

## **SUSPICIOUS FIRE KILLS WOMAN, 27 - DETROIT NEIGHBOR SAYS SHE WAS 'LOVELY PERSON,' MOTHER OF A 5-YEAR-OLD**

Detroit Free Press (MI) - Friday, February 1, 2002

Author: CECIL ANGEL FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

A 27-year-old woman died in her west side Detroit home Thursday afternoon in a fire that may have been set, arson investigators said.

**Laquesha Harris** was found dead near the front door of her upstairs apartment in a two-flat building in the 16800 block of Stoepel Avenue. Firefighters arriving at 1:10 p.m. discovered two fires in the dwelling.

Donald Hannon, a neighbor and friend of **Harris**, saw smoke billowing from a roof as he returned from running some errands and thought it was his home at first.

Hannon said he and another man tried to rescue **Harris**, prying open a security door and kicking in a second door, but a wall of thick black smoke drove them back.

The men rushed to the rear of the duplex and called out to **Harris**, but there was no answer.

"The back window was busted and you could see the fire," Hannon said.

About that time firefighters arrived.

"She didn't set that fire herself," Hannon said. "She didn't even smoke. I just want to see how it's going to unfold. It wasn't right."

Hannon described **Harris** as a "lovely person" who attended the Church of Today in Warren. She was a devoted mother to her 5-year-old son, Teddy, he said, and took him to school each day.

During the fire, the child was with his grandmother, he said.

"A son will never see his mother again. That's cold," Hannon said.

He said **Harris** used to work for him part-time in his audio taping business. They taped conventions and seminars around the country.

After the fire, Detroit homicide investigators canvassed the neighborhood talking to **Harris**' friends and relatives. Among those interviewed were Beverly **Harris** and her daughter Dwanna Jackson.

**Harris** said she was the dead woman's aunt but didn't want to say more. Jackson, formerly Dwanna **Harris**, is the mother of D'Wan Sims, whose widely reported disappearance from a Livonia mall in 1994 remains a mystery.

Across the street from **Laquesha Harris** ' home, Stanley Anderson looked at the burned house. He said he had known **Harris** for about three years and they had worked for the audio taping company.

"I know she was a nice and respectable young lady," Anderson said. "It was nice and quiet over there, no problems whatsoever."

Contact CECIL ANGEL at 313-223-4531 or [angel@freepress.com](mailto:angel@freepress.com).

Caption: Photo GABRIEL B. TAIT/Detroit Free Press

Detroit Police Officers Keith Buckman, left, Michael Crowder and Douglas McDonald help by pulling a fire house to a burning home Thursday. Homicide detectives are investigating the blaze.

Edition: METRO FINAL

Section: NWS

Page: 5B

Index Terms: LAQUESHA HARRIS; FIRE ; DEATH ; DETROIT ; HOMICIDE ; ARSON

Record Number: 0202010414

Copyright (c) 2002 Detroit Free Press