg: Well, there is none. The..There are no studies on Corazol, period, in humans. (*Emphasis was put on the word "period."*)

Esdale: Yeah, I gotcha. All right Doctor, you know...I appreciate you getting on the phone.

Goldberg: Okay.

Esdale: And, have a good night.

Goldberg: All right, bye.

Esdale: Bye.

(End of call)