

## **FERNDALE: MOTIVE BEHIND KILLING IN DISPUTE - FAMILY DISAGREES WITH POLICE THEORY**

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Through tears, the family of 48-year-old Charles Hardaway sat in a Ferndale courtroom Thursday and saw the men accused of killing their loved one.

More than a dozen relatives - including the victim's mother, sister, son, daughter, nephews, nieces and grandchildren - filled the courtroom.

Two Detroit men - Robert Clark, 28, and **Martin Pitts**, 27 - were charged with first-degree murder. If convicted, they face a life prison sentence. They were arraigned before 43rd District Judge Joseph Longo, and are being held in the Oakland County Jail without bond. Their preliminary examinations are set for April 26.

Police said that Clark killed Hardaway on Tuesday to seek retribution for something that had happened in the past. The reason for the retribution, detectives said Thursday, was unclear.

But family members said that the police officers' theories don't seem to add up.

Hardaway had spent the past 17 years in prison, convicted in 1990 of conspiracy to distribute cocaine. He was released to a halfway house in March.

According to police, Clark fired 10 slugs at Hardaway, who was on his way to work, in the parking lot at the Sundance Shoe Outlet on 9 Mile Road. Hardaway worked at the shoe store.

Clark then ran away, meeting up with Pitts, who was driving a Ford Explorer. After a chase, police captured both men.

Hardaway's family said they don't know the motive for the slaying either, but say the police explanation doesn't make sense.

A Detroit native with seven children, Hardaway was a changed man after prison, his 24-year-old son, Brian McKinney, said during a break in the court proceeding. Hardaway converted to Islam, wrote his loved ones thoughtful letters and received an associate's degree.

"He was a good person," McKinney said. "The police need to do more investigating."

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