

The Sun

**Jury selected for rape trial in Carroll Co.
Defendant is accused of assaulting girl, 15, by Columbia library
Sisters awaited ride home
Testimony in case is expected to take remainder of week**

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The trial of a man accused of a rape in Columbia that made many question the safety of the placid planned community got under way in Carroll County Circuit Court in Westminster yesterday.

Timothy Bryan Chase, 28, is charged with raping a 15-year-old girl while her 7-year-old sister was forced to watch -- after the two were abducted in front of Howard County's Central Library in March.

Yesterday, jurors were selected to hear the case against the former Howard County General Hospital janitor.

The jury of six men and six women is expected to hear testimony and arguments in the case until the end of the week.

Chase appeared in court yesterday wearing a white Kufi -- a traditional African cap -- glasses and a crisp white shirt with suspenders. His attorney, Assistant Public Defender W. Samuel Truette, consulted often with Chase as the jury was selected.

Before the jury selection, Howard Circuit Judge Diane O. Leasure granted a prosecution motion and ordered that Chase remove the cap and glasses when the teen-ager is asked to identify him in court. He also was ordered not to trim his goatee.

Calling Chase's appearance "altered," prosecutors asked that he remove the items so he would appear as he did when he was arrested.

At the time, he was not wearing the cap or glasses, the prosecution's motion said.

The girls told police the assailant wore a dark knit cap and had "stubble-type whiskers."

The incident prompted a widespread reaction in Columbia, where many parents previously might not have worried if their children had to wait a few minutes outside the library.

The girls were waiting because their mother was delayed a few minutes by traffic.

It also prompted library officials to conduct an internal review of security measures.

Although they never made public the results of that review, they did say they are continuing their policy of calling police if children of middle school age or younger remain at one of the branches 15 minutes after closing.

That policy, established in the 1980s, apparently was in effect at the time of the alleged rape.

Trial moved to Carroll

The trial was to be held in Howard County on Nov. 12. But Leasure ruled that Chase could not get a fair trial there because of an article that appeared in the Howard County edition of The Sun.

Leasure granted a last-minute defense motion, ruling that the article was so detailed that finding an impartial jury would be difficult. The article included legal analysis of the case and evidence that would not be admitted at trial.

Local attorneys said it was the first case moved out of the county over prosecutors' objections in at least 15 years.

Despite prosecution requests, Leasure did not ask jurors whether they had read the November article, which did not appear in the Sun edition circulated in Carroll County.

Witnesses who might be called to testify include crime lab technicians from the FBI, the teen and her sister and some of Chase's relatives.

The owner of Toby's Dinner Theatre, Toby Orenstein, might also be called to testify.

Staff members at Orenstein's theater were the first to call police March 20 when they found the girls, naked and shaking, banging on the back door during a performance.

Waiting after library closed

The girls had been waiting for their mother to pick them up outside the library after it closed at 9 p.m.

A man approached and forced them into woods behind the library and made them undress, the girls told police.

Police said the man raped the teen-ager, then told the girls to run or he would shoot them. The girls ran to the theater.

Chase, who lives on Cedar Lane in Columbia, is charged with first-degree rape, a first-degree sex offense, robbery, theft, two counts of kidnapping, two counts of false imprisonment and three counts of assault.

Two of the charges carry maximum sentences of life in prison.

Chase was on parole for a drug conviction at the time of his arrest. He also has an armed robbery conviction.

From December 1984 to May 1994, he spent all but six months in jail, state officials have said.

Evidence against Chase includes jewelry belonging to one of the girls that was found in his pockets, as well as DNA evidence, according to court records.

A condom, the 7-year-old's shirt and the teen-ager's book bag were found near the scene.

DNA challenge possible

Neither Chase nor his attorney has put forward a defense in the case. But voir dire questions -- queries posed to potential jurors, submitted by the defense, suggest that Truette might challenge the DNA evidence.

Prosecutors used a relatively new technique of DNA testing, known as polymerase chain reaction, which amplifies selected segments of the DNA strands.

Although this test requires smaller samples, the results can be less informative than other forms of testing, according to experts.

DNA test results are used in court to show whether evidence such as blood and semen match the DNA profile of a defendant.

The tests generally give odds on the likelihood of finding another person with the same DNA profile.

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