

## **SACRIFICE FOR LOVE LEADS TO ICY DEATH - COUPLE DROWN TRYING TO SAVE DOG, EACH OTHER**

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**DeAndre Bailey** hated the cold, often turning the thermometer in his mother's east side home as high as 80 degrees.

In the sweltering spring.

But then again, he loved his girlfriend and his pit bull.

So much so that he'd do anything to protect them.

Even if that meant risking his own life.

**Bailey**, 25, and Kimberly Nelson, 36, both of Warren, drowned in the frigid waters of the Detroit River in a failed attempt to save Caesar, the couple's 1 1/2-year-old pit bull, police said.

The drowning happened Saturday morning at Angel Park on Detroit's east side near Grosse Pointe Park. **Bailey** and Nelson were there with their dogs, said Detroit Police Officer Thaxon Hill. Nelson took the dogs to the park frequently, relatives said.

Caesar jumped in the water, and either **Bailey** or Nelson went in after the dog, Hill said. One person drowned trying to save the other, he said. Police don't know who jumped in first, and there are no witnesses.

On a routine patrol about 11 a.m., police found Nelson's Ford Explorer with the couple's other pit bull inside, Hill said. But its owners were nowhere in sight.

Hill said the officers then spotted a leash in the water.

A police dive team recovered the couple's bodies and Caesar about three hours later, he said.

The Wayne County Medical Examiner's Office conducted an autopsy on Sunday and found no signs of foul play. It's not known how long **Bailey**, Nelson and Caesar were underwater.

On Monday, both families struggled to come to grips with the deaths. Everything was going right for the couple, relatives said.

Though Nelson was 11 years older than **Bailey**, the two were inseparable, relatives said. They met in 1997 through a mutual friend who arranged for **Bailey** to pick up a stranded Nelson. Nelson didn't have a car. **Bailey** loved collecting and fixing up classic GM cars.

This summer, **Bailey** and Nelson moved into a new home in Warren and launched a home improvement business together.

Around the same time, **Bailey** bought Nelson an engagement ring and popped the big question. Nelson accepted.

"It was love at first sight," said Nelson's aunt, Reena Gennette, 48, of Eastpointe. "She loved him so much. She died for him. She always said she would spend the rest of her life with Dre. They were happy."

And both loved, spoiled and obsessed over their pit bulls -- Caesar and Patches, **Bailey's** sister Lasana Shaw said. Patches, the dog that police found in Nelson's SUV, is now with Nelson's relatives in Warren.

"They were allowed to sleep with them, sit with them," said Shaw, 35, of Detroit's east side.

Yet, Shaw added, visitors would walk into the couple's Warren home and "you'd never know they had pets." There were no dirty, paw-print trails and no pooch smells, she said.

"They took immaculate care of the dogs," Shaw said.

**Bailey** had big plans for Caesar, said Daniel Duren, **Bailey's** 29-year-old cousin. He wanted to enter Caesar in dog shows.

Shaw doesn't understand how her protective little brother could love a dog more than his own life. Though she doesn't blame Caesar, she said **Bailey** would be alive, cracking jokes, sitting next to the heater in his mother's home and being the life of all in the room.

"I just can't believe they got in that cold water. I know they weren't thinking. They couldn't have been. This is a dog. But that was their baby," Shaw said.

"I shouldn't be angry with them, but I'm angry with them for trying to save a dog. But the Lord works in mysterious ways. You can't fuss with the Lord."

Visitation for **Bailey** will be at 10:30 a.m. Saturday at Swanson Funeral Home, 806 E. Grand Blvd., Detroit. Services will follow at 11 a.m. Burial will be in Trinity Cemetery in Detroit. Visitation for Nelson is at noon today at Schultz Funeral Home, 21705 Gratiot, Eastpointe. A rosary will follow at 7 p.m. at the funeral home. Her remains will be placed in Resurrection Cemetery, Clinton Township.

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Caption: Photos courtesy of the Nelson family; Photo SUSAN TUSA/Detroit Free Press; Map Detroit Free Press

**DeAndre Bailey**, left, and Kimberly Nelson drowned Saturday while trying to save their dog Caesar in Angel Park on Detroit's east side.

Shadow of St. Clair Shores walks along the Detroit River at Angel Park on Detroit's east side, where a couple drowned Saturday morning trying to save their pit bull from the frigid water. When asked whether he'd do the same, Shadow's owner, Roy Henderson, said: "I might. . . . Shadow's part of the family."

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