

2 CHARGED IN TOT'S FATAL BEATING AND POISONING

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Author: JOE SWICKARD Free Press Staff Writer

Four-year-old **Rosland Bryant** , Detroit's 236th homicide victim of 1983, was beaten and poisoned as punishment for soiling herself, according to court testimony.

The child's father and his girlfriend , who claimed they were only trying to discipline her, were ordered Wednesday to stand trial for her murder. An assistant Wayne County medical examiner had testified that **Rosland** , who died May 16, was beaten to death and poisoned by being forced to eat her own feces.

Dr. Opas Ratanaproeksa said the child's stomach contained enough fecal matter to have killed her within two or three days. She allegedly had been forced to eat it as punishment.

"E-coli (found in the large intestine and feces) is a very toxic bacteria, very dangerous," Ratanaproeksa said, adding this was the first case of its kind he had seen.

The 3-foot-5, 40-pound child's body was covered with more than 30 recent bruises, the doctor testified. The child's body also showed older scars and marks of a scalding, he said.

ASSISTANT Wayne County Prosecutor Robert Agacinski argued that Lorenzo Taylor and Shelley Sims should stand trial on a first-degree murder charge because the child was not only beaten but poisoned . Agacinski said the use of poison automatically raises the charge to first-degree murder.

"It was a cold, calculated killing," Agacinski said. "(And) they injected her with a lethal amount of feces . . . The acts were barbaric."

But District Judge Ricardo Lubinski rejected Agacinski's arguments, saying the prosecution failed to establish the necessary premeditation. He ordered the couple to stand trial on the lesser charge of second-degree murder.

Defense attorneys Lawrence John and Gerald Lawrence, who had argued their clients acted out of "ignorance" rather than malice, said the reduction of the first-degree murder charges was a victory.

"It was absolutely essential," Lawrence said. " . . . we have to look (as lawyers) beyond the horror of the act to the legal requirements, and once again the Prosecutor's Office overcharged."

Second-degree murder, upon conviction, carries a maximum penalty of life in prison. Conviction for first-degree murder, however, carries a mandatory sentence of life in prison without parole.

SIMS' 11-year-old daughter, Patricia, testifying Wednesday, said both her mother and Taylor resorted to "whuppings" and other drastic measures when **Rosland** began wetting and soiling herself. The problem began after **Rosland** , a brother and Taylor moved into the Sims' home about 10 months ago.

"She kept pooping in her pants and peeing," Patricia said. "My mother would whup **Rosland** with a brown leather belt on her behind . . . (and) make her stay down in the basement."

Rosland was once forced to take a scalding bath in the basement laundry tub , Patricia said.

SIMS, in a statement to police, admitted beating the child and forcing her to eat the feces, "but only a couple of times." Sims, who also said the scalding was an accident, claimed Taylor joined the beatings and forced feedings.

However, Taylor told police that it was Sims who took the lead in punishing the child.

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