

DIDN'T REPORT WHAT SHE KNEW

# Guard Feared Jail Sex Case Coverup

By JIM STEWART  
and KEN WILLIS

Fear of a "coverup" within the Bureau of Corrections kept a guard at the Atlanta City Jail from reporting what she knew of an alleged rape there earlier this month.

The correctional officer, Sharron Green, now under suspension herself, told investigators she was afraid her superiors would only manufacture a cover story to protect the three officers allegedly involved if she reported the victim's story.

Officer Green said she had intended

to "jump the chain of command" and tell another superior officer of the incident when word of the alleged rape leaked out.

Meanwhile, it was also learned that one of the three guards accused of assaulting a young shoplifting suspect has a criminal record, a second had faced disciplinary charges before and the third was considered a "poor employe."

A Municipal Court hearing for the guards was postponed Monday. Officers Melvin Leeks, Otis Royal and C. G. Aiken have been charged with aggravated assault and false imprisonment in

connection with the incident. A new hearing was set for next Tuesday.

The victim, an 18-year-old girl recently arrived from Michigan, said the three guards repeatedly assaulted her on the deserted fifth floor of the city jail early in the morning of Dec. 4.

The guards "used their authority" to coerce her into not fighting back, the victim said in a recent interview.

"I feel I was raped," she said. "They should be charged."

The three officers, who were fired following a hastily called disciplinary hearing before Corrections Director J.D.

Hudson, deny any knowledge of the incident.

While withholding a final decision, Fulton County Dist. Atty. Lewis Slaton said Monday that evidence of force is lacking in the assault and that rape charges against the three men are unlikely.

Citing the victim's statement to police that it was her belief that the officers would arrange for her release if she consented to have sex, Slaton said, "It wasn't force and it wasn't against her will. Trickery doesn't fall under rape."

See JAIL, Page 13-A

# Jail

## From Page 1-A

The victim reportedly told Officer Green and another city prisoner of the attack after she was returned by one of the guards to the second floor of the city jail, where women are normally held.

Officer Green said she attempted to talk the girl into telling her superiors of the attack, but that the girl wanted to "wait and find out if they (the guards) are going to do what they said.

"I didn't really believe what she was saying," Officer Green told investigators. "I didn't report it to (my superior) because I felt he would have gotten together with the fellows and told them to get their stories together.

"If this had taken place, they would try to cover up for it," Green told Atlanta police investigating the incident.

In the nearly two weeks since the alleged assault, city officials and citizens' groups have urged a more thorough investigation.

Mayor Maynard Jackson said he was "incensed and outraged that such a thing could happen here."

The Georgia American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), and the Atlanta chapter of the National Organization of Women (NOW) have urged presentation of the case to a grand jury.

Commissioner of Community and Human Development Davey Gibson, under whose authority the Corrections Bureau falls, also urged a new investigation and asked that jail Director Hudson move his permanent office from the city prison farm on Key Road to the city jail.

Alluding to some "bad apples" within his bureau, Hudson said that regardless of the legal outcome of the incident, he considered the alleged assault "an act of rape by virtue of the fact that they (the guards) were wearing a badge and uniform."

According to Hudson, the victim and various statements given to investigators, the alleged incident unfolded in the following manner:

The victim was arrested at Rich's in Greenbriar shopping center for theft by taking. An accomplice, a male, was also arrested.

She was taken to the city jail for processing at approximately 10:30 p.m. Dec. 3. While sitting in the holding area, she began chatting with officers.

She told investigators that officers Leeks and Royal, assigned to the holding area, kept "flirting" with her. Leeks, she

said, jokingly told her his name was "Watergate."

Sometime after midnight, the girl told authorities, she was put on the prison elevator by Royal. After two male prisoners, including her alleged accomplice in the shoplifting, were let out on another floor, Royal continued to the fifth floor of the jail.

"You know that man that was talking to you that had the beard?" the girl said Royal asked her. "Yes," she replied.

"That's officer Leeks. He'll be up to talk to you later. We're going upstairs and I'm going to put you in a room by yourself until he comes up," Royal allegedly told the girl.

She said he also asked her if she smoked marijuana. She said she told him yes, occasionally. "Well, I'll see about bringing you up some," the girl said Royal told her.

Once on the fifth floor, Royal and Aiken, who was stationed on that floor, herded the other prisoners into their cells and took the girl through a day room to a deserted area.

In her first statement to authorities, the girl said that Royal "told me they were working on trying to get me out" as he stacked a mattress on a spring bunk.

Later, she told police it was only after the alleged assault that the officers promised to help her get out of jail.

The girl said Royal told her to take down her slacks and that when she did nothing, he disrobed her.

In her first report statement to police, the girl did not allege that physical force was used. In her second statement, she said that Royal shoved his knee between her legs.

In the order of Royal, Leeks and Aiken, the girl said the guards had sex with her.

The girl said she was then put back on the elevator. "He (Officer Leeks) said he was going to take me downstairs and he was going to see what he could do about getting me out on bond, or lowering my bond, or getting me out without bond."

Once on the second floor, the girl told investigators that she confided to another female prisoner that she had been assaulted. That prisoner, in turn, told Officer Green of the incident.

According to Leeks' statement to investigators, he saw the girl only one other time after she was processed. He said that we went to get her early on the morning of Dec. 4 so that she could talk with her alleged accomplice, who was arranging bond.

Leeks said the first he heard of a rape charge was from Officer Green, who called him and informed him of the girl's charges.

"I told Sharron (Green) I don't know what this chick is doing, but it's a damn lie," Leeks told police.

Hudson said he tended to believe the girl's story because tests at Grady Hospital confirmed that sexual intercourse had taken place.

"Also, for a person that had been in Atlanta for only a short time and never in that jail before, she perfectly described the fifth floor, right down to the soiled paper towels, cigarette butts on the floor and the mattress," Hudson said.

Hudson said Leeks "has presented us with problems since the day we hired him. I can't say I anticipated discharging him. My predictions were that someday he would do something. . .let's say I'm not surprised, okay?"

Leeks also has a criminal record. In 1970, he pleaded guilty to a receiving stolen goods charge and received a \$300 fine and three-year sentence. He had been arrested on two other occasions as well.

Hudson said that he was aware of Leeks' record but defended his employment, saying it was "an employable criminal record."

"Rehabilitation is consistent with my philosophy," he said.

Hudson said officer Royal "did not show a great deal of potential.

"We had placed him at the jail only temporarily, and we probably would not have retained him. He was a poor employe," Hudson said.

As for Aiken, the corrections director said he was "a good employe with a tendency to overreact." He had also been brought up on disciplinary charges before, Hudson confirmed.

Hudson said his office was handicapped in the type and depth of background investigation it could do on potential correctional officers.

"The police have the same problem and are swamped with investigation requests on their own people," he said. "Some questionable ones are going to get through.

"I don't know how you can stop it except the way I have, and that is to fire the ones where possible and prosecute."

Hudson said that although he spends five to eight hours a day at the city jail, he has already made plans to move his permanent office there within the next two weeks.