

## **2 KILLED FAMILY FOR JEWELRY, POLICE SAY - GRANDMA LET THEM COME IN LIVONIA HOME**

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The grandmother was home alone, police say, when the killers arrived.

Maria Vergati, visiting her son and three grandchildren in Livonia from Italy, let them in.

The two ex-cons had heard in early December about a safe full of jewels and gold in the house, authorities said Thursday, and had come to empty it. They were armed.

What happened after the rest of the unsuspecting family came home last Saturday was a shocking, cold-blooded attack, authorities said, as the killers executed the grandmother, her son and his three children.

On Thursday, **John Wolfenbarger**, 31, of Detroit and Dennis Lincoln, 27, of Flint were arraigned in 16th District Court in Livonia, each charged with five counts of first-degree murder.

"I have never seen a case where a criminal intentionally executed small children," Wayne County Prosecutor Mike Duggan said.

Besides the grandmother, the victims were Marco Pesce, 38, his son Carlo, 12, and daughters Sabrina and Melissa, ages 9 and 6.

Some family members were so distraught Thursday that even news of the arraignment offered little comfort.

"My mom is gone, my brother is gone, and three beautiful kids are gone," said Fabrizio Pesce, Marco Pesce's brother. "All the rest is meaningless."

At a news conference Thursday, Duggan described the events:

On Saturday afternoon, Vergati's grandchildren were in Ann Arbor visiting their mother at a drug rehabilitation center when Vergati let the suspects into the house. Pesce was at his jewelry store, Italia, in Livonia.

Around 5:30 p.m., he picked up his children in Ann Arbor, dropped them off at home and returned to his store.

The kids, Duggan said, "walked into a home where the armed killers were waiting."

The suspects tried to get the kids to open a 3,000-pound safe, but they apparently did not know the combination.

The men then forced Carlo to lure his father home by calling and telling him there was an emergency.

Pesce returned and apparently opened the safe, Duggan said. He said the family members were each executed from behind.

On Sunday, Livonia police found the bodies after checking on the family at the request of relatives who had not heard from them.

Investigators learned from witnesses that **Wolfenbarger** and Lincoln were at a home in Detroit shortly after the killings with bags of diamonds, watches and melted gold, Duggan said.

Duggan said it was unclear how the suspects knew Pesce kept jewelry at home.

**Wolfenbarger** was arrested in Livonia on Tuesday morning. Lincoln was arrested that evening in Mt. Morris Township near Flint.

Police reports at the time said a third person also had been arrested. That person is considered a material witness and not a suspect, police said Thursday. He and another material witness, both from the Detroit area, are being held because they might otherwise disappear, Duggan indicated.

After searching **Wolfenbarger**'s car, police found metal snips that can be used to remove jewels from settings, as well as a gas torch that can be used to melt gold, Duggan said.

Duggan said Pesce's ex-wife, Diane Jameel, was not a suspect and criticized speculation in the media connecting her to the crime.

**Wolfenbarger** and Lincoln were paroled from prison this year. Both men were in compliance with their parole offices, said Russ Marlan, a spokesman for the Michigan Department of Corrections.

The defendants, in addition to the premeditated murder counts, are charged with five counts each of felony murder and armed robbery and one count each of home invasion, as well as being felons in possession of a firearm.

The two were arraigned by closed-circuit TV in the Livonia city jail before District Judge Robert Brzezinski.

For much of the arraignment, **Wolfenbarger** kept his head down while Lincoln folded his arms across his chest. The judge entered not-guilty pleas for both.

Livonia Mayor Jack Kirksey praised the police department Thursday, saying the city is relieved by the arrests.

Police Chief Peter Kunst said officers worked long shifts through the holidays to crack the case.

When they were tired, they looked at the photos of the three killed children to keep them going.

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Caption: Photo

Marco Pesce, 38 Maria Vergati, 68 Carlo Pesce, 12 Sabrina Pesce, 9 Melissa Pesce, 6

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