

## **VIOLENCE NO STRANGER TO 5 SLAIN DETROITERS - VICTIMS: FAMILY ENDURED YEARS OF ABUSE, POVERTY IN COURT: SUSPECT'S BEHAVIOR HOLDS UP HEARING**

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STAFF WRITERS

**Lisa Shelton** and her family endured poverty, child abuse and senseless acts of violence for more than a decade.

Ten years ago, **Shelton** and three of her four children watched as her mother's former boyfriend severely burned **Shelton**'s father and 2-year-old brother, dousing them with gasoline and setting them on fire, according to court files.

The next day, investigators found the family living with a relative in a filthy home with moldy meat and cockroaches.

The children were placed in foster care, but a judge returned **Shelton**'s kids to her two weeks later.

That may have been just the beginning of the violence and trouble that has haunted the family's life. The end came on Thursday when **Shelton** and her children were found dead in their east-side Detroit home after what a witness described as almost 24 hours of torture and abuse.

On Friday, Roger Thompson, 36 and the father of one of the children, was arraigned on five counts of first-degree murder and one count first-degree child abuse.

Thompson appeared before Detroit 36th District Court Magistrate Steve Lockhart.

His arraignment almost didn't happen. Thompson appeared on a TV screen before the magistrate. Lockhart asked him to state his name three times. Thompson -- wearing a paper medical gown -- swayed from side to side, sighing and not answering the question.

The magistrate had to ask two more times before Thompson answered. He then tried asking five times whether Thompson understood the charges. The defendant never answered, prompting the magistrate to call off the process until today.

The victims' families were outraged and only steps away from their cars when they learned that Thompson requested to go forward. They composed themselves and ran back into the courtroom. During the second arraignment attempt, Thompson spoke clearly, and the magistrate gave him no bond.

Thompson's mother, Mary Thompson, said she rushed to Detroit from Georgia to support her son. After the proceeding, she could barely speak between sobs.

"You don't understand. He loved those kids. He loved **Lisa** ," Mary Thompson told reporters. "My son needs some help. There is something wrong with my son."

Police said Thompson admitted to strangling **Shelton** with an extension cord after the two argued over money early Wednesday.

He told police that he then grabbed a pipe and began beating WaNee Parker, 12. By then, according to court documents, the other children -- William Parker Jr., 16, Wrandell Parker, 14, and Aushanai Thompson, 9, his biological daughter -- woke up. He told officials he beat William and had the teen tie up his siblings.

The only survivor, **Shelton** 's 13-year-old sister, told the Free Press that Thompson forced her to undress and locked her in a closet. She remained there for more than a day before escaping and fleeing to a neighbor's house, where she was able to point Thompson out to police.

The Wayne County Medical Examiner's Office found Friday that all four children died in the home on Minnesota near Brush of blunt force trauma to the head; **Shelton** died of strangulation.

"These five horrible deaths illustrate in the strongest possible terms the problem we have with family violence in this country," Wayne County Prosecutor Kym Worthy said Friday. Prosecutors did not issue charges in connection with the surviving girl.

Family members said they had worried about **Shelton** 's safety, saying Thompson beat her. He was never convicted of any crime, but he owed about \$19,000 for support of Aushanai, court records show.

**Shelton** and William Parker Sr. filed for divorce in 1997.

In their divorce records, Parker said he made \$250.40 a week doing temporary work for the auto industry.

The court awarded the couple joint custody, and **Shelton** cared for the children.

Wayne County Friend of the Court records show that Parker owes more than \$45,000 in child support.

William Parker Jr. began appearing in the court system when he was 15. According to Wayne County Family Court records, William and an uncle, James Knott, were arrested by Detroit police last Dec. 3 for a carjacking on the city's west side, taking a woman's 2003 Dodge Durango.

The boys were charged with carjacking and possession of a gun during a felony and designated for a possible adult sentence.

At a preliminary examination Dec. 16, the victim failed to appear in court to testify and the case was dismissed.

William was released from juvenile detention shortly before Christmas.

But he and his uncle returned to stealing cars, according to court records.

William was again arrested by Detroit police on Jan. 18 while driving a stolen SUV. Police found a bag containing eight small packets of marijuana in his pocket.

William pleaded guilty to possession of marijuana and a stolen car but was allowed to go to his mother's home on Minnesota with an electronic tether while the judge considered what to do with him.

Clinical probation officer Alice Rady interviewed William and **Shelton** last month.

According to Rady's report written March 24, **Shelton** said she had been suffering from depression since she was 11 and had been hospitalized several times for it.

"William's attitude was pleasant" during the interview, Rady reported. "However, he argued with his mother throughout the entire interview."

She praised the family, however, for sticking with each other, saying "the family's strength is that they have a lot of love for each other and they stick together."

William was enrolled at Southeastern High School but never attended any classes there, the report said.

He was in the eighth grade at East Middle School in Farmington Hills in the 2002-03 school year, earning an A in basic math and physical education, but D-minuses and an F in other subjects.

The family moved often.

William had flunked sixth grade in an unidentified Detroit school twice.

A judge was to have decided what to do with William on April 22, but she closed the boy's case Friday after learning of his death.

Later Friday, Lockhart scheduled Thompson's next court date for April 13.

"That's my son," Mary Thompson said of Roger Thompson. "Pray for my child, pray for **Lisa**'s family. I loved all those kids."

The family has set up a fund for people to contribute to the funeral costs.

Checks made out to the **Lisa Shelton** Family Memorial Fund can be mailed to any Bank One.

The family has not finalized funeral plans.

## VIOLENT QUARRELS

- \* Stay away from the kitchen or anywhere near weapons.
- \* Go to a room with a door or window to escape.
- \* Call 911 right away.
- \* Identify neighbors you can tell about the violence and ask that they call police if they hear a disturbance coming from your home.
- \* If a police officer comes, tell what happened; get the officer's name and badge number.
- \* Get medical help if you are hurt.
- \* Take pictures of any bruises and injuries.

Source: Wayne County Family Violence Handbook

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Caption: Photo J. KYLE KEENER/Detroit Free Press

Roger Thompson is arraigned by video feed Friday in 36th District Court before Magistrate Steve Lockhart. He is charged with five counts of first-degree murder and one count of first-degree child abuse. He is being held without bond.

### **Lisa Shelton**

Wrandell Parker  
WaNee Parker  
William Parker Jr.  
Aushanai Thompson

A makeshift memorial of stuffed animals, notes and candles grows near the scene of deaths on Minnesota Street. Michelle Whites, 31, and a friend's daughter, Dezirre Dickson, 2, add to the memorial Friday

Murder suspect Roger Thompson's mother, Mary Thompson, front, and his aunt Ophelia Chambers outside 36th District Court in Detroit.

Memo: SIDEBAR ATTACHED; SEE ALSO RELATED STORIES ON PAGE 4A

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