

RANDOM VICTIM—John Hartman, 15, died Sunday after being assaulted in downtown Fairbanks early Saturday morning.

Attack called 'random violence'

4 suspects charged with 1st-degree murder

By AL SLAVIN
and JOLIE LEWIS
Staff Writers

The 15-year-old boy beaten to death by four assailants early Saturday was kicked in the head at least 15 times and then sexually assaulted in what police say was an act of "random street violence."

Fairbanks Police Lt. Paul Keller used the phrase to depict the circumstances surrounding John Hartman's death, which occurred 1½ days after paramedics found him lying in a pool of blood at the corner of Ninth Avenue and Barnette Street.

Authorities upgraded the charges against the four suspects to first-degree murder on Monday. Each was being held in Fairbanks Correctional Center on \$1 million bail.

The four individuals charged with Hartman's murder are George Frese, 20; Kevin Pease, 18; Marvin Roberts, 19; and Eugene Vent, 17. Keller said the suspects confronted Hartman at Ninth and Barnette shortly before 3 a.m. as the teen-ager walked home from a friend's house.

Keller said police are searching for

a motive, such as robbery, but have not identified any link between the victim and his assailants.

The attack, Keller said, lasted just a few minutes but seriously injured Hartman and landed him in the Intensive Care Unit at Fairbanks Memorial Hospital. "We got a call from a passerby who saw the victim lying in the street," he said.

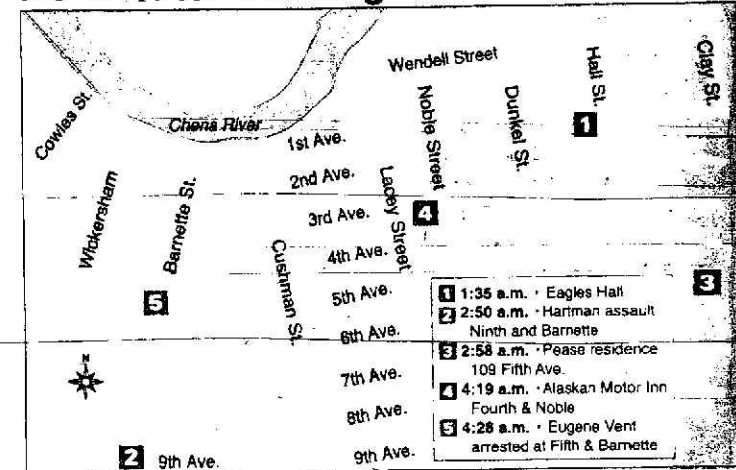
It capped a night of violent behavior that kept police scurrying from one call to the next. A key break in the Hartman attack came when an Alaskan Motor Inn clerk reported he had been assaulted by three males in a hotel room.

One of them was Vent, who pulled out a handgun, according to clerk Mike Baca.

"He came out with his gun," Baca said. "I kind of yelled a bunch of cuss words and he took off running."

Keller said police officers were returning from another call when they arrested Vent at Fifth Avenue and Barnette Street. Keller said he decided to question Vent about some other incidents that occurred that morning.

Downtown beating



News-Miner graphic

Vent told police he participated in the Hartman attack and that Pease, Roberts and Frese repeatedly kicked the victim in the head. Frese corroborated Vent's statement during questioning.

But Frese said Vent also repeatedly

kicked the victim in the head. Frese told police he sprained his ankle during the assault.

"After the physical assault, he was sexually assaulted," said Keller, who would not discuss the sexual assault. See FATAL ASSAULT, Page A-6

Troopers: Snaring incident bungled; no charges expected

By BRIAN O'DONOGHUE
Staff Writer

The release of a wolf last March from a snaring site littered with dead caribou prompted Alaska State Troopers to investigate possible charges against biologist Gordon Haber. Tok trapper Eugene Johnson, as well as state and federal game officials.

An appearance of wrongdoing cuts across the board, according to the state prosecutor assigned to the case, but no charges will be

"If that's not illegal, I don't know what is," said Haber, a maverick biologist long associated with wolf-protection groups. "And if they're not going to enforce it, I just feel the state needs to throw out the whole set of permissive trapping and snaring laws."

Johnson told troopers he was operating under the assumption that it was OK to leave the dead caribou where he found them, so long as he added no new snares. He didn't bother salvaging the

Combing the warp



Oct 14 pg 2/2

FATAL ASSAULT: Witnesses

Continued from Page A-1
He said no one tried to intervene but said police have witnesses who heard the assault.

Keller said the four suspects were "probably drinking" in the hours before the attack.

All four defendants, Keller said, attended a wedding reception at the Eagles Aerie Lodge on Saturday night. Lodge secretary David Pruhs would not say who rented the hall that night, but he said 600 people attended the reception, which lasted until 3 a.m.

"The people here were very nice, very cordial," Pruhs said. "There were no problems. We had no complaints."

But Keller said the first in a string of assaults occurred in the lodge parking lot. No charges were filed in connection with that reported assault.

Some of the people at the reception attended a separate party at the Alaskan Motor Inn, according to the hotel clerk.

Baca said 20 people were drinking in one of the rooms and that most were minors. The woman who rented Room 107 checked out at roughly 4 a.m. because she couldn't handle the crowd in her room, Baca said.

That's when Baca called police and told the revelers officers were on the way. He had called police twice before during the evening but officers were on other calls.



ROBERTS



VENT



FRESE



PEASE

Baca said all but three people fled the room. One was using the telephone and refused to hang up. The clerk said he hung up the phone and that a fight started. Baca was attacked by two men and sprayed them with pepper spray.

Then Vent pulled a gun but ran after Baca yelled at him. Once Baca called to report the room occupants had pulled a gun, police responded and arrested Vent.

Keller said police investigated the Hartman attack all day Saturday and arrested the suspects on Sunday without incident.

Roberts was arrested at 1:32 p.m. Frese was picked up at 4:15

p.m. The last suspect, Pease, was arrested shortly before 6 p.m. at his Fifth Avenue apartment. Police seized the shoes each man was wearing that night.

At 6:37 p.m., a physician declared Hartman dead. Keller said Hartman's mother decided to pursue an organ donor program for her son's remains.

Hartman, who was homeschooled, played in the Fairbanks Youth Football league. He helped his team, the Redskiffs, secure the division title last year, said his former coach, Ken Ferringer. Hartman also played in the "Arctic Bowl"—the Super Bowl of local youth football.

"I saw him growing up as a normal kid," said Ferringer, who coached Hartman as a linebacker for three years. "As a player and a kid that we knew, he was one of the best we could have. He would try anything for us."

Bryan Arvold, a family friend of four years, was at Hartman's bedside Saturday and Sunday. "I learned a very important lesson—why moms are the way moms are," he said. "She was sitting there watching her son die and there's nothing she can do about it."

Arvold described Hartman as a "real quiet" boy. He has no idea what provoked the attack.

"This is unexplainable—and unexcusable."

Staff writer Douglas Fischer contributed to this report.



John Tragle/News-Miner Intern

NEWS CONFERENCE—Fairbanks Police Lt. Paul Keller conducts a news conference at the Gillam Way police substation Monday afternoon. Keller described the fatal beating on John Hartman as an act of random street violence.

- To ASIS - works at
- Ayestas