

Family: Police responsible for musician's death

By Leah Hope

April 4, 2007 - The family of a Chicago blues drummer who died in police custody nearly four years ago has filed a wrongful death lawsuit.

A medical examiner's report said Fred Grady, who played with some blues greats, died of natural causes, but relatives allege that Grady was beaten by officers in lockup and died from those injuries.

On April 9, 2007, Grady was involved in a minor traffic accident.

According to his family, Grady was also a skilled carpenter who carried expensive tools in his van. They say he was going to retrieve those tools when he was arrested. While in police custody, his family believes something went wrong.

Four years after his death, Grady's family is suing five employees of the Chicago Police Department.

"There should be somebody willing to answer these questions and as far as I see, nobody has stepped up to do that," said Frederick Moore, Grady's son

"When you think about what he suffered -- and for no reason," said Diane McGhee, Grady's sister

Grady's mug shot, which was taken after his arrest at 10:30 p.m. on April 8, 2003, shows he was in good condition upon arrival at the lockup. The lockup keepers note marks "no" to the question "Does the arrestee have any obvious pain or injury?"

Three hours later, Grady was dead, according to the lawsuit. An autopsy reports the cause of death as heart attack, but postmortem photos show gashes and bruises.

"This case cannot be explained any other way than to say it was police brutality and cover-up," said Berve Power, Grady family attorney. Grady was taken to the 12th district lockup on West Monroe. Three Chicago police officers are named in the lawsuit, along with two detention aides who worked in the lockup facility.

The last big family gathering before Grady's death was the wedding of his nephew. Today relatives reminisce, but say they feel stuck in time not knowing what happened to Grady while in police custody. "I couldn't understand how that could happen, but it did," said Barbara McKinney, Grady's sister. "I still feel at times like maybe it's just a dream," said Moore.

The Chicago Police Department did not want to comment on the case, but attorneys representing the police employees contend Grady died from natural causes. They said that is supported by reports from two medical examiners.

This civil case is scheduled to start on June 11th in federal court.