

Possible errors made in Wise autopsy report

By JEANNINE GUTTMAN
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Sun Staff Writers

SAN BERNARDINO — Fearing the pathologist made errors in his report on the autopsy of Beverly Wise, murdered here three years ago, the county coroner's office asked the police department to return its copy of that report. The Sun has learned.

Saying "no" to the request, made last February, police told coroner's officials that if the pathologist, Dr. Wayne Scott wanted to make changes, he should write a supplement to the original March 31, 1977, report. But police never heard again from the coroner's office about the case, it was learned.

Coroner Bill Hill, who plans to seek a fourth term in 1982, adamantly denied Tuesday that his office ever made the request.

But he admitted that Scott "probably had used" pre-taped, or "canned," descriptions of the vari-

ous surgical tasks he had performed during the Wise autopsy. An autopsy is a detailed examination of the body and its organs to determine the exact cause of death.

In several previous autopsies,

however, these "short-cut" descriptions were found to be inaccurate because Scott had not done what his autopsy reports claimed.

Sources in the coroner's office told The Sun that this was the reason the Wise autopsy report

was recalled. It was thought possible that Scott's claims about what he had done in the Wise autopsy were faulty, too, sources said. Such discrepancies could block successful prosecution of a case.

Scott refused to talk to re-

porters, telling his secretary to say that he had "nothing to say."

The Sun compared language in the Wise autopsy report and found some of it identical to several organ descriptions in the controversial Robert Renova autopsy

report, written two years later.

In both reports, Scott used the "canned" autopsy method, inserting pre-written phrases to describe organs that Scott felt were normal. These descriptions, however, contained the words, "sections . . . strip . . . cut," to indicate the organs had been surgically cut. In the Renova autopsy of Feb. 3, 1979, those organs were never cut by Scott.

Wise, 26, was found stabbed to death in her home here March 30, 1977, and her two children, Brandi Jondell Summers, then 5 years old, and Tiffani Wise, then 2, were missing. Despite an intensive investigation that lasted several months, no one was arrested and the children never were found.

The case — one of the most baffling in the city's history — was reopened last September. So far, five persons have been charged.

But more importantly, the girls

Pathologist 'shocked' by incident

By JEANNINE GUTTMAN
Sun Staff Writer

When Dr. Irving Root first learned of the attempt to recall the Beverly Wise autopsy report that had been written by his partner, "I felt like that mushroom that people always keep in the dark and keep feeding horse manure."

"The first I heard about the incident was Monday from you (The Sun). Then I talked to Bill (Coroner Bill Hill) and Wayne (Dr. Wayne Scott) and both said that it ques-

tions about the accuracy of Scott's autopsy reports) had been going on for quite some time.

"I am shocked. If there is any truth to this, I am appalled and I am really upset. I don't like it. I don't like it one damn bit."

"I have the godawful feeling that I am getting caught up by guilt by association. So now I'm going to have to make some decisions. I am not going to continue to put myself in this position," Root said.

For the past 17 years, Root and Scott have owned Root-Scott Labs,

1890 N. Waterman Ave. During that time, the two forensic pathologists also have performed autopsies for the coroner's office under a contract with San Bernardino County.

Despite those long-term business relationships, Scott is a partner Root says he rarely sees and with whom he disagrees politically and philosophically.

"I was shocked when you (The Sun) called me and told me what had happened. But I was even more shocked when I talked to Bill

and Wayne and found out that, no, it wasn't just a new story that happened yesterday. It's been going on for quite a while."

"Hill told me he was out of town when it (the attempt to recall the autopsy report from the police) happened. And he said, if Leo (Leo Reyes, Hill's chief deputy coroner) said he didn't do it, he didn't do it. From that conversation, I knew it obviously hadn't just happened."

"I just don't want to be a part of

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