



OFFICE OF THE
DISTRICT ATTORNEY
ORANGE COUNTY, CALIFORNIA
TODD SPITZER

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

PRESS RELEASE

Date: September 4, 2024
Case #: 24NF2300

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**Placentia Barber Charged with Murder, Torture for Beating 6-Year-Old Boy
he was Babysitting to Death with a Piece of Lumber**

SANTA ANA, Calif. – A Placentia barber has been charged with murder and torture for beating a 6-year-old boy he was babysitting to death with a piece of lumber after the first grader peed his pants at a local park. The boy's mother was working the night shift as a nurse's assistant at St. Joseph's Hospital while her son's babysitter drove the critically injured boy to Children's Hospital of Orange County (CHOC) early Friday morning.

Chance Crawford, 6, died from his injuries Tuesday afternoon.

Ernest Lamar Love, 41, has been charged with one felony count of murder, one felony count of torture, and one felony count of child abuse causing death. He faces a maximum sentence of 32 years to life plus five years if convicted on all charges.

Love has pleaded not guilty and is currently being held without bail.

On Thursday, August 29, 2024, Chance finished his third day of first grade and was dropped off at Love's Placentia barbershop around 6:30 p.m. so that Love could babysit him while his mother went to work at St. Joseph's Hospital.

At approximately 1:30am, Love is accused of carrying Chance into the ER at CHOC hospital, unconscious and struggling to breathe.

Less than three hours earlier, video surveillance shows Love walking into his barber shop with a large piece of raw lumber with a reluctant Chance following behind him.

Doctors at CHOC discovered that much of Chance's flesh was missing from his buttocks, leaving raw, gaping wounds, along with subdural hematoma, extreme brain swelling, and other injuries consistent with violent shaking. The little boy also had healing fracture on his shoulder blade.

Love is accused of beating the first grader with the piece of lumber, then pouring hydrogen peroxide on the open wounds before forcing the boy to doing push-ups, sit-ups, and jumping jacks. When the boy collapsed, Love is accused of driving the boy to the emergency room at CHOC instead of calling 911.

“While his new classmates were celebrating the end of the first week of first grade, Chance’s seat in his classroom was empty as he fought for his life in a hospital bed,” said Orange County District Attorney Todd Spitzer. “Words do not exist to describe the absolute terror this little boy was forced to endure – all at the hands of someone who was supposed to be protecting him, not torturing him to death. Now we as prosecutors will do everything we can to pursue justice for little Chance and be his protectors in death that he failed to have in life.”

Deputy District Attorney Bethel Cope-Vega of the Family Protection Unit is prosecuting this case.

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