

Family's hard life ends in brutal horror - Detroit mom, 4 kids killed; man held

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DETROIT ? They liked football, cheerleading, barbecues, "all the usual kid stuff," relatives said.

But the four children living on the east side weren't leading lives out of a Disney movie. Their bedraggled home was in a crime-ridden neighborhood, and their mom fought with her boyfriend, who lived with them on and off.

On Thursday the children, whose ages ranged from 9-16, eventually paid the price for the self-admitted failures of the man, Roger Thompson, police said.

Thompson, 36, is being held by police in the beating deaths of the four children and the strangling death of their mother, **Lisa Shelton**, 33.

"What can you say?" asked Nathaniel Parker, uncle of three of the victims. "These were kids. Innocent kids."

The reason for the children's deaths: Thompson didn't want them to turn out like him, he told police.

Police said Thompson first strangled **Shelton**, his longtime girlfriend, in a rage in the wee hours of Thursday morning. He then bound and gagged the children in their bedroom, and beat them to death with a lead pipe.

He said after his capture that he was distraught over his inability to support the family, and was arguing with **Shelton** over that issue when he killed her.

A fifth child at the home, Christina Knott, 13, also had been bound and put into a closet. But she managed to escape when Thompson left the house seven hours later. It isn't yet known why he didn't kill her.

Christina ran to neighbors two doors away, and they called police, who discovered Thompson standing in a field across the street from the home.

"I had just dropped them off Monday," said William Parker Sr., father of three of the children. "The only thing the police told me was that my children were dead."

The deaths continued two trends that have plagued Detroit: a violent 2004 and violence toward children.

The number of deaths in the city this year is 102, compared with 361 for all of last year. By contrast, the far larger cities of Los Angeles and New York have, respectively, 128 and 102 this year.

As for murder victims under age 18, Detroit has the fifth highest number among the nation's 25 biggest cities, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The number from 1999 to 2001 is 80, which is three times the national average.

Mother killed first

The latest victims in Detroit, besides **Shelton**, are Inshana Thompson, 9; Wanee Parker, 12; Wrandell Parker, 14; and William Parker Jr., 16.

Inshana was the daughter of **Shelton** and Roger Thompson; the other three were the children of **Shelton** and William Parker Sr.

Tyann **Shelton** described her sister, **Lisa**, as highly intelligent and a budding poet.

"She was an angel," she said. "Why would somebody do this?"

Police and witnesses gave the following account of what happened:

At 3 a.m. Thursday, Roger Thompson and **Lisa Shelton** were in bed, arguing over their lack of money.

Thompson was broke and jobless, and the family was squatting in the home on Minnesota Avenue.

Shelton called Thompson a deadbeat, and he strangled her. He told police he didn't mean to kill her. Thompson said he then decided to kill the children.

He handed the eldest child, William, an electrical cord and instructed him to tie up the children. For some reason, he placed Christina in a closet separate from the others.

Once the other children were bound, Thompson tied up William and gagged everyone. Looking for a weapon, he found a galvanized pipe in the basement.

He then returned to the bedroom and beat each child to death.

Christina remained in the closet for seven hours and, after hearing Thompson go into another room, fled the home.

After she had alerted neighbors and the police were called, officers escorted Christina back to her home. That's when she spotted Thompson in a field across the street. She pointed him out to police, who apprehended him without incident.

Family, friends shocked

"What person would do this?" asked Nathaniel Parker, the uncle. "This man killed his own child.

He killed his own baby."

It was only by fluke that Christina Knott was at the home at the time of the murders, said Queen Knott, her adoptive mom.

Christina had run away from home and was staying with her sister, **Lisa Shelton**. She had been kicked out of Cerveney Middle School on March 19 for fighting with a teacher.

Queen Knott said **Shelton** had called her earlier to say that Christina was OK.

Knott said she was home this morning watching television when she heard about the killings. When she heard the ages of the victims, her heart sank and she jumped in her car and drove over to the house.

"I was just hoping it wasn't true, but then I saw the police cars," she said.

Knott said Christina is a chronic runaway.

Nancy Marrughi, who lives one house down across the street, said she saw Thompson and **Shelton** and the children move in about six months ago.

She said the kids were very friendly. She saw them just a day earlier playing with the family dog, a gray and black pit bull, in the front yard.

During that time, police had never been called to the home for any kind of disturbance. Thompson had a relatively clean police record, with no arrests for felonies.

Nathaniel Parker, the uncle of three of the children, said the boy wanted to play football and that the girls enjoyed playing softball and cheerleading.

He said the family enjoyed going to the park to play basketball and enjoy barbecues.

Distraught sister

Outside the home, a gray bungalow whose windows were covered by transparent plastic, relatives of the victims kept arriving to hear the grim news.

Hearing that it was her sister inside, Tyann **Shelton** screamed and stomped the ground. Friends tried to hold her as she tried to break away.

The scene played itself over and over as more family members and friends arrived. Some stomped the ground in anger and others wailed with sadness. Some did both. One woman fainted.

"What happened?" cried an unidentified man. "What did he do that for?"

By the time police carried the bodies from the house, a crowd of 75 relatives and neighbors had gathered along the block. The police held up a white sheet to prevent the crowd from viewing the bodies.

Watching from the other side of the home, neighbor Michelle Duhart and her twin 7-year-old daughters, Briana and Brandy Duhart, could see the bodies, which were covered in white sheets.

"This is so pitiful," the mother said.

"They should have killed him," Briana said.

"Oh, no, no," chided the mom.

As the third body, and fourth, and fifth was carried from the home, the elder Duhart and another neighborhood woman, Teresa Glaspie, began to murmur and weep.

"Oh, Jesus," Glaspie said.

The twins, asked how they felt, both spoke at the same time:

"Sad."

Back on Minnesota Avenue, the neighborhood was dotted with vacant homes, vacant lots and trash. A sign on a nearby vacant home read: "This building is being watched."

By early Thursday evening, a makeshift memorial began to form in front of the home, just beside a torn fence.

Caption: Tyann **Shelton** , right, sister of **LisaShelton** , one of the five people killed Thursday, is comforted at the scene of the killings on Minnesota near Brush in Detroit. Friends and family are horrified by the news that a Detroit mother and her four children were beaten to death Thursday in an abandoned house they were living in on Minnesota Avenue. The mother's boyfriend is being held in the murders. Christina Knott **LisaShelton** William Parker Jr. Wrandell Parker Wanee Parker Inshana Thompson Thompson

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