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State pays family of Alabaster man killed by trooper

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The state of Alabama has paid \$900,000 to the mother of an Alabaster man shot to death three years ago by a state trooper, although an internal investigation cleared him of criminal wrongdoing.

According to documents in the state's online court records, the state paid the money to Kathy Edmondson of Chilton County to settle her wrongful death case against Trooper Michael B. Roberts and several Department of Public Safety officials. Edmondson's son, Chris Lindley, was shot to death during an encounter with Roberts.

Under terms of the settlement agreement, Edmondson agreed not to disclose the terms, although the money is state money. Edmondson's attorneys, David Marsh and Rip Andrews, would not discuss the exact settlement amount, although they said they were satisfied that the case had settled without a trial.

Alan Edmondson, Lindley's stepfather, said Wednesday that he was reluctant to comment on the case, despite the state's having posted the settlement agreement on its court system Web site.

"We are just glad he (Roberts) is no longer on the road," Alan Edmondson said.

Roberts resigned his job in October, according to Dorris Teague at the Department of Public Safety.

"The Edmondsons have been through a tremendous personal tragedy," Marsh said. "They brought the case because they believed it was the right thing to do. Now they want to put it behind them."

The agreement states that "the payments made are not to be construed as an admission of liability" by Roberts and the other defendants.

A wreck, then shooting:

Chris Lindley, 29, bled to death around midnight Dec. 14, 2004, from two gunshot wounds inflicted by Roberts, according to the autopsy report on the case.

The encounter with Roberts occurred near Lindley's home in Saginaw shortly before midnight after Lindley wrecked his pickup at the Edmondson Lane and U.S. 31 railroad crossing. He was within a quarter-mile of his home and his parents' home.

In his sworn statement to the Alabama Bureau of Investigation, Roberts said the confrontation began shortly after he arrived on the scene where Lindley was talking on a cell phone outside his wrecked truck.

"I was scared of him," said Roberts, who was out of his car with no cell phone or two-way radio. "I was scared of whatever it was down that road that he was trying to get to."

The autopsy referred to a toxicology report showing that Lindley had alcohol and a prescription painkiller in

his system.

The unarmed Lindley, according to the Edmondson lawyers, presented no danger to Roberts and never was told he was under arrest.

"The shooting was unjustified, and he (Roberts) shouldn't have been out there in the first place," said Andrews.

The shooting was presented to a Shelby County grand jury by a special prosecutor, Van Davis of St. Clair County. The grand jury did not indict Roberts.

Why settle?:

The Edmondsons were unhappy with that proceeding, they said at the time, because a private investigator who had documented questionable aspects of Roberts' background was not allowed to present his evidence to the grand jury.

Efforts to reach Roberts for comment were unsuccessful.

Asked why the state was willing to settle the case for \$900,000, F. Tim McCollum, the assistant attorney general who represented Roberts and the other defendants, as well as the Department of Public Safety, said, "Sometimes it is in the best interest of both parties to settle."

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