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Hanging in cell was a suicide, sheriff says - But - Times-Picayune, The (New Orleans, LA) - October 29, 2000 - page 31

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A man who hanged himself Friday night at the **Orleans Parish Prison** intake center, where he was being booked, showed no signs of intoxication or depression minutes before entering the holding cell where he ended his life, police said Saturday.

Bryant P. Johnson, 26, of Algiers, became belligerent when told of two outstanding warrants for his arrest and was placed alone in a cell to prevent him from getting into fights, Criminal Sheriff Charles Foti said.

"He wasn't suicidal, he wasn't intoxicated," Foti said. "He was unhappy when they found he had two other warrants. He said they weren't his."

Johnson was visited every 15 minutes, but between visits he hanged himself by tying his belt to the door about 8:20 p.m., Foti said. He was taken to Tulane University Hospital, where he was pronounced dead at 9 p.m.

"He was worked on extensively by the medical department, by EMS," Foti said.

Johnson was in good spirits the day before he was arrested, looking forward to starting a new job, his sister Adrienne Johnson said Saturday.

"He was fine," she said. "He was (saying), 'Yes, Sis, I gotta go take a physical 'cause I'm getting ready to start on another job going offshore.' He wasn't showing signs of depression."

Johnson had been arrested earlier Friday evening on a charge of disturbing the peace after he got into a fight with another man. He had two misdemeanor warrants against him and previously served time in both Orleans and Jefferson parishes, Foti said.

Family members question whether Johnson was treated appropriately in the prison. As of Saturday afternoon they had not been allowed to view his body.

"They stuck him in a cell by himself," Adrienne Johnson said. "They say they don't even have the booking papers because he wasn't really booked. A lot of this is really, really shady."

While processing prisoners, deputies typically do not confiscate belts or other clothing, Foti said. They take only weapons, drugs or valuable items that could cause fights in the holding pen. Foti said that although deputies did have to subdue Johnson, they did not use excessive force.

Chief coroner's investigator John Gagliano confirmed hanging as the cause of **death**.

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