

Students Charged

3 at Bayside HS busted in brutal sex assault of girl

By Graham Rayman, Karen Freifeld
and Arthur Staple

STAFF WRITERS

Three Bayside High School students were arrested yesterday for forcing a 16-year-old sophomore into a bathroom, beating and sexually assaulting her Tuesday, police said.

The students — Elkech Leon of Hollis, Parrish Jones of East Elmhurst and Jonathan Mendoza of Flushing, all 18-year-old sophomores — were charged with first-degree sodomy, kidnaping, assault and sex abuse. They were awaiting arraignment last night.

The 16-year-old was found beaten and bound with her own shoelaces about 4:30 p.m. Tuesday in the basement of the school. She had been punched in the face, strangled into unconsciousness with the belt of one of her attackers and then sodomized, authorities said.



Photo by Robert Mecca
Jonathan Mendoza

The crime can only be characterized as shocking and reprehensible," Queens District Attorney Richard Brown said in a statement. "The young woman will bear the physical — and the emotional — scars of the assault for the rest of her life."

The girl had stayed after school to work in the computer lab around 4 p.m. but changed her mind and decided to go home, law enforcement sources said. She saw a student she knew with some other boys and he said "they'll walk her out" to a school bus, the sources said. Then she found herself taken into the bathroom instead of outside, the sources said.

The brutal attack in a school with 2,700 students but just seven serious crimes in the 1997-98 school year, has left students, parents and officials in shock. The 111th Precinct, where the school is located, is one of the safest in the city, according to police figures.

"I wouldn't think something would happen in a place like this," said Diana Han, 14, a sophomore from Flushing waiting for her father to pick her up. "From now on, I'm going to take precautions."

The victim was released from the North Shore-Long Island Jewish Health System in New Hyde Park yesterday. Brown said she is receiving counseling.

Lawrence Whitfield, 17, a junior, described the girl as a "real close friend" who talked to him on Monday about making weekend plans. "They took advantage of her," Whitfield said. "She's not the type of girl who's sexually active. They forced it on her."

Whitfield expressed surprise that Mendoza was allegedly involved in the incident. "Are you serious? I play basketball with him a lot. I didn't know he was like that." Of Jones, he said, "If something is going on he'll be in the middle of it," he said.

The attack took place at a time when the school was still filled with students. Down the hall there was a swim meet. Upstairs, there was a basketball game. To reach the bathroom, the students would've had to walk by the dean's office.

"There's always security in the hall, there's always people around," said Pat Brana, 15, a junior from Bayside. "It just didn't make sense. It's usually pretty safe. It seems impossible that, like, all that could go on without anybody seeing it."

At about 4:30 p.m., a student heard groans coming from the bathroom. The student summoned a custodian to investigate and they found the girl lying on the floor.

Deputy Chief Patrick Timlin of Queens Detectives said her hands were bound behind her back and

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Newsday Photo / Alan Raia

Students arriving for classes at Bayside High School yesterday read newspaper accounts of an attack on a fellow student.

A Quiet High School Suddenly on Edge

By Jessica Kowal

STAFF WRITER

In a park across from Bayside High School after her last class of the day, Sarah Nunez leaned closer to her boyfriend, and he reached out to grab her hand.

Sarah, 17, and her friends didn't know the 16-year-old sophomore police say was assaulted in a basement locker room Tuesday afternoon, but they were among the high school's girls who were especially unnerved by the news.

"When I first heard it, I didn't believe it," Sarah said. "I was scared. It could have been me."

Typically, students don't worry too much about security at Bayside High School, considered among Queens' best. Teens from around the borough apply for Bayside High's specialized arts, music and math and science programs, and they rarely worry about security.

But yesterday, they sorted through the rumors about the attack and assessed their own safety. The

girls, updating the "buddy system," walked the hallways in groups. Several boys reacted angrily to the idea that one of their friends could be threatened in this way.

"Personally, if I knew the girl, I would kill the guys who did it," said Noah Seidman, 16, a junior, who lives in Bay Terrace.

Just two weeks ago, 150 of Bayside High School's oldest graduates toured the school, where they visited the swimming pool, locker rooms and science labs. The alumni group also thanked principal Harris Sarney and presented him with a plaque honoring his efforts to create a safer, academically strong school environment.

"I've complained about some things in the past, but safety has never been one of them," said Frank Skala, president of the Bayside High School Alumni Association and a graduate of the Class of '55. "From my point of view, the school until now has been very

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Bayside High School Facts and Figures

Address: 32-24 Corporal Kennedy St., Bayside

Principal: Harris M. Sarney

Programs: Has selective admission to four-year vocal and instrumental music, art, science and math research programs. Interdisciplinary 10th-grade writing core.

