

The Sun

Father charged in 2 killings is denied bail a second time; Search of Choptank for gun is to resume tomorrow

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September 14, 1999 Page(s): 2B

Edition: FINAL

Section: LOCAL

Dateline: EASTON

Length: 612 words

Index Terms:

MARYLAND

Record Number: 9909140136

Charged with first-degree murder in the deaths of his two young children, Richard Wayne Spicknall II was again denied bail in a brief court appearance yesterday before a Talbot County district judge.

Spicknall, a Glen Burnie native whose father is a retired Baltimore police officer, is accused of killing Destiny Array, 3, and Richard Wayne III, 2, then telling police he had been carjacked by a hitch-hiker who threw him from a U.S. 50 bridge near Cambridge early Thursday morning.

An intensive search of the murky Choptank River will resume tomorrow, with investigators looking for the handgun they believe Spicknall used to shoot the children as they sat strapped in their car safety seats.

Spicknall, 27, appeared in a nearly empty courtroom yesterday for a perfunctory bail review hearing on a second first-degree murder charge filed by state police Friday after his daughter died at Maryland Shock Trauma Center. His first hearing was Friday.

Spicknall kept his head bowed throughout the 15-minute hearing. He spoke in a whisper to his attorney, Michael E. Davey.

Asked a series of questions about the court procedure by District Judge William H. Adkins III, Spicknall answered each time with a barely-audible, "Yes, sir."

A preliminary hearing is scheduled Oct. 6, when Adkins will decide whether there is sufficient cause to move the case to Circuit Court. Spicknall, who is being held in an isolation cell at Talbot County Detention Center, will undergo a psychiatric examination to determine whether he is competent to stand trial.

Prosecutor Scott Patterson said that while Spicknall, if convicted, could face the death penalty on each first-degree murder charge, no decision has been made on how the case will be prosecuted.

Tomorrow, more than two dozen divers, including officers from the state police, the Maryland Natural Resources Police and Baltimore, will search the Choptank River for a gun.

Howard County Sheriff Charles M. Cave acknowledged yesterday that a restraining order against Richard Wayne Spicknall was entered in December but later "inadvertently removed" from computer records Jan. 21. A restraining order should have prevented him from purchasing a 9 mm Smith and Wesson handgun last month.

Spicknall consented to the protective order -- issued by Howard County Circuit Court Judge Diane O. Leasure on Dec. 2, 1998 -- which barred him from contacting his wife, Lisa Fields Spicknall.

The Howard County sheriff also said yesterday that three other men -- all of whom have domestic violence restraining orders pending against them -- could have purchased weapons because their records were not processed correctly by his office.

The sheriff's office attributed the errors to a "misunderstanding of the procedures involving a protective order marked with the word 'consent,'" Cave said.

Handgun purchasers are required to fill out an application that is forwarded to the state police for a background check. Cave said his office has corrected the omissions and sent the names to state police, who are determining whether guns were bought.

In Pasadena, mourners streamed into the McCully-Polyniak Funeral Home for yesterday's open-casket viewing of Destiny and Richie. Their funeral will be held there today at 11 a.m., with burial at the Glen Haven Cemetery in Glen Burnie.

Staff writer Devon Spurgeon also contributed to this article.

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