

Baby Is Scalded, Put in Hot Oven In Exorcism Rite

Mother Is Said to Believe 'Devil' Possessed Him

By SHEILA RULE

A Harlem woman, fearing that her young son was "possessed by the devil," scalded water over his body and then put him into a heated oven early yesterday, apparently in a rite of exorcism, the police said.

The child, Leon Justin, was reported in "very critical" condition in the burn unit of New York Hospital-Cornell Medical Center, with second- and third-degree burns over 95 percent of his body, a hospital spokesman said. The spokesman said the child, believed to be 18 to 20 months old, was also malnourished.

The boy's mother, Patricia Abraham, 25, was charged with first-degree assault, a crime punishable by up to 15 years' imprisonment. Authorities said they would request that she undergo a psychiatric examination.

The incident was uncovered shortly after midnight when firemen were called to the building, at 1315 Amsterdam Avenue, a member of a tenant's security patrol. He said he had heard chattering and smelled smoke coming from the apartment. The police said the patrol member, finding the apartment door unlocked, went inside.

He witnessed Miss Abraham standing nude at the stove and pouring hot water over the naked baby who wore another son, Vance, about 6 years old, who was also naked, and Miss Abraham's mother, Lucia Abraham, 56, who was in a nightgown. The woman then placed the kicking boy in the oven, the patrol member said.

'An Exorcism Rite'

When the firefighters and the police arrived, they found the baby lying in a bed-room and his mother crouching on top of the oven. The boy's grandmother was questioned and released, pending further investigation.

"It was an exorcism rite," a police spokesman said. "She said she was trying to get rid of the devil. God had told her the baby was possessed."

Authorities said that Miss Abraham had told neighbors, "If you want to see the devil burn, come on in."

The baby's father, Leroy Justin, lives in the Bronx and was not present at the time of the incident. The police said they had arrested Miss Abraham in the past on charges of robbery and assault.

Groups of people pointed and peered down the hall at the apartment yesterday afternoon as they waited for elevators in the high-rise building. One neighbor, who had smelled smoke moments before midnight, described the family's past behavior as "like any normal people."

"I don't know what brought that on," said the woman, who refused to give her name. "They seemed normal, looked normal, dressed normal. I never thought they would do anything like that."

A spokesman for the Manhattan District Attorney's office said there was no evidence that Miss Abraham was a member of a cult or had acted under anyone else's counsel.

The police spokesman described the woman as "calm and lucid" during questioning, and as showing no remorse for her action.

Officer Who Pursued Clues on 'Son of Sam' Facing Police Charges

By LEONARD BUDER

The Bronx detective whose activities helped spark speculation that David R. Berkowitz, the so-called "Son of Sam" murderer, might have had an accomplice when he killed some of his victims, will face departmental disciplinary charges because of his actions in that case.

The detective, Henry Cinotti of the 44th Detective Squad, has been placed on "modified assignment" pending a department hearing. Officers on modified assignment do not carry guns or shields and perform mainly clerical duties.

Deputy Chief Edwin T. Dreher, commander of Bronx detectives, said that the investigation into the possibility that Mr. Berkowitz had an accomplice had been concluded several weeks ago without uncovering any such evidence.

Detective Cinotti could not be reached for comment. Another detective in the squad said he was on vacation.

Mr. Berkowitz, who was arrested outside his Yonkers apartment on Aug. 10, 1977, had told the police that he acted alone when he killed six women and wounded seven other persons with a .44-caliber revolver over a one-year period. He is now in the State Correctional Facility at Attica.

Officials Have Been Skeptical

Although the specific charges against the detective have not yet gone through departmental channels and consequently are not a matter of public record at this time, department sources said that police authorities were displeased and embarrassed by the way Detective Cinotti handled the investigation. From the start, police officials have been skeptical that Mr. Berkowitz had an accomplice.

One sore point reportedly involved a trip by Detective Cinotti to Minot, N.D., to inquire into the possibility of a link between Mr. Berkowitz and the late John Carr.

John Carr, who was 31 years old when he died of gunshot wounds in Minot in February 1978, was the son of Sam Carr, a Yonkers neighbor of Mr. Berkowitz. Mr. Berkowitz, who did not personally know Sam Carr, had referred to the older Carr as his "master" who spoke to him through a dog and ordered him to kill.

Last October, after a number of published reports appeared, police officials acknowledged they were looking into the possibility of an accomplice.

At that time sources in the Queens District Attorney's office also indicated that that office was investigating such a possibility. But a spokesman for District Attorney John J. Santucci subsequently said that the inquiry had produced nothing to support the theory of an accomplice.



