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NATION NOW

Oklahoma 'thrill killing' reverberates on two continents

The brutal slaying of an Australian who was attending college in the U.S. on a baseball scholarship has shattered two towns on opposite sides of the globe. Three teens have been arrested charged as adults for the crime.

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As an editor and reporter, Michael Muskal has covered local, national, economic and foreign issues at three newspapers, including the Los Angeles Times.

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Matt Pearce, a University of Missouri graduate, has previously written for the Kansas City Star, the Los Angeles Review of Books, The New Inquiry and The Pitch.

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Duncan remembering

"Boredom" killers charged

College student gunned

WARNING Raw 911 Call

Associated Press

August 21, 2013 | 12:47 p.m.

DUNCAN, Okla. -- With a motive that's both chilling and simple - to break up the boredom of an Oklahoma summer - three teenagers randomly targeted an Australian collegiate baseball player who was attending school in the U.S. and killed him for fun, prosecutors said Tuesday as they charged two of the boys with murder.

Prosecutor Jason Hicks called the boys "thugs" as he described how Christopher Lane, 22, of Melbourne, was shot once in the back and died along a tree-lined road on Duncan's well-to-do north side. He said the three teens, from the grittier part of town, chose Lane at random and that one of the boys "thinks it's all a joke."

Hicks charged Chancey Allen Luna, 16, and James Francis Edwards Jr., 15, of Duncan, with first-degree murder. Under Oklahoma law they will be tried as adults. Michael Dewayne Jones, 17, of Duncan, was charged with using a vehicle in the discharge of a weapon and with accessory to first-degree murder after the fact. He is considered a youthful offender but will be tried in adult court.

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Jones wept in the courtroom after he tried to speak about the incident but was cut off by the judge who said it wasn't the time to sort out the facts of the case. Jones faces anywhere from two years to life in prison if convicted on the counts he faces.

The two younger teens face life in prison without parole if convicted on the murder charge.

"I'm appalled," Hicks said after the hearing. "This is not supposed to happen in this community."

In court, Hicks said Luna was sitting in the back seat of a car when he pulled the trigger on a .22 caliber revolver and shot Lane once in the back. Hicks said Jones was driving the vehicle and Edwards was in the passenger seat.

A recording of an emergency 911 call obtained Tuesday by The Associated Press offers a chilling account of the next moments as a woman identifying herself as Joyce Smith tells the operator she saw Lane fall over into a ditch as she drove by.

"He's got blood on his back," the woman says.

Later relaying word from another witness on the scene to the 911 operator, the woman says: "He's turning blue. He's making a noise."

Edwards has had prior run-ins with the law and came to court Friday - apparently after the shooting - to sign documents related to his juvenile probation.

"I believe this man is a threat to the community and should not be let out," Hicks said as he requested he be held without bail. "He thinks it's all a joke."

The two younger boys were held without bail, while bail for Jones was set at \$1 million.

Before the hearing, Edwards' father, James Edwards Sr., said he knew where his son was 95 percent of the time. He said his son was involved in wrestling and football, and was trying to forge the same sort of athletic career as Lane. He was heading into his sophomore year in high school.

Edwards Sr. said Luna was also like a son to him.

Luna's mother, Jennifer Luna, said her son likes to play basketball at a local court and play on his iPhone and Xbox.

"I know my son. He is a good kid," she said.

Lane played baseball at East Central University in Ada, 85 miles east of Duncan, and had been visiting his girlfriend and her parents in Duncan after he and his girlfriend returned to the U.S. from Australia about a week ago.

Duncan police Chief Dan Ford has said the boys wanted to overcome a boring end to their summer vacation - classes in Duncan resumed Tuesday - and that Jones told officers they were bored and killed Lane for "the fun of it."

Family and friends on two continents were mourning Lane, who gave up pursuit of an Australian football career to pursue his passion for baseball, an American pastime. His girlfriend, Sarah Harper, tearfully laid a cross at a streetside memorial in Duncan, while half a world away, an impromptu memorial grew at the home plate he protected as a catcher on his youth team.

"We just thought we'd leave it," Harper said as she visited the memorial in Duncan. "This is his final spot."

His old baseball team, Essendon, scheduled a memorial game for Sunday to raise funds for Lane's parents as they worked to have their boy's remains sent home.

Tony Cornish, president of the Essendon Baseball Club, said Lane played with the club for 12 years.

"He started out as a T-baller, right from the age of 7," said Cornish.

Cornish said Lane was part of the club until he left to attend college in the U.S.

"Chris Lane was a good kid, just a great all-around guy," Cornish said. "We're still all in shock here."

Meanwhile, St. Bernard's College in Essendon, where Lane was a student, is planning a memorial Mass for Lane in November.

Melbourne's Herald Sun newspaper reported that roses and a baseball were placed Monday on the home plate where Lane played as a youth with the message: "A wonderful young man taken too soon. Why?"

Tim Fischer, former Australia deputy prime minister, criticized the National Rifle Association and asked Australians to avoid the U.S. as a way to put pressure on its Congress to act on gun control.

"Tourists thinking of going to the USA should think twice," Fischer told the Herald Sun. "I am deeply



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angry about this because of the callous attitude of the three teenagers, (but) it's a sign of the proliferation of guns on the ground in the USA. There is a gun for almost every American."

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wakamow at 1:04 PM August 22, 2013

Nearly two decades ago, Tim Fischer the former Deputy Prime Minister of Australia, championed Australia's gun control reforms, an effort that has virtually eliminated firearm crimes in the country. Commenting on the sensing killing of Australian Chris Lane, as he was out jogging in Oklahoma, the former Deputy Prime Minister held little back when voicing his disgust for the alternate approach being followed in America:

"Just for the record, Australia has had zero gun massacres since 1996, and in the United States, 80 people are killed by guns every single day," he noted. "So, it is another example of murder and mayhem on Main Street USA. People thinking of going to the USA for business, education or vacation should think carefully about it given the statistical facts you are 15 times more likely to be shot dead in the USA than in Australia."

Fischer appealed to American authorities, to follow in the footsteps his nation took in the late 1990s to toughen gun laws:

"We don't have gun shows where you can walk up and not even be subject to a background check in one of the dumbest decisions so far in the litany of agony over the gun laws and gun policies of the NRA and the USA. There is deep seated anger this time and I can tell you there is disbelief," said Fischer. "I just want to appeal to the deep thinkers in the USA to think again about the drift in the state of the nation."

CharmCityHasFallenAndCantGetUp at 12:51 PM August 22, 2013

Come on Obama, stand up and say "If I had a son, he would look like Chancey Allen Luna, James Francis Edwards Jr. and Michael Dewayne Jones. I thought you were the president "of all the people." Ypu obviously are not. You are however a fraud, a liar and a race baiter. You disgust me.

Robert Williams at 12:46 PM August 22, 2013

Sorry, a "hate" crime with the current administration and Attorney General is only White on Black. And not a peep from Jackson and Sharpton, the world famous race baitors.

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