

Slay victim stabbed, beheaded

Carnegie man, 22, charged with killing housemate

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By Jonathan D. Silver and Michael A. Fuoco Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

A nondescript two-story home in Carnegie became a house of horrors Wednesday when a man stabbed his housemate to death and then beheaded, eviscerated and dismembered him with a hacksaw in the basement, police said.

Allegheny County homicide detectives yesterday charged James M. Baldwin, 22, with homicide and abuse of a corpse in the death of Brendon Martin, 19.

Police said the crime took place at Mr. Baldwin's home at 604 Bouquet St., which he shared with his girlfriend, Jennifer Paterson, 21, her 3-year-old daughter and Mr. Martin.

Ms. Paterson, who was not charged with a crime, and her daughter were unharmed. It is not clear whether either was home at the time of the homicide.

After the slaying, Mr. Martin's remains were packaged into four garbage bags and buried in a shallow grave about 21/2 feet deep in Collier, roughly three miles away. Police have impounded a vehicle belonging to Mr. Baldwin's brother that was used by Mr. Baldwin to transport the bags, authorities said.

The remains were discovered Thursday morning about 60 yards off the 600 block of Ridge Road near Settler's Cabin Park. A fifth garbage bag at the scene contained clothing, garbage, rags that might have been used to clean blood from the basement and empty bottles of cleaning solution, County police Superintendent Charles Moffatt said. Police recovered a hacksaw, but Superintendent Moffatt said he did not know where.

Mr. Baldwin was arrested at county police headquarters in Point Breeze at 12:55 a.m. yesterday. Authorities were at a loss to explain the motive.

"I have no idea why he would do that," Superintendent Moffatt said. "Whatever he did, he sure didn't cover his tracks well."

Nor could the suspect's father, James A. Baldwin, provide a clue as to how his son -- the eldest of his seven children, a student at the University of Pittsburgh -- could be involved in a crime so gruesome.

The elder Mr. Baldwin, already distraught and confused over the homicide and his son's arrest, nearly collapsed when he learned yesterday afternoon that the victim's body had been cut apart.

"There's no way I can frame my thoughts," he said, tears welling in his eyes, his body shivering as he sat on the steps of his Carnegie home. "I'm emotionally numb, just numb."

"I have no words to express my grief" for the victim and his family, he said. He buried his face in his hands.

The only possible motive known so far was that the suspect had given the victim five days to move out. Mr. Baldwin was planning to move back in with his family and rent out the house, his father said. Police believed the ultimatum was issued early in the week.

The suspect's father said he talked to his son Wednesday night and his son said he was going to bed early because he had classes in the morning. They next spoke early yesterday morning, by telephone, with his son in the Allegheny County Jail.

"I told him I loved him," Mr. Baldwin said, fighting tears. "He said he loved me."

"I am so, so sad. I don't know what to say to [Mr. Martin's father]. That gentleman's son, God bless his soul, is now in a better place. I pray for his son and I pray for him," he said.

"My son's going to a horrible place. He was a bright guy, likeable. Now his world's over."

Neighbors said they had not noticed any problems at the Bouquet Street home, which was still festooned yesterday with Christmas lights around the porch and the fence.

In the tiny front yard, what appeared to be an inflatable snowman was deflated. Steelers emblems and children's decals of bears covered the front windows. Plush toys and a child's plastic tricycle were on the porch. Affixed to the mailbox was a cardboard sign listing Mr. Martin's and Mr. Baldwin's names.

Superintendent Moffatt said there was no indication that Mr. Baldwin had psychiatric problems. Court records do not reveal any cases against him. The only problems he seemed to have were financial. County assessment records show he was in arrears on his county property taxes for this year and last year.

On Wednesday night, a Collier public works employee spotted footprints leading from Ridge Road down a sparsely wooded hillside under development. He returned the next morning, found what appeared to be a grave, and contacted Collier police.

Superintendent Moffatt praised the unidentified employee's instincts and quick work by police in Collier and Carnegie and at the medical examiner's office and crime lab.

Mr. Martin was identified by tattoos on his arms. A backpack at the scene with blood on it contained paperwork that led investigators to the Bouquet Street address. Superintendent Moffatt would not say what that information was.

An autopsy revealed that Mr. Martin died from stab wounds of the trunk and neck.