

Woman accuses Coz of groping her

Ex-Temple employee claims she was doped, assaulted at comedian's Montco home

By NICOLE WEISENSEE EGAN
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MONTGOMERY COUNTY authorities are investigating sexual-assault allegations against actor/comedian Bill Cosby, officials confirmed last night.

A former Temple University athletic department employee has accused Cosby of groping her at his Elkins Park mansion last January, police said. She reported the alleged assault to Canadian cops last week, police said.

The alleged victim could not be reached for comment. She has returned home to Canada, where relatives said she was "not available" last night.

Cosby, 67, a Philadelphia native, was not available for comment either. He canceled a speech in Cleveland last night for personal reasons. He was scheduled to talk about problems in America's poor black communities.

Cosby supporters denounced the allegations.

"The allegation as I understand it is utterly preposterous and bizarre, coming one year after it was supposed to take place," said Walter Phillips Jr., a Philadelphia attorney representing Cosby.

Phillips said he'd defend his client vigorously if criminal charges are filed against him. Phillips said

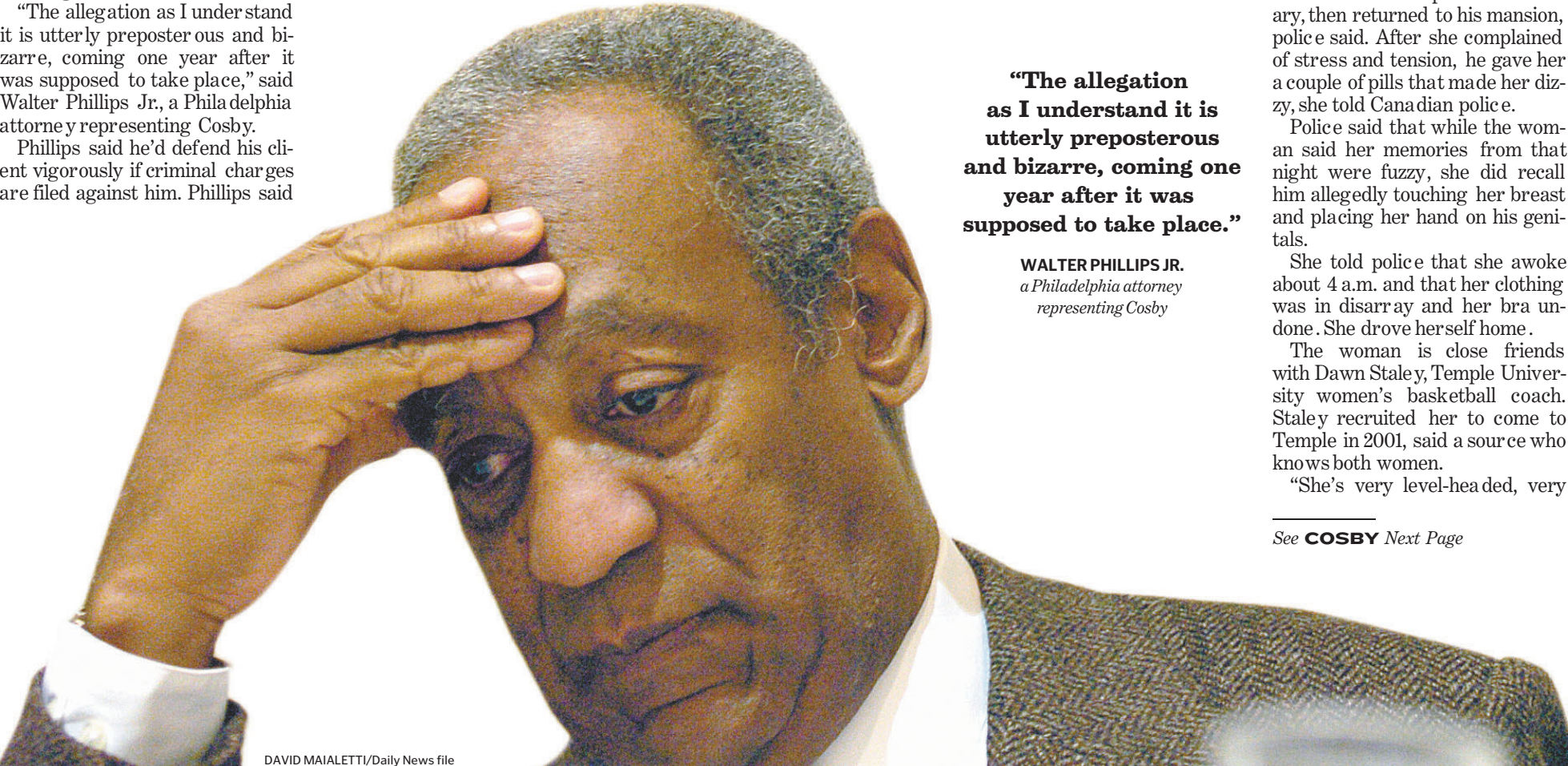


JOSEPH KACZMAREK/For the Daily News

Bill Cosby's accuser said that she returned to the comedian's Elkins Park mansion (above) after a night out with friends last January, complained of tension, and that he gave her a couple of pills that made her dizzy. She told police that she awoke hours later, her clothes messed up, her bra undone.

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a Philadelphia attorney
representing Cosby



DAVID MAIALETTI/Daily News file

he's had one conversation with Cheltenham Township Police Chief John Norris about the case. Norris "has not even talked to the complainant at this point," Phillips said.

"They just started the investigation," he said.

