

## Essex offers reward in 2 murders

Essex County Sheriff Thomas J. D'Alessio announced his "Crimestoppers" program is offering a \$1,000 reward for information on two murders under investigation by the Newark Police Department.

The first case involves the slaying of 23-year-old Karroletta Hemmitt of Clifton Avenue, whose body was found on April 28 on Lackawanna Avenue, a street between Orange Street and Route 280. She was shot in the head with a bullet from a large caliber weapon, and her body fell onto the NJ Transit railbed at approximately 8:15 a.m.

Newark Detective Charles Conte is investigating the case and feels commuters driving east on Route 280 or pedestrians on the street may have observed something. Information can be forwarded to him or to Investigator Henry Dillon of the Essex County Prosecutor's Office.

In the second case, police are seeking the identity of a young man slain at 18th Street and 11th Avenue on April 23. Area residents heard several shots and saw a man run to a brown, four-door Cadillac Seville.

The victim, who died of multiple gunshot wounds, was 17 to 21 years old, 5 feet, 9 inches tall, 160 pounds with a medium complexion. His right shoulder was tattooed with a heart crossed by an



### Waiting for a nibble

David Schusterman of Cranford, left, and Frank Gagliardi of Elizabeth wait patiently for a nibble while fishing in White Meadow Lake in Rockaway Township. You may catch fish today, but no rays, as rain is expected throughout the state.

Photo by Robert Eberle

arrow and the name "Tia." Newark Detective William Thomas is in charge of this investigation.

D'Alessio said anyone with information about either case can contact

the Crimestoppers program by dialing S-H-E-R-I-F-F. The caller will not be asked to identify himself, and all information will be kept confidential. If the information leads to solving the cases, the caller will be eligible for a cash re-

ward. The Crimestoppers program is a nonprofit corporation administered by a civilian board of directors. Funding for the program is obtained from the private sector.

## Self-defense claimed in Newark murder trial

By DIANE CURCIO

The defense attorney for a Newark teenager accused of murder told a Superior Court jury yesterday the slaying was done in self-defense as the boy tried to end a drugs-for-sex relationship with an older man.

Anthony Pope, a Newark attorney representing Juan Christian DeJesus, told the jury in his opening statement yesterday, "What you hear may shock you—it may absolutely set you back."

DeJesus, who was 15 when Benedict DeMarzo was stabbed to death, is charged with murder, receiving stolen property, and two counts each of burglary and weapons offenses.

Pope conceded his client was driving the 67-year-old victim's 1986 Cadillac when he was arrested outside his girlfriend's house in Elizabeth. But the defense contends the killing was a "matter of self-defense."

"It is possible that a young 15-year-old boy can be manipulated. It is possible that a 15-year-old boy can be given drugs in exchange for sex," Pope told the jury of nine women and five men, which includes two alternates.

The defense attorney argued DeMarzo fed the boy's addiction, and when the teenager tried to end their relationship, the older man pulled out a knife and cut him twice. Pope said DeJesus retaliated with his own weapon, fatally wounding DeMarzo.

The victim's body was not discovered until two days after the Feb. 24, 1988, murder, according to Essex County Assistant Prosecutor Edward G.

Washburne.

Washburne did not mention the relationship between the victim and defendant as described by Pope. The prosecutor said only that DeMarzo and DeJesus both lived in the Aspen River Park Housing Complex on Lexington Street in Newark. The victim was a tenant of the senior citizens building in the complex.

Washburne said DeMarzo's friends became concerned about him when he was not seen for several days. The friends found him stabbed and beaten on the bedroom floor.

He also said money was missing from the victim's wallet, and jewelry was taken from the apartment. Detectives found a backpack in the apartment containing a letter to DeJesus' brother, along with blood-stained clothes.

Six days after the slaying, DeJesus was arrested in Elizabeth when he was "cruising" in the victim's car, Washburne said.

