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Attorney gets video showing struggle between inmate, OC deputies

By Gillian Flaccus

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SANTA ANA – A man who was arrested by Orange County deputies was stripped of his pants, strapped to a chair, Tasered repeatedly while in handcuffs and slammed to the floor with a knee to his head, a newly released videotape shows.

The 13-minute video, given to The Associated Press on Wednesday by the man's attorney, was taken in March 2006 after Matthew Fleuret was arrested during a barroom brawl in San Clemente.

His attorney, Stephen Bernard, has filed a \$47 million lawsuit against the county, and recently obtained the grainy footage during preparation for the trial. The tape begins with silent, black-and-white footage from a stationary security camera and then moves to colored footage with audio taken by a sheriff's deputy using a handheld video recorder.

Fleuret, a construction worker, was not charged and was released within 24 hours, the attorney said. He has no criminal record, Bernard said. He said Fleuret, 24, was not available to be interviewed because the case is pending.

Sheriff's spokesman Jim Amormino referred calls to Bill Haluck, an attorney for the county. Haluck did not return calls for comment.

Susan Schroeder, a spokeswoman for the district attorney's office, said her office has received no complaints about Fleuret's treatment and has not launched an investigation.

Arrest and booking records show that deputies fired a stun gun at Fleuret at least 10 times in the county jail. The arresting officer wrote that he sprayed Fleuret twice with pepper spray and hit him in the legs with a baton as he tried to break up a fight at the bar.

Deputies who filed reports after the jailhouse struggle wrote that Fleuret was extremely intoxicated and was "agitated, strong and aggressive." One deputy wrote that it took three deputies to hold down his legs and that he continued to fight even after he was strapped into the chair.

The first portion of the video shows Fleuret sitting handcuffed on a bench as he waits to be booked. A deputy walks up and appears to elbow Fleuret on the side of the head.

A few minutes later, the shirtless and handcuffed Fleuret is heard saying, "I didn't do nothing," and asks to see an attorney.

The video then shows two deputies escorting Fleuret down a hallway, but as they approach the doorway to a medical unit, Fleuret shouts "No," followed by an expletive. He begins to struggle and at least six deputies swarm him and wrestle him to the ground.

Someone commands "Tase him!" and "Tase him again!" as Fleuret screams. One deputy can be seen pinning his neck to the floor with his knee, while several other deputies appear to use their hands to hold his back and legs

down.

Fleuret repeatedly screams, "I can't breathe!" as a deputy urges him to relax.

"The more you resist, the worse it gets," the deputy says.

Fleuret is then dragged into the medical unit and someone pulls down his jeans. Several other deputies hoist him into a chair, secure straps across his chest and place a black, transparent hood over his head – a "spit guard" to keep him from spitting at deputies.

While a nurse examines him, Fleuret complains: "This ain't right, man."

Bernard said Fleuret, who now lives in Utah, was seriously injured and suffers from post-traumatic stress disorder. He can no longer work in construction, the attorney said.


"He's got rotator cuff injuries, he probably will need surgery," Bernard said. "He has damage to both wrists, he has a head injury, he's got a concussion, he's got visual problems."

■ ■ ■

Associated Press Writer Daisy Nguyen in Los Angeles contributed to this report.

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