

police brutality against koreans

Family of Man Killed by Deputies Year Ago Still Mourns for Him

By PAUL FELDMAN and JOHN H. LEE, Times Staff Writers

A year after an unarmed Corbion man was shot and killed by Los Angeles County sheriff's deputies after a lengthy car chase, 30 family members and friends gathered Wednesday in Cypress at the grave of Hong Pvo Lee to remember him and to press their demands for legal action against the deputies.

The Los Angeles County district attorney's office, following a six-week investigation last spring, cleared five deputies of criminal wrongdoing in the shooting, which drew last cries of racial discrimination and police brutality from the Korean community.

Since then, Lee's parents have filed a \$5.5-million federal lawsuit alleging that Lee's civil rights were violated. The U.S. Department of Justice is also conducting an investigation into the civil rights issue, according to attorneys for the Lee family and for the Sheriff's Department.

During Wednesday's service at Forest Lawn Memorial Park, Lee's relatives and their attorney, George V. Denny III, maintained that pretrial depositions from two Long Beach police officers, Richard R. Boatwright and Mario Razo, reinforce their contention that the 21-year-old Lee was killed wrongfully.

The Long Beach officers, who had pursued Lee along with the deputies and witnessed the fatal shooting, both stated in sworn depositions that they were "amazed" at the deputies' conduct.

Moreover, according to the depositions transcript, seven-year police veteran Boatwright said that, after the shooting, he turned to Razo, and said, "We just observed the sheriff's excessive somebody."

Neither Boatwright nor Razo, who said in his deposition that he could not remember Boatwright using the word excessive, could be reached Wednesday for comment.



GAIL FISHER / Los Angeles Times

Relatives, friends of Hong Pvo Lee marked anniversary of his death. His mother, Soong Ja Lee, kneels at grave, at right.



Attorney David D. Lawrence, representing the Sheriff's Department, Wednesday questioned the Long Beach officers' accounts, saying, "I'm confident the deputies acted properly and did what they had to do."

At the graveside service, Lee's father, liquor store owner Sung Kyo Lee, tearfully declared, "It is wrong what happened and justice should be served here. . . . We have to get to the bottom of this."

The incident began when Lee,

driving late at night in an unincorporated area near Lynwood, was spotted by sheriff's deputies running a stop sign. Rather than pull over, Lee accelerated and led deputies on a 15-mile chase that ended in a north Long Beach industrial area.

The five deputies got out of their vehicles with their guns drawn, and one, John Chapman, 30, approached the driver's side of Lee's vehicle, demanding that Lee get out.

The deputies told investigators later that they fired at Lee only after he suddenly shifted his car into reverse and attempted to run them down. That account was corroborated by a truck driver, who told investigators that he was parked nearby and saw the entire incident.

The district attorney's report concluded that the deputies acted in self-defense when they shot Lee nine times. An autopsy had found

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