

Trial against police officer continues

Lawsuit accuses Roberts of excessive force, violating the plaintiff's rights

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HUNTINGTON — A civil trial against a Huntington police officer will continue today in U.S. District Judge Robert C. Chambers' courtroom.

Attorneys representing Jermon Webb filed a lawsuit in May 2000 against police officer Adam Roberts accusing the officer of excessive force and violating his rights.

Webb was shot in the back following a police chase on April 16, 2000. According to police reports, Roberts was trying to stop Webb to question him about shots being fired in the 1800 block of 9th Avenue when Webb ran into a bush and bounced into Roberts, causing Roberts' gun to fire.

The shooting caused an uproar among some residents, who accused the Huntington Police Department of inequalities. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and the American Civil Liberties Union both criticized the police department for its handling of the situation.

The trial began Tuesday with jury selection and testimony from two Cabell County paramedics, a ballistics expert and Webb's mother and grandmother.

Webb's grandmother, Patricia McClure, testified that Webb still complains about pain in his back. Webb's mother, Joya Webb, told the all-white jury of four women

"He a different person. He's always under me, always at home ... He's not like my Jermon."

Joya Webb

mother of Jermon Webb

and three men that since the shooting, her son stays around the house and acts different.

When her son's attorney, Mark Underwood, asked what she meant, Joya Webb said she could not really describe it.

"He's a different person," she said. "He's always under me, always at home. ... He's not like my Jermon. I have to talk with him constantly and tell him that everything is all right."

During cross-examination, Roberts' attorney, Paul Farrell, pointed out several inconsistencies in the two women's testimony, including how long Webb was hospitalized following the shooting, whether he needed follow-up medical care and whether he now plays basketball.

During a deposition, Jermon Webb said he plays basketball two or three times a week. McClure testified he plays occasionally. Joya Webb testified he does not play at all any more.

Underwood dropped the city of Huntington, former police chief Mike Nimmo and Sgt. Darrell A. Booth as co-defendants before the trial began.

The trial is expected to last all week.