

CUSTODIAN CHARGED IN SLAYING OF 3 AT DOPE PAD

Detroit Free Press (MI) - Wednesday, May 5, 1982

Author: ANDREA FORD Free Press Staff Writer

A Detroit school custodian was **charged** Tuesday **in** the execution-style slayings of three people and the wounding of a fourth during what police called a "small-time dope pad ripoff" on the city's west side.

A second suspect, who police said "walked away" from the State Prison of Southern Michigan at Jackson last fall while serving a life term on a 1976 **murder** conviction, was being sought **in** the case.

THE BODIES of two **men** and a woman were found at 15470 Muirland about 2 a.m. Tuesday after the lone survivor of the massacre -- bound, gagged and bleeding -- crawled to a nearby house.

Police said the survivor lay still after he was shot and stabbed **in** the head, leading his assailants to believe he was dead.

Shortly after being called, police arrested Larry Pearson, 27, a maintenance **man** at an unnamed Detroit public school.

Pearson was **charged** with three counts of first degree **murder** and one count of attempted **murder in** 36th (Detroit) District Court Tuesday afternoon. Judge Wendy Baxter ordered him held without bond **in** Wayne County Jail pending a May 14 pre-trial hearing.

Inspector Gilbert Hill, chief of the police Homicide Section, said the bodies of Danna Johns, 22, David Witherspoon, 27, and a **man** tentatively identified as Eric Curry, 31, were found **in** a dining room at the Muirland address.

THE SURVIVOR was hospitalized **in** serious condition with a grazing gunshot wound and a stab wound to the head. Police would not release his name.

Hill said the two suspects knew the victims and arrived at the home about midnight intending to rob them.

"Once inside, they pulled guns and announced a holdup," Hill said.

The survivor told police he and the three other people were made to lie on the floor while their hands were tied with electrical cord. All except the woman were gagged. The survivor said each was shot **in** the head at least once, then stabbed **in** the head or neck.

The gunmen left, thinking everyone **in** the house was dead, police said. The survivor, still bound and gagged, struggled to a house next door, where neighbors contacted police, Hill said.

Police said the house, which was shared by Witherspoon and Johns, was a small-scale heroin operation and that some drugs and money were stolen by the gunmen.

The second suspect **in** the case, who was not named, was convicted of killing an 18-year-old during a Detroit street robbery seven years ago, police said.

The **man** pleaded guilty to second degree **murder in** the slaying and was sentenced to life. He was on trustee status at Jackson Prison, where he had freedom to move and access to the grounds, when he escaped last September, Hill said.

Edition: METRO FINAL

Section: NWS

Page: 3A

Index Terms: MURDER; DRUGS

Record Number: 8301010024

Copyright (c) 1982 Detroit Free Press