

The Sun

**Riva man sues police officer, department over incident  
\$2.4 million suit alleges negligence, false arrest**

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A man who had a run-in with an Anne Arundel County police officer last December has filed a \$2.4 million negligence lawsuit in Anne Arundel Circuit Court against the county, the police department and the officer.

Russell Wayne Varner of the 200 block of Grisdale Hill in the Riva area alleges that Officer Sonny M. Pentz of the Southern District grabbed him without provocation on Dec. 20, 1995, while he was standing outside his home, hit him on the back and then shoved him into a police car, causing him to injure his back.

The lawsuit alleges that Pentz targeted him for the harsh treatment because of "bad blood" between them.

"The acts and conduct of Officer M. Pentz were done willfully, unlawfully and violently, with a wanton disregard of the welfare and rights of the plaintiff, Russell Wayne Varner," the suit alleges.

The suit seeks \$2.4 million on separate counts of assault, negligence and false arrest.

Gill Cochran, Varner's lawyer, said Varner was arrested after police responded to a domestic disturbance next door, and he came out of his house to see if he could help.

Police arrested and handcuffed Varner after he had a confrontation with Pentz, Cochran said.

He said that while Varner was sitting alone in the front seat of the police car, the car slipped into reverse, smashed into a garage and caused \$20,000 in damages.

Cochran said Varner was acquitted June 18 by District Court Judge Martha Rasin of the assault, battery, fleeing and eluding police and marijuana possession charges stemming from the incident.

Pentz, an eight-year veteran of the police department, said yesterday he could not comment on the lawsuit.

County Attorney Phillip F. Scheibe also said he had not seen the lawsuit and could not comment on it.

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