

Police: Dad shot kids he could no longer support - Unemployed father of 4 arraigned

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DETROIT -- Broke, unemployed and distraught about his crumbling marriage, **Anthony Lamar Bailey** told police he could no longer care for his four children.

Bailey, 37, admitted to detectives that he shot his four children -- killing three of them -- before torching his northwest Detroit house Tuesday night.

"He was overwhelmed with the possibility of taking care of his children by himself with no help from his family or his wife," said Cmdr. Craig Schwartz, who heads the Major Crimes Division.

Bailey was ordered held without bond Thursday on murder charges during his arraignment in 36th District Court. If convicted, he faces up to life in prison.

While **Bailey** said he was overburdened by his children, his family said that for months his failing marriage seemed the more pressing problem.

But **Bailey's** sister, Ferlita **Bailey**, said her brother needs mental help, not prison.

"For some reason, he felt alienated from the family," she said. "I'm like the last one he was dealing with in the family. He really believed nobody loved him. With **Anthony**, his head just wasn't stable."

Adding to the stresses in **Bailey's** life, his mother, Melinda Bradley, died in May of lung cancer.

Still, as recently as Sunday, **Anthony Bailey** seemed normal, Ferlita **Bailey** said.

However, he and his estranged wife, Essie Mae **Bailey**, had a history of violence toward each other. Both are on probation for assaulting the other in separate incidents earlier this year.

Anthony Bailey was "doing everything he was supposed to do" on probation, which included attending counseling on domestic violence, said Chief 36th District Judge Marilyn Atkins.

Anthony Bailey first glimpsed his future wife while she was working as a sales clerk at Montgomery Ward about 14 years ago. She was a young mom with two children from a previous marriage. He wanted to be near her, so within weeks, he was working in the store's tire department.

"They dated for between six months and a year," said **Bailey's** stepfather, David Bradley, 63, of Detroit. "He brought her by the house to introduce her to me and my wife, and the next thing we knew, he was telling us they were going to get married."

But by the second year of marriage, Bradley said "things began to go from bad to worse." Still they remained together until recently. Then after a series of arguments and physical confrontations, Essie **Bailey** walked out, leaving her husband to care for their four children.

Bailey became distraught about the end of his marriage, but he never complained about the burden of being a single parent "until the end," his father said.

His life was unraveled as he grew weary of trying to keep it together.

"I never heard him complain about the kids," said Bradley. "He loved the kids --they were his life. The divorce was his biggest problem."

That changed in the last three weeks.

"He told me that he wanted to get on with his life," said Bradley. "He wanted to let his wife take the kids, but I told him he needed to go to social services or to the police and let them know."

But **Bailey** changed his mind the next week and decided he wasn't moving, Bradley said.

"My son, he was abusive to her, and she just got tired of it," Bradley said. "I didn't agree with him having the kids."

Arguments escalated.

Essie **Bailey** and her daughter from a previous marriage returned to the house within the last couple of weeks to deliver diapers for the baby, Bradley said.

"She was trying to talk to him, and they began arguing again, so she left," Bradley said. "Then, he took a shotgun and fired it in the air. She called me about it, and I said I'd talk to him."

He told **Bailey** that "what he did was wrong," said Bradley, who was worried about his stepson having a shotgun in the house.

When Bradley's granddaughter called two weeks ago and told him that they were left home alone until the early morning hours while **Bailey** attended a concert, Bradley felt he had to act.

"I called protective services on the Monday before the blackout and told them everything," he said. "I told them about the neglect of the children, and I told them he had bought a shotgun. The operator took the call, and I told her what I believed was about to happen."

Bradley said the operator told him "someone would go out there that evening."

But Bradley said he never heard back from anyone from protective services, so he called again.

He insisted that he did everything he could to get help from the Family Independence Agency.

"I tried to talk to the supervisor, but she wasn't in her office. Then I tried to talk to the assistant supervisor, (but no one answered) so I left a message. I was pretty upset about it."

Bradley said he finally spoke to someone after Tuesday night's slayings.

"I told them they were responsible because if they had called, we could have gotten those kids out of there," Bradley said.

State and federal laws prohibit the Michigan Family Independence Agency from commenting on specific cases, said spokeswoman Maureen Sorbet. She could not even acknowledge whether the agency had received a call from **Bailey's** father.

However, Nannette Bowler, director of the state Family Independence Agency, said she is launching an investigation to make sure appropriate actions were taken.

"Unfortunately, we cannot always anticipate the actions some people will take that result in such horrific destruction of human life," Bowler said.

In itself, possessing a gun is not enough to warrant removal of a child, Sorbet said.

Generally, the agency's child protective services branch investigates allegations of child mistreatment when it receives calls on 24-hour hot lines. Also, state law lists people, such as health care workers, teachers and social workers, who must report even suspicions of child abuse or neglect.

The agency evaluates the complaints and then launches an investigation within 24 hours by visiting the home where the children are housed.

If the situation calls for removal, investigators must file a report with the local prosecutor within 24 hours. In 2002, the FIA investigated 72,988 complaints. Of those, 17,220 were substantiated.

Family annihilation is a rare phenomenon, happening between 50-80 times a year, but is more often perpetrated by fathers, said Jack Levin, director of the Brudnick Center on Violence and Conflict at Northeastern University in Boston.

There are three kind of family annihilators: those motivated by revenge, a perverted sense of love or a combination of the two.

"One suffers a nasty separation or divorce, perhaps a custody battle, and blames his wife for all of his troubles and decided to get even by killing her and all that she loves," Levin said. "The other has lost his job or suffered some kind of financial disappointment and becomes hopeless, despondent, disillusioned but not deranged, and he decides that life is so miserable that he will take all of his children to a better place in the hereafter."

Levin suspected **Bailey** might fall into both categories.

Children's fund

Standard Federal Bank has established a fund to help defray funeral expenses for the **Bailey** family. Contributions to the **Bailey** Children's Fund can be made in person at any of the bank's branches. Funeral arrangements are pending for Sharnice, 11 Ayana, 3 and **Lamar**, 1.

Antonia update

Antonia **Bailey**, 9, who survived Tuesday's murder spree, remains in critical condition at Children's Hospital in Detroit. Doctors successfully removed 15 gunshot pellets from her abdomen Wednesday.

Caption: Essie **Bailey** is consoled by her oldest daughter Iesha Brassell on Thursday during the arraignment of her estranged husband, **Anthony Bailey**. He is charged with killing three of their children, ages 1 to 11. In recent weeks, **Anthony Bailey** fired a shotgun into the air after arguing with his estranged wife, Essie **Bailey**, center. She had brought diapers to the house for the youngest child. The **Bailey** children killed Tuesday in their home on Ashton in northwest Detroit were, from left, **Lamar**, 1, Sharnice, 11, and Ayana, 3. Antonia, 9, survived. Children's fund **Anthony Bailey** was arraigned by video before 36th District Magistrate Charles W. Anderson III.

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