Patricia Abraham, left, being led into 26th Precinct station after arrest on charges resulting from the burning of her 20-month-old child. The child's father, Leroy Justin, above, who was not at the house at the time of incident, broke into tears at police station.

Koch to Star in 'Rate That Official' on TV Tonight

By MAURICE CARROLL

Mayor Koch is going to play rate-that-official in a television interview tonight at 9 o'clock and, on a scale of 10, he thinks that Governor Carey deserves a 9.

"Nobody should get a 10 — not even the Mayor-tollah," the Mayor said in his remarks, which were taped before the show.

At the request of Ken Auletta, moderator of the Channel 13 show, Mr. Koch rated three of his appointees, two of his fellow citywide officials and two of his frequent critics.

His Schools Chancellor, Frank J. Macchiarola, would get a 1. "He has the right goals," the Mayor said. "He hasn't accomplished them yet."

He refused to rate his Sanitation Commissioner, Norman Steisel, publicly. He said that Mr. Steisel would get a personal, confidential report, but that the department would get "below 5." Mr. Koch added: "I don't want Norman to think I'm criticizing him. It's just that I'm so upset about sanitation."

Joseph C. Hoffman, head of the Health and Hospitals Corporation, would get a 6. "It's not a personal matter," the Mayor said. "It is that Health and Hospitals Corporation is not performing as well as I would like."

Carol Bellamy, the City Council President, and Harrison J. Goldin, the City Comptroller, would both get an 8-plus.

How about Herman Badillo, who has become one of the Mayor's most persistent critics since leaving as Deputy Mayor?

"Herman Badillo is a very special person," Mr. Koch said. "The things that he does well, he gets a 10, and the things that he doesn't do so well, I'd give him a 5. What I'm saying there is that he's got a brilliant intellect. It doesn't always produce results."

How about Victor Gotbaum, head of District Council 37, the biggest of the municipal-employee unions?

"Well, in terms of Victor Gotbaum's representing his union, a 10," Mr. Koch said. "In terms of me — zip."

The City

Improvements Due On S.I. Ferry

New York City has begun a \$5.75 million program to modernize the Staten Island ferry system, Mayor Koch announced yesterday. Construction is expected to be under way by the summer at the Whitehall Street terminal in Manhattan and the Staten Island terminal.

The city will pay for only 5 percent of the project; the state will contribute 20 percent and the Federal Government 75 percent. The work will include construction of stairways and elevators for the elderly and handicapped at the Whitehall Street terminal and the installation of communications systems for better coordination of rail, bus and ferry schedules.

Suit Is Dismissed In Token Booth Case

State Supreme Court in Queens has dismissed a negligence lawsuit against the Transit Authority by the family of a token booth clerk killed during a fire attack on the booth by three teen-agers last year. Justice Alfred D. Lerner ruled that the negligence charge came under the Workers' Compensation Law and that the family of Venezuela Pendergast, 47 years old, had no legal case.

Mrs. Pendergast and Regina Reichter, 65, were working in the token booth at the Broad Channel station last Jan. 16 when the attack took place. Mrs. Reichter died of burns within hours and Mrs. Pendergast died Feb. 1.

Two of the three accused, William Prout, 18, and Peter Grassia, 16, pleaded guilty to a murder charge and face sentencing on Jan. 9. The third, Linda Krauss, 18, pleaded guilty of murder, cooperated with officials and got a prison term of up to four years.

Trial Postponed

The trial of Allen Lewis for attempted murder was postponed after the defendant's lawyer said he had new evidence to prove his client did not push Renee Katz in front of a subway train. The defense attorney, Jonathan

2 Men Found Slain In Bed in Harlem

The bodies of two men were found lying face up in a bed in a Harlem apartment late last night, the police said. The necks of both victims had been slashed with a knife.

After a neighbor called the police at 11:20 P.M., the men, one about 30 years old and the other 60, were found in bed with their pants rolled down to their knees in a cluttered second floor apartment at 2326 Seventh Avenue. Names of the victims were not disclosed.

When police arrived, they also found a 50-year-old woman, incoherent and apparently hysterical in the apartment. She was taken to Harlem Hospital and the police were not immediately able to question her. There were no indications that a robbery had occurred.

Private School Fined

The Washington Business Institute, a private vocational school in Manhattan, has been ordered to pay a \$50,000 fine for awarding diplomas to students who never completed required courses; granting duplicate credit for courses; and other violations of state education law.

Gordon Ambach, New York State Commissioner of Education, said he had decided to keep the school open because of "pervasive changes in management and ownership."

The school, which has long been the subject of criticism by students and educational officials, was recently sold to Deleahanty Educational Systems and Kennedy Concepts Inc.

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