

Officers Indicted in Groom Shooting

NYPD held criminally accountable

(AP) -- Three New York City police officers charged in a 50-bullet barrage that killed an unarmed groom on his wedding day appeared before a judge Monday and had their first encounter since the shooting with the victims and their families.

In a packed, tension-filled courtroom, the three officers stood with their hands clasped as they pleaded not guilty in the Nov. 25 shooting that killed 23-year-old Sean Bell and wounded two of his friends.

The officers fired 46 of the 50

shots. The judge set bail for the two officers who fired the most bullets and released the other without bail.

Shooting survivors Joseph Guzman, in a wheelchair, and Trent Benefield, using a crutch, attended with Nicole Paultre Bell, who was engaged to Bell and legally took his name after he died.

Queens District Attorney Richard Brown on Monday unsealed the indictment charging Detectives Michael Oliver, who fired 31 times, and Giscard Isnora, a decorated undercover officer who fired 11 times, with first-degree and second-degree manslaughter.

If convicted of the most serious charges, the detectives would receive mandatory prison time — up to 25 years.

Oliver also was charged with



Sean Bell's parents William and Valerie Bell attend a news conference Monday outside Queens Criminal Court in New York. (AP photo)

endangerment for a bullet that smashed through the window of an occupied house. And a third officer, Detective Marc Cooper, was charged with a misdemeanor for a bullet that struck a train station across the street.

The case renewed allegations that the NYPD is too quick on the trigger and sparked protests by activists who say the department is too quick to judge black men harshly, a claim city officials deny. Bell was black, as are Guzman and Benefield. Cooper, 39, and Isnora, 28, are also black. Oliver, 35, is white.

Sean Bell was killed after his bachelor party at a strip club. Union representatives and lawyers for the officers have said their clients were convinced that Bell and his friends were going to retrieve a gun from his car to settle a dispute.

Potter to Hop 'Flight of Friendship'

Portland citizens to help restore New Orleans

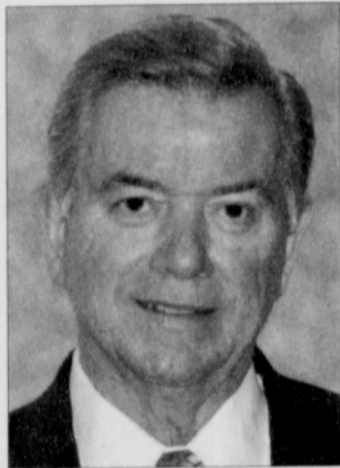
Mayor Tom Potter will accompany 75 Portland citizens April 1-4 on a "Flight of Friendship" to help New Orleans recover from the devastating effects of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

The effort is similar to one undertaken shortly after Sept. 11, 2001, when a group of Portlanders reached out to New Yorkers to help spur tourism again in that city.

Participants this time will work

with Mercy Corps, which has been in New Orleans since the storms to help rebuilding efforts, and provide financial and moral support and focus on recovery efforts along the Gulf Coast.

Of particular concern are residents of New Orleans' 9th Ward neighborhood, which was devastated by flooding after the hurricanes. Flight of Friendship and SMART (Start Making A Reader Today) will donate hundreds of books for children to the



Tom Potter

9th Ward Community Center and will stock the shelves for a new book-lending center.

The group also will meet with New Orleans Mayor Ray Nagin, and visit with emergency preparedness officials to learn what lessons can be applied to Portland.

Mayor Potter will accompany attorney Nick Fish and Gov. Ted Kulongoski, as well as several other business and community members.

Anyone interested in joining the flight or for more information can visit www.flightoffriendship.com.

Boyfriend Guilty of Murder

A Portland man who was so angry over a breakup that he stabbed his former girlfriend is guilty of murder.

A Multnomah County jury Monday rejected defense arguments that Gilberto Pedroso was reasonably distressed and only guilty of manslaughter when he stabbed Claudia Rhone 17 times on the lawn of her north Portland apartment complex last May 2.

Defense attorney Joe Calhoun argued that Pedroso was affected by an "extreme emotional disturbance." For months, he was so obsessed with Rhone that he kept watch on her unit at 216 N. Sumner St. -- even sleeping under her window, Calhoun said.

Pedroso, 64, is scheduled next




Claudia Rhone

month to be sentenced to life in prison with the possibility of parole after 25 years.


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State Reps Want Troops Out

(AP) - After two hours of emotional debate, which included one lawmaker reading the names of Oregonians killed in Iraq and Afghanistan, the Oregon House backed a resolution Tuesday urging President Bush and Congress to withdraw troops from Iraq as soon as possible.

Approval of the nonbinding resolution came after sponsors said it was important for state lawmakers

to send a message, on behalf of their constituents, that Oregonians no longer support the four-year-old Iraq war and want U.S. troops withdrawn.

"Our troops have done their job. It's long past time to bring them home," said Rep. Chip Shields, D-Portland, chief sponsor of the measure.

The resolution was opposed by most of the chamber's Repub-

licans, who argued that it would have no practical effect but could undermine morale among U.S. troops by making them think people back home don't support them.

But Shields and other supporters said the memorial was a legitimate way for the Legislature to "stand by" troops and their families by bringing troops home as soon as possible.

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