Norris issued a terse "no comment" about the situation yesterday. Montgomery County District Attorney Bruce L. Castor Jr., whose detectives are also investigating the case, did not return phone calls requesting comment.

Cosby's uncle Thornhill Cosby passionately defended his nephew.

"I don't believe any of it," said Thornhill, who lives in Philadelphia. "Why does that woman wait for a whole year to come forth now?"

"The whole family is very proud of him," he said. "We're not going to believe all this garbage that's out there."

The alleged victim said she, Cosby and some others went out to dinner in Philadelphia last January, then returned to his mansion, police said. After she complained of stress and tension, he gave her a couple of pills that made her dizzy, she told Canadian police.

Police said that while the woman said her memories from that night were fuzzy, she did recall him allegedly touching her breast and placing her hand on his genitals.

She told police that she awoke about 4 a.m. and that her clothing was in disarray and her bra undone. She drove herself home.

The woman is close friends with Dawn Staley, Temple University women's basketball coach. Staley recruited her to come to Temple in 2001, said a source who knows both women.

"She's very level-headed, very

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professional," the source said.

The source also said the alleged victim, who is in her early 30s and 6 feet tall, is "strikingly beautiful."

She is a former basketball player in Canada and at an American college.

She left her position at Temple last April, said Larry Dougherty, a Temple sports media spokesman.

The woman reported the alleged sexual assault to the Durham Regional Police Department near Toronto, a spokesperson confirmed last night. The Durham police then referred it to the Philadelphia police, who referred it to the Cheltenham police. Cheltenham police alerted the Montgomery County district attorney's office, sources said.

The alleged victim had "frequent contact" with Cosby, the source said.

Staley is also close with Cosby. In December, he dedicated the screening of his movie, "Fat Albert," to her at the world premiere at Temple University. Staley has a huge, framed photo of her and Cosby on the Temple basketball court, signed by Cosby, hanging in the waiting room of her office.

Cosby has made a lot of commercials for Comcast promoting the women's basketball team and would regularly show up at women's games, the source said.

"You know I can't comment," Staley said last night after the women's team defeated Fordham University, when asked about the case.

Last year, Cosby caused a stir when he gave a speech at the NAACP Legal Defense Fund in Washington criticizing blacks for not using the opportunities the civil-rights movement created for them.

After some negative press about his remarks, Cosby issued a clarifying statement, saying

his remarks were addressing the epidemic of an estimated 50 percent of African-American males' in cities dropping out of school.

Cosby said he wanted the comments to be a call to action for African-Americans to "turn the mirror around on ourselves."

His list of professional achievements is long, in both television, comedy and other arenas. Not only is he a world-famous and beloved actor and comedian, but he has received numerous honors, including a Presidential Medal of Freedom in 2002. He's also funded numerous scholarships at his alma mater, Temple University.

His biggest tragedy was undoubtedly the death of his only son, Ennis, who was murdered in January 1997. Later that year, Autumn Jackson, a woman claiming to be his illegitimate daughter, threatened that she would tell the world she was his love child if he didn't pay her \$40 million.

Cosby admitted he'd been unfaithful to his wife, Camille, and that he'd paid Autumn and her mother \$100,000 over the years to keep quiet, but he denied he was Autumn's father. Jackson was later sentenced to 26 months behind bars for extortion.

Last year, Cosby told a *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* columnist he'd tried to get Autumn to do a paternity test for years but she refused.

All was quiet at the Elkins Park mansion yesterday afternoon. An employee who approached the *Daily News* from the back entrance and did not wish to be identified had little to say.

"I don't know nothing about it," she said. "I'm just a staff member." ★

Staff writers Gloria Campisi, Dan Gross, Barbara Isenberg and Simone Weichselbaum contributed to this report.

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Boyfriend charged in hotel killing

Suspected of firing a bullet through wall into his lover's head

By CATHERINE LUCEY

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The young woman shot in the head in a Center City hotel Tuesday was killed by her boyfriend, police said yesterday.

Vincent "BK" Lamkin, 23, of Compton, Calif., was charged late Wednesday night with the murder of Martina Hart, 21, also of Compton. He is charged with murder, possession of an instrument of crime and weapons offenses, an investigator said.

Hart's body was found Tuesday

afternoon in the bedroom of the suite at the Marriot Residence Inn near Juniper Street, across from City Hall. Lamkin and Hart had been staying there with four other men. They had all driven in from California.

Police believe Lamkin fired a shot from an adjacent room, which ripped through the bedroom wall and struck Hart in the head.

Lamkin has admitted to police that he fired the gun, but claimed that he shot in self-defense. Police are still trying to figure out what exactly happened.

The other men have been questioned but will not be charged with anything. The gun used in the shooting has not been recovered.

Originally they thought they might be members of a rap group, but it appears that only Lamkin was some kind of small-time rapper.

Some of the five are known to the Compton police, according to investigators. Los Angeles police yesterday would not say if Lamkin had a record and said he was not on any most-wanted lists. ★



Photos: JESSICA GRIFFIN/Daily News

MAN SLAIN IN VAN IN SW PHILA.

AN UNIDENTIFIED man was shot to death yesterday in a shootout inside a minivan (left) at a gas station (below) in Southwest Philadelphia, police said. They are seeking the driver of the van. The passenger was shot three times in the lower back and once in the left shoulder about 5 p.m., police said. Witnesses said they saw the driver put the gun in his pants and run from the scene. The passenger was pronounced dead at the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania at about 7 p.m., police said.

