

'A child without sin'

Funeral service held for infant who died in unattended van

By JOHN ROBINSON
Sentinel staff writer

SANTA CRUZ — The parents of a baby who died Aug. 2 after being left inside a van sat together with their heads bowed and arms around each other Friday as funeral services were held.

The infant, Cedric Martel Blan, was 11 days old when he died in the care of foster parents in Felton. Sheriff's investigators said the baby died of hyperthermia after being left unattended in the family's van for up to four hours.

Friday, the infant's body lay in an open coffin, covered with white sheets while his mother cried and tears welled within the gathered families and friends.

"This is a child without sin, and I am sure now he sits with God," said Pastor Alex Robinson of the Church of the Living God and Faith Tabernacle. "Sometimes the Lord takes a baby and leaves the parents. He is telling you that he is waiting for you."

The baby had been placed under the care of Santa Cruz County Child Protective Services after Sylvia Blan gave birth at a Fresno hospital.

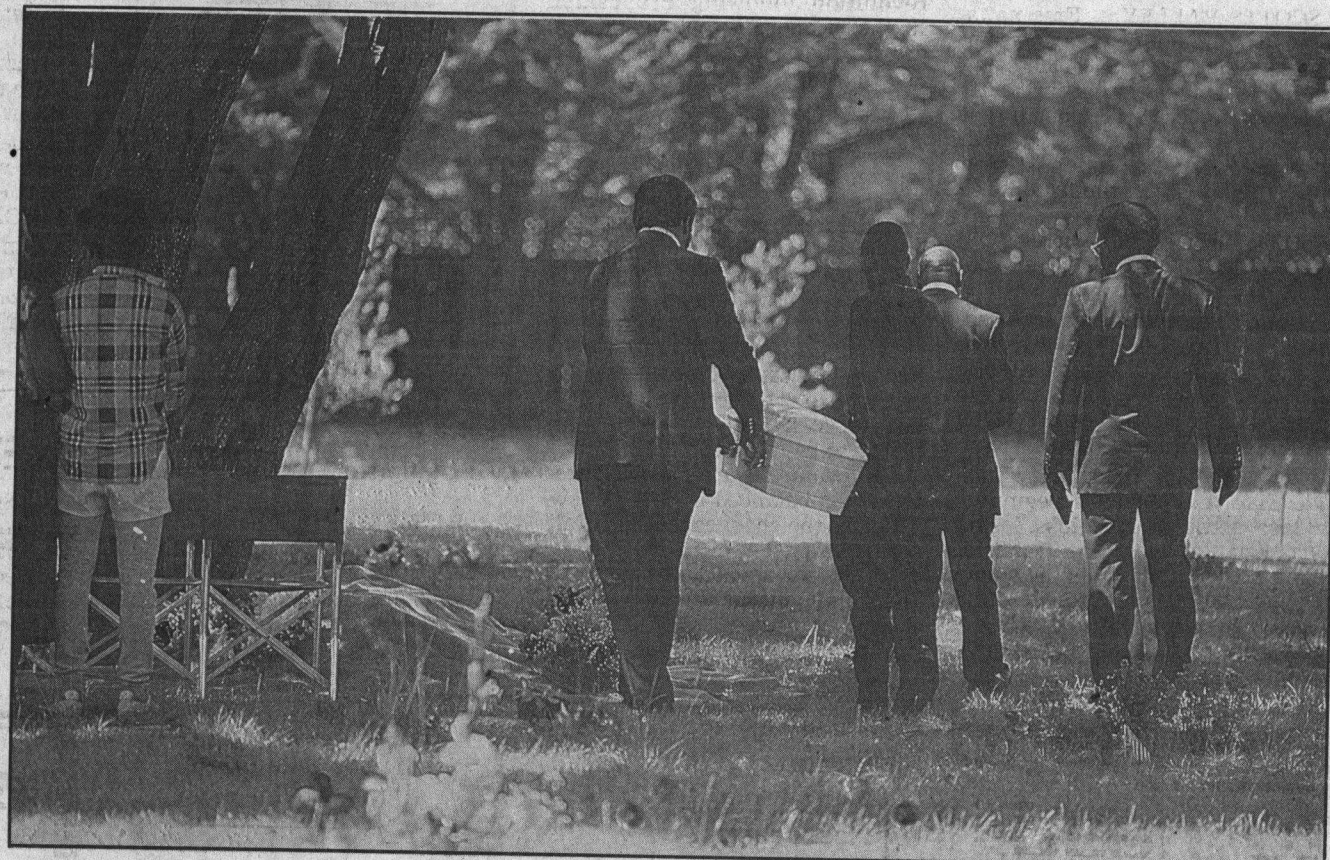
The child's death has prompted a number of state and local investigations, both into CPS and the actions of the foster parents. The baby's death came as CPS was already under criticism for its handling of a case involving three daughters of a Santa Cruz woman.

The Blan's attorney, Gordon Salisbury, said Sylvia Blan was planning to resume custody of her child as soon as she could, and had enrolled in parenting classes and bought a crib in anticipation.

Sylvia Blan had been confined to state prison on drug-related offenses but was released from custody the day after the baby's birth and had returned to Santa Cruz. Salisbury said she had visited her child only twice before the baby died.

"She is overcome with grief," Salisbury said.

Salisbury, who attended the funeral, said he has been helping the family evaluate the death, and whether a civil lawsuit would be filed.



The Associated Press

Pall bearers carry Cedric Blan's coffin to the grave site; the child's parents (below) leave the chapel.

"Her grief makes it necessary for her to put off emotions or thoughts about who is responsible," Salisbury said.

The case is still being reviewed by investigators and the District Attorney's Office as to whether any criminal charges will be filed against the foster parents in Felton.

Also attending the funeral were the foster parents who briefly cared for Cedric Blan in Fresno before he was brought to Santa Cruz. The Fresno foster parents tearfully hugged the Blans and gave them a photograph they had taken of the baby.

The infant was buried at Soquel Cemetery under the branches of a large oak tree. As the coffin sat upon a covered mound of dirt, final services were conducted. Torn flower petals were sprinkled over the casket as a pastor recited the words, "Ashes to ashes, dust to dust. ..."

On a neighboring grave, a pinwheel spun in the wind, marking the grave of another young child, as sobs from the family carried across the graveyard.

