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PETITIONER'S EXHIBIT #41
Commercial Appeal newspaper article

003911

Exhibit U

Memphis Commercial Appeal
June 9, 1993



003912

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The Commercial Appeal

'DID NOT' KILL 3 BOYS, TEEN WRITES FROM JAIL

Date: June 9, 1993

Section: Metro

Page: B1

Source: Bartholomew Sullivan and Marc Perrusquia The Commercial Appeal

Memo: Shorter version, Final B1

Edition: First

One of three teenagers accused of murdering three West Memphis boys has told his parents in a letter that he "did not do it." The letter raises further questions about the credibility of a statement Jessie Lloyd **Misskelley Jr.**, 17, gave police. He told them he witnessed one of the killings and chased and subdued one of the boys who tried to escape.

Within hours of his statement, police arrested his two co-defendants, Michael Wayne Echols, 18, and Charles Jason Baldwin, 16, and carried out four search warrants.

In a letter from the Cross County Jail in Wynne, Ark., received by the family Monday afternoon, **Misskelley** denied involvement in the slayings.

"I hope that y'all don't hate me because I did not do it," **Misskelley** wrote, saying he spent the day on a roofing job with a man named Ricky Deese.

"I can not stand (it) in here much longer. I will go crazy," the letter said at one point. "Please try to get me out. I will die in here."

The statement, obtained Sunday by The Commercial Appeal, raises questions about times and possible alibis. Attorney Paul N. Ford said he can prove his client was in school at the time **Misskelley** told police the slayings were taking place.

Echols's lawyer, Val P. Price of Jonesboro, Ark., said Tuesday night that he has not reviewed **Misskelley's** statement in detail but anticipates he will challenge what he termed "the alleged confession." Price said Echols will plead not guilty.

Misskelley told police that the murders took place between 9 a.m. and noon on May 5 although at another point he says that "all this stuff" happened at night.

School officials said Monday that records show the three victims - Weaver Elementary School second-graders Steve Branch, Christopher Byers and Michael Moore - were in school until at least 2:45 p.m. that day, and witnesses saw them at 5:15 p.m.

Ford declined comment Tuesday on whether his client has an alibi if the slayings occurred at night but has said Baldwin will plead not guilty.

Ford said it appears "logical" that **Misskelley's** statement is the basis for his client's arrest.

Misskelley ended his statement at 3:18 p.m. on Thursday and the arrests of Baldwin and Echols occurred at 10:32 that night.

Lee Rush, **Misskelley's** stepmother, said the family has received death threats since a story came out in The Commercial Appeal detailing the statement he gave to police. Rush said the family can prove **Misskelley** was working the day of the slayings and attending a wrestling event that night, but she declined to give details.

"With . . . like that in the newspaper, you're asking for the Old West days: (People are) going to lynch this kid," Rush said. "I don't believe it."

"It's all false," said Jessie **Misskelley Sr.**, 54, who has played host to a steady stream of reporters since news of his son's arrest broke last week. "I think they just made it up."

Deese could not be reached for comment Tuesday.

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West Memphis Police Insp. Gary Gitchell declined comment Tuesday. Gitchell said the case is still under investigation and dismissed questions aimed at the strength of the case against the three defendants.

"We just have to keep on working," he said.

The roofing work and wrestling match alibis differ from one the elder Misskelley gave reporters on Monday, when he said he believed his son spent the whole day May 5 in the Highland Trailer Park between Marion and West Memphis and was searching for witnesses to confirm it.

Dyess, Ark., Fire Chief Floyd Gilmore said the Fire Department, which has sponsored wrestling matches in town on previous occasions, did not hold a contest the night of May 5.

Dyess Mayor Edward Wooten said there hasn't been a wrestling match in Dyess for more than a year. "There were no wrestling matches that day in the town of Dyess," Wooten said.

Misskelley said in the letter that he has access to a television set and a Bible.

"My stomach has been hurting me," he said. "I watch the news last night and I cry and cry."

Keywords: MURDER

MULTIPLE

CHILD

AR

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CHARGE

TEEN

STATEMENT

REACTION

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003914

Exhibit U-1

Letter from Jessie Misskelley, Jr
To Jessie Misskelley, Sr.

003915

Dear Dad and Lee

I miss both of ya'll I can not stand in here much

longer I will go crazy ya'll know I did not

do it I am not that crazy I miss ya'll a lot

tell Susie I Love her with all my heart

ya'll tried to get me out I quit smoking

I got a tv and I got a Bible and I quit

cousing my stomache has been hurtting me

I watch the news last knight and I cry and cry

tell every body I said Hi and I love them

and give pat a hug for me since I can not give

it to her and austin a kiss too I hope that ya'll

don't hate me because I did not do it I was with

Rickey Deese the day it happen ~~it was~~ I was

ruffin please try to get me out I will die in

here you that I can not stand it well I guess

I will let you go for now but not for long

I Love ya'll ch. I fixen to write Susie and give

it to her please P.S.

Write

I am in

Back

cross country

I love

tail

Ya'll

Love

I can see

Jessie

people on Sunday

JR,

I don't know what

time I hope ya'll

003916

can come