

## 4TH SUSPECT ARRAIGNED IN HOTEL CLERK'S KILLING

Detroit Free Press (MI) - Tuesday, September 9, 2003

Author: JOHN MASSON FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

The break **in** the case came down to a single usable frame of videotape from a surveillance camera at the Troy Holiday Inn.

The equipment captured the image of an ex-employee -- an image that guided detectives **in** their search for **suspects in** the Sept. 2 robbery that left night desk clerk Michelle Eberhard dead and **hotel** guest Rachel Joost seriously injured with a gunshot wound to the face.

Within hours of the shootings, detectives had started to zero **in** on four people suspected **in** the crime, said Detective Sgt. Suzanne Post of the Troy Police Department. On Monday, the last of the four **suspects** -- John Andrew Spratt Jr., 30, of Oak Park -- was **arraigned** on charges including first-degree felony murder and armed robbery.

Others charged **in** the case include Detroiters Thomas Ralph Jackson, 24, a former kitchen worker at the **hotel** ; Shirley Ann Haywood, 36, and Brandon Burns-Perry, 17. Post said all four **suspects** are members of the same extended family.

After Spratt was **arraigned** Monday by Magistrate Clement Waldmann **in** 52-4 District Court **in** Troy, Post talked about the events that led up to the shootings.

Post said the four **suspects** pulled up to the Holiday Inn after midnight and parked. Burns-Perry went **in** through the front door, let Spratt and Jackson **in** through a different door, then left. Spratt and Jackson confronted Eberhard at the desk, took her to a back room, tied her up with a phone cord and robbed her.

"Then the subjects shot her **in** the back of the head, execution-style," Post said.

All four left and Haywood drove them back to Detroit **in** a 1993 Nissan Altima, the detective said. But Spratt, the only one of the four with a criminal record, started to worry.

"They came back to get the phone cord, because they were afraid they'd left their fingerprints on it," Post said.

Spratt is on lifetime probation for a drug offense, Post said, and knew his prints would be quickly identified by police.

When three of the **suspects** returned to the **hotel** -- Burns-Perry stayed behind -- Jackson and Spratt went into the lobby while Haywood stayed **in** the car, Post said. The two armed men encountered Joost, who was talking on a cell phone with her husband, a police officer **in** Cedar Park, Texas.

The men forced Joost into the back room where Eberhard's bound body lay. While Spratt untied the phone cord, Post said, Jackson shot Joost **in** the head. She threw her hand up **in** a reflexive attempt to ward off the bullet. The slug passed through her hand and into her face, said Chief Deputy Prosecutor Deb Carley.

Joost fell to floor and played dead as the gun clicked four more times, Carley said.

Jackson and Spratt took the phone cord and left. Joost scrambled to the third floor, where she hid and called her husband and 911 for help.

"Rachel Joost is my hero," Post said. "The things she did were just remarkable."

Despite her injuries, Post said, Joost was able to provide "phenomenal" descriptions of the **suspects** that supplemented the videotape and helped crack the case.

Post said the investigation continues. On Monday afternoon, Troy police were at a house on Moran near Davison **in** Detroit where three of the **suspects** lived. They've also served five or six search warrants **in** Detroit, Post said, and have recovered a 9mm Luger, a .40-caliber Glock, and the Nissan Altima.

But it all started with the video tape.

"We found one frame of video that had something we could use on it, and we ran with it," Post said.

Contact JOHN MASSON at 248-591-5628 or [masson@freepress.com](mailto:masson@freepress.com).

Caption: Photo

John Andrew Spratt Jr., 30, of Oak Park is charged with murder.

Edition: METRO FINAL

Section: NWS

Page: 1B

Index Terms: TROY HOLIDAY INN ; ARREST ; SUSPECT; ROBBERY ; HOMICIDE ; JOHN ANDREW ; SPRATT JR

Record Number: 0309090356

Copyright (c) 2003 Detroit Free Press