Police noticed DeJesus was also wearing a gold watch, but when he was taken to police headquarters for questioning, the watch had disappeared, according to Washburne, who said police later found it stuck inside the seat of the patrol car used to transport DeJesus. Washburne said the watch belonged to the victim.

DeJesus gave police a statement, according to Washburne.

Testimony is expected to continue today as the trial resumes before Superior Court Judge Leonard Ronco.

## Fugitive is charged with Orange murder

By KEVIN DILWORTH

A fugitive has been arrested and charged with the murder of a live-in maid whose bloodied body was found in an Orange home April 17, authorities announced yesterday.

Orange Police Director Charles Cobbetti identified the suspect as Mickiavago (Mick) MacKoon, 20, the estranged son of the couple for whom the murder victim, Ann Wason, 47, was employed for four years.

MacKoon, who has had various addresses, including the Park Avenue home of some friends in Orange, "was tracked through the Northeast and the Southeast" before being picked up in Jacksonville, Fla., last Friday, Cobbetti said.

"We've been one step behind this suspect from day one," said the police director, who credited Capt. John Rappaport, head of the detective bureau, and Essex County Investigator Patrick DeFrancisci with breaking the case.

The suspect "was apprehended by members of the Jacksonville (police) strike force, acting upon a homicide warrant" issued by Orange police investigators and Essex County detectives, Cobbetti continued.

MacKoon was wanted as a federal

fugitive who fled to avoid prosecution stemming from a series of New Jersey armed robberies last year, he noted.

MacKoon's name was publicized in August when he was arrested on charges of driving a \$68,000 Mercedes-Benz stolen in a Livingston armed robbery and with using license plates stolen in another Livingston armed robbery.

MacKoon waived extradition after he was caught in Florida a week ago, Cobbetti said. Rappaport brought the suspect back to New Jersey on Monday.

MacKoon is being held in the Essex County jail in Newark without bail pending arraignment.

Although Wason worked at the Reynolds Terrace home of the murder suspect's parents, Mickford and Claudette MacKoon, the two were estranged from their son, according to authorities.

Wason's body was found in a first-floor bathroom 2½ weeks ago.

Besides the murder charge, Cobbetti said, MacKoon is accused of murder during the commission of a robbery, possession of a dangerous weapon, a baseball bat, and possession of a dangerous weapon with the intent to commit an unlawful act.

## Man pleads guilty in fatal Newark fire

By DIANE CURCIO

A 26-year-old Newark man admitted in Superior Court yesterday that he set a fire which ultimately engulfed six buildings in the city's Central Ward last December, killing one woman and leaving 90 people homeless.

Nathaniel Mickens pleaded guilty to aggravated manslaughter and aggravated arson before Judge Michael J. Degnan.

Essex County Assistant Prosecutor Mark Anderl said that under the terms of a plea agreement, Mickens faces 40 years in prison and probably will have to serve 20 years behind bars before he can become eligible for parole.

Mickens was arrested at the scene of the early morning blaze, which began at 685 S. 11th St. and quickly spread to five other three-story frame

buildings. Authorities had said Mickens was evicted from the building shortly before the Dec. 11 blaze.

He told Degnan yesterday that he had gone to the apartment house looking for his father-in-law. When he could not find him, Mickens asked another tenant to give the father-in-law a message. When the tenant refused, an argument ensued.

In retaliation, Mickens climbed through the window of his former first-floor apartment and set fire to a mattress with a disposable cigarette lighter.

Anderl said Mickens, who was intoxicated, had second thoughts and tried to extinguish the blaze but could not. Mickens left the scene to take home his daughter, who had been waiting in a car.

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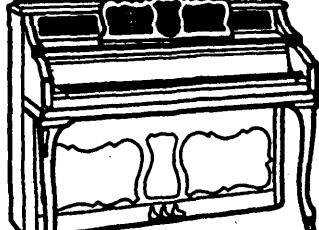
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