

CHARGES MURDER, ARSON IN 2 DEATHS

Detroit Free Press (MI) - Thursday, July 27, 2006

Author: STAN DONALDSON, FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

A Detroit man who police say killed his daughter and girlfriend because he did not want to pay child support and wanted to keep their relationship hidden was charged Wednesday with murder and arson in their deaths.

Jimmie Reed Jr ., 30, was arraigned in 50th District Court in Pontiac on open murder and arson charges in the death of Markeda Byas, 31, and on felony murder and arson charges in the death of Arctavia **Reed** , who was 2 months old. If convicted, **Reed** could face life in prison.

Police said **Reed** set fire to Byas' apartment in the 1300 block of Bynan Lane in Pontiac early Friday to cover up Byas' death. Police said Byas died of a gunshot wound to the head before the fire was set, and Arctavia died of smoke inhalation.

Pontiac police Detective Darrin McAllister said Wednesday that at 8 a.m. July 20, **Reed** went to the Wind Song apartment complex while the baby and Byas were in bed asleep. He said **Reed** took out a pistol and shot Byas in the head.

He said **Reed** then drove to Waterford, where another girlfriend lives, and stayed for a few hours before going to work at Inalfa Roof Systems in Auburn Hills.

At some point after he left work, McAllister said **Reed** told detectives, he went to a Meijer store in Auburn Hills, where he bought a gasoline container and gas. Police said he returned to Byas' apartment about 3 a.m. Friday and set it on fire, first the bedroom and then the living room. Byas was already dead, police said, but the baby was alive.

"He told us the baby woke up screaming" when the fire started, McAllister said of **Reed** 's statement to police.

Reed surrendered Monday for questioning after detectives contacted his relatives to inform them he was a suspect.

As McAllister read details of the case to Judge Leo Bowman on Wednesday, members of Byas' and **Reed** 's families wept.

"It's in God's hands now and we have peace with it. But I wonder why he just couldn't walk away" from the relationship, said Jomo Byas, 33, Markeda Byas' brother.

He said he felt bad for **Reed** 's family because they did not know of the child or the relationship with Markeda Byas.

"Why would he do that to my sister, but more importantly, why would he do that to the child he just had?" Jomo Byas said.

Police said **Reed** did not want to pay child support to Byas and he wanted to keep their relationship secret from other girlfriends. **Reed** also has a 7-year-old child and has another girlfriend in Detroit who is expecting a child within a few days, police said.

Reed was denied bond and is set to appear in court again Aug. 8 for a preliminary exam.

Byas, who grew up in the Flint area, is survived by a 7-year-old son from another relationship. He is in the care of family members.

A joint funeral service for Markeda Byas and Arctavia is set for 11 a.m. Saturday at Bountiful Love Ministries Church of God in Christ in Flint.

Contact STAN DONALDSON at 248-351-3691 or sdonaldson@freepress.com.

ILLUSTRATION: Photo

CAPTION:

Police say the suspect shot Markeda Byas to death in Pontiac and that their daughter, Arctavia **Reed** , died in a fire he set later.

CAPTIONWRITER: **Jimmie Reed Jr .**

DISCLAIMER: THIS ELECTRONIC VERSION MAY DIFFER SLIGHTLY FROM THE PRINTED ARTICLE

Edition: METRO FINAL

Section: NWS; NEWS

Page: 1B

Index Terms: arson;homicide; Jimmie Reed Jr .;Markeda Byas

Record Number: dfp0000301541

Copyright (c) Detroit Free Press. All rights reserved. Reproduced with the permission of Gannett Co., Inc. by NewsBank, inc.