

# Hunt

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your family when you got to watch your back all the time."

In testimony Tuesday, both Murphy and Gray, also known as Johnny McConnell, pointed fingers at Hunt when asked if the man they saw that morning was in the courtroom. Hunt sat expressionless, as he has throughout much of the seven-day trial, when he was identified.

According to Murphy, as he drove on his way to work on the morning of Aug. 10, he saw a black man, who he has since identified as Hunt, with his arms around the neck of a white woman, who he said was Sykes. The couple stood out in his mind, said Murphy, because Sykes was "pretty" and Hunt was black.

Gray testified that he saw Hunt straddle Sykes as she lay on the ground. Hunt, testified Gray, was beating Sykes in the face and neck, but he did not see a knife. Sykes was yelling loudly and struggling to get away from Hunt, said Gray.

After he returned home from work, Murphy said, he saw news accounts of the Sykes murder on television and called the police to tell what he saw that morning.

## No 'pigtails' on composite

Murphy helped a police artist draw a composite of the man he saw in the Crystal Towers area that morning. But the composite, said Murphy, did not accurately portray what he saw.

The man he saw had his hair in "pigtails," said Murphy, but, because the police department did not have the ability to draw composites of men with braids, the man in the composite drawing did not wear braids.

Murphy then picked Hunt out of a photo lineup and asked to see him in person. He identified Hunt when he saw him in person as well.

Contrary to his testimony in the preliminary hearing, Murphy testified Tuesday that he is sure that Hunt was the man he saw.

Under cross examination, Murphy admitted that he was a member of the Ku Klux Klan in 1974 and that he was committed "voluntarily" to a mental health unit for problems with alcoholism.

Court records show that Murphy was committed involuntarily and that he was diagnosed as having "chronic brain syndrome."

After Gray watched the man and woman struggling, he said he walked six-tenths of a mile to a pay phone, passing a phone across the street at the fire station, and called the police to report what he saw. Gray used the name Sammy Mitchell when he reported the crime.

Gray testified under cross examination that he does not know Mitchell, who is Hunt's best friend. He said he picked that name at random.

"I just don't like to be involved in things," said Gray. "I used the first name that came to mind. I could have easily said anybody's name."

Much of what Gray has previously told the police in a statement on Aug. 22, 1984, was untrue, Gray testified Tuesday. Although Gray said he realized his previous statements had been taped, he denied many of them when defense attorney S. Mark Rabil questioned him.

When asked by Rabil why he didn't try to help Sykes, Gray said, "I'm helping her by being on this witness stand."

## 'I didn't do it for money'

Gray denied telling friends that he had been promised \$9,000 in Crimestoppers reward money for the information he provided on the case. But he said he has been given approximately \$200 by the police department to help pay his rent.

Gray, charged with common-law robbery and under a \$50,000 bond, has been in jail for the past

three months. Neither the police nor the district attorney have promised him anything in return for his testimony, he said.

But when asked if he would accept a reward, Gray said, "It's not that important to me, but if it's offered, I will be glad to take it."

Despite Murphy and Gray's testimony, a state medical examiner and a State Bureau of Investigation pathologist testified that no physical evidence links Hunt to Sykes' murder.

According to Brenda Dew, an SBI forensic pathologist, blood, saliva and semen samples taken from Hunt do not match those taken from Sykes' body. Hunt is a blood type A secretor and Sykes is a blood type O secretor.

That information, said Dew, does not "incriminate or eliminate anybody." Although sperm could be detected in the fluid taken from Sykes' body, the buildup of bacteria associated with body deterioration can destroy the material needed to determine blood type, Dew said. Sperm, she said, usually live longer.

Dr. Michael J. Shkrum, an assistant chief medical examiner from Chapel Hill and the person who performed the autopsy on Sykes, testified that he did not remove from Sykes' body any foreign hairs that might belong to a black person.

Shkrum also testified that Sykes was killed by a stab wound to the heart.

## Emotional Testimony

Other witnesses who have testified include Sykes' mother, Evelyn Jefferson, who cried throughout much of her short testimony; Fred Flagler, who was managing editor of *The Sentinel*, Sykes' employer when she was killed; Ethel Wiggins, the police dispatcher who sent a car to the wrong location after the call from Gray; Bryan Watts, the black man who found Sykes' body; and police Detective J.I. Daulton, the case's chief investigator.

## Other names pop up often

The two names that have been mentioned in the trial more often than Hunt's have been Sammy Mitchell and a man named Charles "Too Tall" Wall.

Wall has been identified as a street person who frequents the area around Crystal Towers.

Because Wall's physical description fits the initial descriptions eyewitnesses gave of Sykes' attacker, the defense attorneys have implied that he may have been involved in the attack.

## More than one involved

Most of the other witnesses in the case have testified to what Hunt's supporters often point out -- that the murder was committed by more than one person and that blood and sperm samples taken from Hunt do not match those found on Sykes' body.

"In my opinion, more than one person was involved," testified Lewis Stringer, the county medical examiner.

That conclusion, said Stringer, is based on several factors, the foremost being that Sykes was apparently carried from the spot where her clothes, shoes and purse lay to the spot where her body was found. That, said Stringer, could not have been done by one man Hunt's size. Sykes was approximately 5-foot-10, 145 pounds.

Stringer's testimony came as no surprise to District Attorney Donald K. Tisdale, who had said in his opening statements to the jury that he isn't sure Hunt committed the murder alone.

"I'm not convinced at all that one person committed the murder," said Tisdale Friday.

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