

'HE SEEMED LIKE HE WAS AN ALRIGHT GUY' - MOTHER TESTIFIES ON LEAVING INFANT WITH STRANGER AT BUS STOP

Detroit Free Press (MI) - Friday, February 22, 2002

Author: SUZETTE HACKNEY FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

Shaniqua Betty sat at a bus stop frustrated and in tears. She had no shoes, no money and a 3-month-old baby wrapped only in a towel.

Moments later, a man came along and asked why she was crying. He made friendly faces at her child and repeatedly told her Isaiah was a beautiful baby.

Betty talked to the man for 15-20 minutes before asking him if he could watch Isaiah while she ran home to get her belongings. The man promised not to leave the bus stop at Woodward and State Fair. He also promised not to hurt the baby.

And Betty trusted him.

"He seemed like he was an alright guy, you know, friendly," Betty said Thursday during the first-degree murder trial of **Harold Reed** .

The 49-year-old is accused of fatally beating Isaiah and discarding his body under a mattress in an abandoned house.

Betty had been fighting with her boyfriend, and had run in her bare feet from their Exeter Street home without a purse or diaper bag on Aug. 3. "I was crying. I didn't know what to do," Betty testified in Wayne County Circuit Court.

During opening statements, Assistant Prosecutor Michael Wagner said Betty thought she had encountered a friendly, trustworthy Good Samaritan who wanted to help a distressed woman. Instead, he said, **Reed** struck Isaiah in the head five times.

"This man is responsible for Isaiah Lewis' death," Wagner said.

Dr. Boguslaw Pietak, a Wayne County assistant medical examiner, testified that Isaiah sustained three fractures to the skull and one fracture to each jaw. Pietak said the skull injuries caused Isaiah to immediately lose consciousness, and he probably died within seconds.

Reed 's defense attorney, W. Frederick Moore, suggested that Betty feared her boyfriend, Ivan Brown Jr., and asserted that Brown could have hit the baby.

Still, Ira Todd, an investigator for the Violent Crime Task Force, testified that he questioned **Reed** , and **Reed** admitted taking Isaiah from Betty. Todd said that **Reed** led him to an abandoned house on Penrose, where Isaiah's body was found.

Todd testified that after returning to police headquarters, **Reed** told him he sat at the bus stop with the baby for a few minutes, but began to panic when the baby started moving and crying. **Reed** told Todd he looked and called out for Betty. He then noticed the baby was not breathing, so he placed him on a street corner, Todd testified.

Reed said he went to his niece's house to get a blanket for the infant, and when he returned, the child still was not breathing. That's when **Reed** said he took Isaiah to the abandoned house and placed him on the mattress.

Todd said he gave **Reed** an opportunity on Aug. 9 to write a personal message to Betty.

"I'm really very sorry your child died," **Reed** wrote. "I was trying to find you. I walked up and down the street looking for you. I'm sorry."

Testimony continues today in Judge Thomas Brookover's courtroom. If convicted of first-degree murder, **Reed** faces life in prison with no chance of parole.

Contact SUZETTE HACKNEY at 313-222-6672 or hackney@freepress.com.

Edition: METRO FINAL

Section: NWS

Page: 3B

Index Terms: INFANT ; HOMICIDE ; DETROIT ; SHANIQUA BETTY ; TRIAL ; PARENT ; TESTIMONY

Record Number: 0202220370

Copyright (c) 2002 Detroit Free Press