Teachers: 128 (1998)

Other Professionals: 21

Para Professionals: 2

Students: 2,409 (1997-98)

Special Ed.: 119 (1997-98)

Ethnicity / Gender of Students vs. City School Average

White: 25.4 percent vs. 15.4 percent

Black: 23.9 percent vs. 36.8 percent

Hispanic: 19.6 percent vs. 35.1 percent

Asian / other: 31.1 percent vs. 12.7 percent

Male: 51.4 percent vs. 50.4 percent

Female: 48.6 percent vs. 49.6 percent

Students Involved in Incidents vs. City Average

2.2 percent vs. 3.7 percent (1998)

Students in Special Ed. vs. City Average

4.7 percent vs. 6.7 percent (1998)

Source: Board of Education, 1997-98 Annual School Report

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Guilty in '95 Slaying

By Chau Lam

STAFF WRITER

Christopher Ashby, the third person charged in the 1995 slaying of Frank Chun, of Valley Stream, was convicted of murder and related charges by a Nassau County Court jury late Tuesday.

The jury rejected Ashby's defense that he wasn't the triggerman and found him guilty of second-degree murder in addition to robbery, assault and burglary. Judge Joseph C. Calabrese in Mineola set sentencing for Dec. 3. Ashby faces life in prison.

Soon after the July 24, 1995, murder, Ashby, also known as Christopher Bailey, fled to his native Jamaica. He later waived extradition and returned to the United States.

On the day her 23-year-old son was killed and her husband, Myung-Kuk Chun, was shot, Shin-Ja Kim and her dog were waiting for them to come home from work. Frank Chun, who had

just graduated from New York University, was helping his father run the family cosmetic stores, police said.

Ashby and an accomplice, Henry J. Paul, showed up at the house, dragged Kim inside at gunpoint and terrorized her for 15 minutes, asking where she kept money and when her husband and son were returning. As soon as Myung-Kuk Chun and Frank Chun came home, Ashby fired about five shots, hitting her son once between the eyes, killing him. Three of the bullets struck her husband, who survived, police said.

Ashby and Paul then fled with \$150 in a car driven by a former employee of Chun's, Avril Forman, who had been fired for stealing, said Assistant District Attorney Michael Walsh. Forman admitted she helped plan the robbery and drove the getaway car.

Paul, of Richmond Hill, Queens, is serving 33 1/3 years to life at an upstate prison. Forman, of Rosedale, Queens, who testified for the prosecution at Ashby's trial, is serving 15 years to life.

3 Charged in Sex Assault

RAPE from A3

there were marks on her neck from the belt.

"She knew at least one of the teens, but any implication that she agreed to go into the bathroom with them is incorrect," Timlin said.

She blacked out during the attack, but she was able to help identify at least one of her attackers, law enforcement sources said. Two of the students were picked up before dawn from their homes. Mendoza was picked up at the school.

Leon and Jones are accused of performing the bulk of the assault, while the third student, Mendoza, allegedly acted as a lookout. All three have given written and video-taped statements, Timlin said.

Relatives of the teens could not be reached for comment. None of the three has a prior criminal record.

The Police Department took over control of the School Safety Division in January. Lt. Stephen Biegel, a police spokesman, declined to disclose the

number of officers assigned to the school. Asst. Chief James Lawrence, commander of the police department's School Safety Division, was out of town and could not be reached for comment.

But Pam McDonnell of the Board of Education said there are typically six to eight officers there, and there were eight on duty on Tuesday.

Several boys at the school said the security officers typically harass students about cutting class, wearing hats in school or other minor infractions, but they said it was easy to go in and out of the building.

"When it comes to the big issues, they're useless," said Danny Lee, 16, and a junior. "They make a big deal out of the little things."

Greg Thomas, the executive director of the board's School Safety Division, defended the number of officers at the school, saying it was "appropriate." "It's an unusual incident for this school. It's a normal, quiet school. We will do an assessment," he said.

Staff writer Jessica Kowal contributed to this story.

A Quiet School Now on Edge

STUDENTS from A3

safe."

Built in 1936, Bayside High sent more than 1,000 students to fight in World War II, after many students completed "war courses" that trained them to run, climb ropes, lift weights and do other exercises that might help them in combat, according to Skala, the school's unofficial historian and father of two graduates.

Its only serious scandal occurred in 1992, when students were offered higher grades if they purchased tickets to a "Night of Music" event, or if they donated \$5 to the school's English magazine, Skala said.

But students said there have been isolated incidents of violence in past years, including the slashing of one student with a boxcutter, and a student who tried to jump out a window.

Queens Borough President Claire Shulman, a former vice president of the PTA, sent her daughter, now Ellen Shulman Baker, to Bayside High School, and Baker eventually became an astronaut who flew on the space shuttle Atlantis in 1995.

Another graduate was Bruce Paltrow, the father of actress Gwyneth Paltrow, Skala said. Paltrow produced the TV series "The White Shadow," and in the early 1980s sent the show's main character back home to Bayside High School, Skala said.

The school also boasts a former ambassador to the Soviet Union and a top aerospace executive as graduates. And two brothers who graduated from Bayside High became National Football League players: Ronnie Harmon, a running back for the Buffalo Bills and San Diego Chargers, and Derrick Harmon, a running back for the San Francisco 49ers. They are to be inducted tonight into the Public Schools Athletic League Hall of Fame.

