

The Sun

**Rape trial jury ordered sequestered
Judge offers no explanation for sudden move
'We are not going home?'
Testimony resumes, centering on DNA patterns**

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The judge hearing the case against the west Columbia man accused of raping a 15-year-old girl ordered the Carroll County jury sequestered for the remainder of the trial yesterday.

Howard Circuit Judge Diane O. Leasure did not explain the reason for the sequestration, telling jurors that circumstances beyond the court's control mandated the move.

"I apologize, but this is an action that is necessary at this time," Leasure told the jurors, some of whom were visibly upset.

Though no one directly connected with the case would comment on the reason for the move, speculation centered on the possibility that the sequestration might be connected with publicity generated by the death of an inmate who had been housed with the defendant, Timothy Bryan Chase, in Carroll County Detention Center.

Leasure had moved the case to Carroll County because of pretrial publicity in Howard.

When testimony in the case resumed, jurors heard that DNA tests on a semen stain found on the rape victim's sweater revealed DNA patterns that occur in one in every 9,000 African-American males -- including Chase.

"I could not exclude Mr. Chase as being a possible source" of the semen, testified Julie A. Kidd, a forensic examiner in the DNA unit of the FBI.

Court ended yesterday before Chase's attorney, Assistant Public Defender W. Samuel Truette, could cross-examine Kidd.

As court was set to begin yesterday, Chase, with his attorney and prosecutors, had a bench conference with Leasure during which Chase appeared to be actively involved in the discussion.

Immediately afterward, Leasure went into chambers, returning to tell jurors they would be sequestered -- advising them they should have family members bring them enough clothes until Monday and that court would be in session Saturday.

Jurors appeared to be shocked at the news. One woman began to cry, as others voiced concerns about their families.

"Are you telling us that we are not going home?" one juror asked.

Another was denied permission to retrieve her pocketbook from her car, and instead was instructed to give her car keys to the bailiff.

Sequesterations generally are ordered to shield jurors from publicity.

This one was ordered as news was breaking about the death of an inmate, one of about 20 in the unit with Chase.

Carroll County Sheriff John H. Brown said a preliminary investigation showed no signs of foul play in the death of Rockville resident Donald K. Lockwood and gave no indication that Chase was involved.

Jail officials said Lockwood went into cardiac arrest and was taken to a local hospital Wednesday night.

Defense attorney Truette refused to comment when asked if he feared the jury might link Chase and the death of the inmate -- despite the sheriff's preliminary investigation.

After the morning's drama, testimony did not get under way until 1 p.m.

Kidd, the DNA expert, told the jurors that tests done on the same sweater sample where the semen stain was found revealed a nonsemen stain that also included DNA patterns that could not exclude the victim. The nonsemen portion could come from blood, saliva or cells from a woman's vaginal area, Kidd testified.

Chase, 28, is accused of abducting the 15-year-old girl and her 7-year-old sister in front of the Howard County Central Library in Columbia and raping the older girl in woods nearby while her sister lay next to her on the ground.

Earlier in the day, a forensic chemist with the Maryland State Police crime lab testified she found semen on the victim's jacket and blue jeans as well as on samples found in the victim during a rape examination. None of those samples contained enough semen to test for DNA, according to testimony yesterday.

Kidd also said her test results showed that Chase was not the source of semen found in a condom near the scene of the rape.

Kidd said the process she used to test the stains is a newer technique, known as polymerase chain reaction. The test is generally used on samples which are very small or damaged by heat or ultraviolet light.

The test amplifies segments of the DNA strands and has become universally accepted in forensic science in recent years, Kidd said.

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