

Man is charged in three rapes - He's arraigned on 10 counts of sexual conduct, kidnapping of women in Harper Woods, Detroit.

Detroit News, The (MI) - Tuesday, August 1, 2006

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HARPER WOODS -- **Dennis Danell Whitsett**, an unemployed 30-year-old with addresses in Detroit and Harper Woods, could be responsible for as many as eight rapes in both cities, detectives said.

Whitsett was arraigned in 32A District Court on Monday on 10 counts of criminal sexual conduct and one of kidnapping involving three young women in assaults between Feb. 2 and July 27. Police Officer Robert Kane of the Detroit Police Sex Crimes Unit said **Whitsett** is a suspect in five other cases in Detroit that are under investigation.

Dressed in a long black T-shirt, long baggy denim short pants, and blue-and-white low-cut basketball shoes, **Whitsett** kept tugging up his pants as Judge Roger T. LaRose read the charges against him.

"I don't even know who that is," he interrupted as the judge read the name and complaint of one of the alleged victims.

Whitsett was at the center of a dispute Saturday between Detroit police and 36th District Judge Robert Costello. Costello first refused to sign a warrant against **Whitsett** because he said the crimes took place outside the city. Costello then refused to arraign **Whitsett** on rape charges for the same reason after Detroit police got another 36th District Court judge to sign the warrant.

On Monday, LaRose in Harper Woods signed two of the warrants against **Whitsett** before arraigning him on all three warrants. In addition to rape and kidnapping, **Whitsett** is charged with two counts of being a second-offense habitual offender, which could multiply by 1 1/2 times the maximum sentence on the other charges, eight of which carry life sentences. LaRose ordered him held without bond pending an Aug. 9 preliminary examination.

In the Feb. 2 case, Harper Woods Detective and Sgt. Ted Stager testified that the victim and a friend were walking near Houston-Whittier and Hayes when **Whitsett** picked them up. The three drove around for a while before **Whitsett** dropped off the victim's friend and drove the other woman to a home on Newcastle in Harper Woods.

There, Stager said, he hit her over the head, told her to take her clothes off and sexually assaulted her before driving her home.

Kane testified that in the case of the victim on July 20, **Whitsett** forced a woman into his car from the same Houston-Whittier area, drove her to the Newcastle home and slapped her before assaulting her. When the woman tried to leave, Kane said **Whitsett** knocked her to the floor and told her he would take her home.

Section: Metro

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Company Name: #keywords2#

Index Terms: SEX CRIMES ; RAPE ; ARRESTS

Dateline: HARPER WOODS

Record Number: det24506516

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