Skala believes the incident Tuesday afternoon is not indicative of the school as a whole.

"The valedictorian in 1938 lives two houses away from me. Her generation, it worked fine. My generation, it worked fine, and my kids' generation," Skala said. "This is their worst moment, and I hope it never happens again."

Staff writer Arthur Staple contributed to this story.

The Highest Honor

Smith to be inducted into PSAL Hall of Fame

By Arthur Staple

STAFF WRITER

The memories from two decades ago are hazy now to Barbara Levine.

A former basketball coach at Forest Hills High School, Levine could not say whether Jackie Smith was a freshman or sophomore when the young, scrawny girl showed up for basketball tryouts. But Levine still remembers what she saw.

"She looked like she'd break in half if you so much as touched her," Levine said. "You couldn't see her if she turned sideways."

"She was also my starting forward from that day on."

Smith went on to win the 1982 Pegasus Award as the top girls basketball player in the PSAL. She played a key role in four straight winning seasons with St. John's and had a short professional tour of duty in France.

She's made the most out of her opportunities in basketball, not the least of which is her current position as women's basketball coach at York College. She will be honored again by the PSAL tonight in Brooklyn, becoming just the fourth female basketball player inducted into the PSAL Hall of Fame.

At 34, she's still thin as a rail, but she can still show the moves that won her respect from the boys on the blacktop courts near her South Jamaica home, the one she still lives in today with her mother.

"I play against my girls sometimes after practice," Smith said. "They get to see some moves up close."

Those who saw her play back in the early 1980s at Forest Hills remember those moves well.

"She used to mop the floor sometimes, diving all over the place," said Phyllis Curry, a Springfield Gardens grad who grew up with Smith and teamed with her on the Jamaica Chic, a summer-league squad. "We'd tease her a lot. But she was also a crowd-pleaser — we'd play outdoors and no one would be watching a bunch of girls playing. But Jackie would make a couple moves and suddenly there'd be a crowd. There weren't too many girls playing that way back then."

"We'd have a 100 people crammed into the girls' gym, which had no bleachers," said Levine, who retired as coach in 1984 but still teaches at Forest Hills.

Among the watchers during Smith's senior year were recruiters from Arizona State, St. John's and a host of other Division I schools. Smith took a visit to ASU but returned unhappy — she was too devoted to her family to think of leaving town at age 17.

"St. John's had a lot to offer," Smith said. "It was a fairly new program and a chance to build from the ground up. It's similar to what I'm doing now at York."

After four years and two Big East championships, Smith chose the only option available to the top American women's player in 1986: Europe. Her two-year stint with the Racing Club De France in Paris was a whirlwind.

"Socially, emotionally, it was all new," she said. "I was a 21-year-old young lady from South Jamaica living in Paris, speaking no French. It was lonely at times."

Smith returned and, after a failed attempt at joining the Harlem Globetrotters, began working for the Brooklyn Sports Foundation. In 1997, the same year the WNBA started, she found out about the York job.

"I started to accept the fact that I had simply missed the boat [on the WNBA]," Smith said. "Now, my goal is to be not one of the greatest players ever, but one of the greatest coaches."

"There's no doubt she would have made the WNBA if it had been around for us," Curry said. "If there was ever someone who slept, ate and drank basketball, it's Jackie."

Smith joins Nancy Lieberman-Cline (Far Rockaway), Gail Marquis (Andrew Jackson) and Debbie Miller (Evander) in the PSAL Hall of Fame's girls basketball wing. She's joined tonight by some of the biggest names in pro sports from the city — Bernard King and Satch Sanders among them.



Photo by Dennis Clark

York women's coach Jackie Smith will become the fourth female basketball player inducted into PSAL Hall of Fame.

FAME GAME

The 1999-2000 PSAL Hall of Fame inductees by sport:

Baseball

Shawon Dunston, Thomas Jefferson HS
John Franco, Lafayette HS
Manny Ramirez, George Washington HS
Bobby Thomson, Curtis HS

Basketball

Nate (Tiny) Archibald, DeWitt Clinton HS
Bernard King, Fort Hamilton HS
Tom (Satch) Sanders, Seward Park HS
Jackie Smith, Forest Hills HS

Football

Moe Finkelstein, Thomas Jefferson HS
Derrick Harmon, Bayside HS
Ronnie Harmon, Bayside HS
Allie Sherman, Boys HS

Softball

Aileen Aponte, Curtis HS
Darlene Crowe, Curtis HS

Gymnastics

Dominick Minicucci, Wagner HS

Track and Field

Larry Ellis, Jamaica HS
Nnenna Lynch, Hunter College HS
Shola Lynch, Hunter College HS

General

Jack Kriegsman, PSAL administrator
Jim MacKay, PSAL administrator
Edmund Michael, PSAL basketball commissioner

Smith is not bitter about the youthful fights for acceptance among the boys or that she can watch some of the younger women from New York run the floor in America's pro league.

"I inherited a team at York that was 3-21 before I came," Smith said. "Last year we were 15-10. I'm comfortable with the fact that now, my talents are not meant for me alone."

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