

UNITED IN SORROW - FATHER HELD IN CHILDREN'S DEATHS GIRL FIGHTS FOR LIFE

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Anthony Bailey called his estranged wife at work Tuesday night with an order: "Watch the news tonight."

An hour later, police say, **Bailey** took a 12-gauge shotgun to his four children and started shooting. By the time he was done, three children were dead and one was gasping for life.

Bailey, 37, then set a small fire and fled the northwest Detroit home, leaving the children behind, police said.

"My daddy did it," 9-year-old Antonia **Bailey** told police as she dipped in and out of consciousness at a hospital.

Her older sister, Sharnice, 11, was dead of three gunshot wounds to the neck and leg; her younger sister, Ayana, 3, was dead of a gunshot to the head, and brother **Lamar**, 1, was dead of a gunshot wound to the shoulder.

Detroit firefighters initially responded to an 8:30 p.m. fire call Tuesday at the home on the 19000 block of Ashton, where they found the children in the basement. They called police once they noticed the gunshot wounds to all four children. A shotgun was left leaning against the side of the home, police said.

Detroit police responded immediately with various task forces and more than 70 officers, fanning out across neighboring streets in search of the children's father. They got the break at 12:30 p.m. Wednesday, when they spotted a despondent man walking on the Greenfield overpass over I-96.

The man initially gave investigators a false name but eventually identified himself as **Anthony Bailey**, said Inspector Marilyn Hall-Beard of the Detroit Police homicide section.

Bailey is charged with three counts of first-degree felony murder, one count of assault with intent to murder and arson. He is expected to be arraigned today in Detroit's 36th District Court.

Police and firefighters found Antonia breathing and moving in the basement of the home. She was taken to Sinai-Grace Hospital and later to Children's Hospital in Detroit.

"Right now, what we should do as a community is pray for little Antonia," Hall-Beard said, explaining that the 9-year-old is in critical but stable condition.

Antonia's stepsister, Iesha Brassell, 21, said Antonia is "real strong right now. She's OK. She's going to make it."

Brassell said she was able to speak to Antonia Wednesday.

"She just asked, 'Why?' " Brassell said. "That's it. 'Why?' She was responding to me."

At Pitcher Elementary School, several blocks from the children's home, teachers preparing for the upcoming school year hugged, wept and searched for answers to Antonia's question.

"Why would a man who loves his children and was so interested in them do something like this?" said Judith Bryant, who taught Antonia last year in fourth grade, and Sharnice the previous year. "I just can't comprehend this."

Several teachers and principal Carol Garland called the girls model students who were involved in student council, earned high grades and possessed exemplary reading and writing skills. They said the girls' father was proactive in their education and had high aspirations for them.

He spoke of turning them into his own version of the tennis superstar sisters, Serena and Venus Williams.

"He stressed their knowledge of computers," Bryant said. "I don't even know if they had computers at home, but they sure knew how to run them."

If there were warning signs of problems at home, Bryant said, she didn't see them. But **Bailey's** stepfather, David Bradley, did.

He said his stepson, whom he'd raised since infancy, became depressed and withdrawn about four months ago when his wife of 12 years, Essie **Bailey**, 40, left. Bradley said his stepson would leave the children alone for hours on end.

Anthony Bailey bought a shotgun about a month ago following an argument with his wife, Bradley said. Pretty soon, he added, Bradley was afraid to visit the house.

After an argument last month, **Bailey** chased his wife out of the home and fired his shotgun into the air, according to Bradley.

Bradley said he sat his stepson down for a talk. **Bailey** didn't want to listen.

"He just stood like a statue, staring straight ahead," Bradley said. "I told him he needed to get help, and he said there was no way to help him."

Wednesday afternoon, Bradley walked toward the burned bungalow where his grandchildren died and where teddy bears adorned the front porch. He soon became overcome with grief and collapsed into the arms of friends near the front porch.

"It started getting bad, and it just went from bad to worse," said Bradley, who said he kept in contact with Essie **Bailey** after she left.

Bradley said his stepson constantly called Essie **Bailey** at Botsford Hospital, where she worked as a nurse's aide. The harassment got to a point where she took out a restraining order against him.

Police said the couple had restraining orders against each other.

Michigan Department of Corrections records indicate Essie **Bailey** is on probation in connection with a domestic violence charge. She pleaded guilty to aggravated domestic violence stemming from a May 30 incident, and was sentenced to one year of probation on July 16.

"There has been some indication that there has been some abuse in the family between the husband and the wife," Hall-Beard said, adding that **Anthony Bailey** has a few minor arrests. "As far as we know, he never served any time in state prison."

Margaret Wasuikanis, who lives next door to the **Bailey** family, said the couple seemed very much in love when they moved in two years ago. Recently, she noticed Essie **Bailey** wasn't around.

"I asked one of the girls how the mother was and she told me, 'She's not here anymore,' " Wasuikanis said.

In hindsight, Wasuikanis said, a Sunday conversation with **Anthony Bailey** was forewarning.

"I saw him outside and he said, 'I'm about to go crazy,' " she said. "I asked him if he was all right, and he said, 'I don't know.' "

Wasuikanis, who has lived in her home for 41 years, called the **Baileys** the "best neighbors we've ever had."

She said **Anthony Bailey** shoveled her walk and offered rides to the hospital when her husband was sick.

"He was so helpful and so mindful of the children," she said. "This is such a surprise, such a shock."

Two weeks ago, she noticed all four children in the yard where they often played, and offered to take their picture.

"They were so excited; they said, 'Oh, yeah,' " she said, showing off a snapshot of the older girls, holding their younger siblings.

"I gave them most of the pictures last week. It pleased them so much. They thought that was a big thing, me taking their pictures."

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Caption: Photo WILLIAM ARCHIE/Detroit Free Press

Detroiters Franklin Miles, left, Timothy Williams and Ashley Butler pray with family at the home where three children were killed Tuesday. Williams is related to the kids.

Lamar Bailey, 1, is held by Sharnice **Bailey**, 11; and Ayana **Bailey**, 3, is held by Anthonia **Bailey**, 9, in a recent photo. All but Antonia were killed.

Anthony Bailey

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