

The Sun

**Four link accused rapist to jewelry
Witnesses say Chase offered to sell rings days after attack**

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An article in yesterday's Howard edition of The Sun mischaracterized a rape victim's identification of jewelry allegedly in the possession of her accused attacker. The victim testified in court that the jewelry was hers.

The Sun regrets the error.

Four of Timothy Chase's former co-workers testified yesterday that Chase tried to sell them jewelry just days after prosecutors say he raped and robbed a 15-year-old Columbia girl behind Howard County's central library.

Jewelry has been central to the case against Chase since he was arrested on March 25, five days after the rape.

At the time, police said they found two gold rings -- later identified by the rape victim as the ones she had been wearing -- in Chase's pocket.

All four prosecution witnesses worked with Chase, 28, at Howard County General Hospital, where he was employed as a janitor.

Brenda Manning, also a janitor at the hospital, testified in Carroll County Circuit Court yesterday that on the day Chase was arrested, he showed her two rings and asked her if she wanted to buy them.

"He said that they belonged to his wife," Manning testified.

Manning said Chase told her that the rings no longer fit his wife's fingers. He asked for about \$50 for the two, she testified.

Earlier this week, the Columbia teen-ager, an honors student, told jurors that the man who raped her stole two rings and an earring after assaulting her in the woods about 100 yards east of the library last March.

Police put a value of \$385 on the jewelry.

At the time of Chase's arrest, police said the suspect's wife gave them one earring that the victim identified as hers.

They returned to arrest Chase and found the two rings, according to court documents.

Chase's wife told The Sun in November that she has refused to testify for the prosecution in this case and recanted a statement she gave police incriminating her husband.

In the victim's testimony on Tuesday,
the girl did not specifically describe the rings or identify them.

In court yesterday, Manning testified that she tried on the rings that Chase presented to her -- one fit her pinky and one did not fit her at all.

Of the four co-workers, Manning was the only one who testified that she saw the jewelry Chase was offering for sale.

The other three said that Chase merely made a verbal offer.

"It's not common for people to approach you and ask you if you want to buy some jewelry," Anthony S. Mello, an emergency room supervisor at the hospital, testified.

The co-workers' statements came during a long day of testimony that centered on the collection of evidence in the case and how it was handled.

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.

Prosecutors allege that Chase abducted the teen-ager and her sister, then 7, outside the county central library in Columbia while the girls waited for their mother to pick them up. The library had just closed, at 9 p.m. Chase told the girls he had a gun and forced them into a nearby woods where he ordered them both to undress, according to court testimony.

According to the older girl's testimony, after she was raped, the assailant took the jewelry and told the girls to run or he would shoot them.

The girls were found by actors at Toby's Dinner Theater.

In court yesterday, Chase -- wearing a crisp white shirt with a T-shirt underneath that had "JESUS" spelled out -- appeared to take copious notes and listened intently when he joined the attorneys during their frequent bench conferences with Howard Circuit Judge Diane O. Leasure.

Earlier, Dr. Willie W. Bivings Jr., a doctor in the county's emergency room, testified that when he examined the girl the night of the March 20 attack, he found semen on her cervix.

Charging documents say a recently used condom was found near the crime scene, but in opening statements, prosecutors did not specifically refer to the condom.

DNA evidence is expected to be presented today.

The teen-ager also had wounds on her legs and two lacerations in her vaginal area, Bivings testified.

He also testified that when she was brought into the emergency room -- wrapped in a blanket from Toby's -- she was crying and looked scared.

The girl testified earlier that thorns and branches ripped her skin as she and her sister ran through the woods -- barely clothed -- after the attack.

Crime lab technicians told jurors they collected soil samples from the crime scene. But an FBI technician later testified that dirt found on boots seized from Chase's home by police could not be linked to soil at the scene.

The case is expected to go to the jury next week.

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