

Murder
7/16/78

Killing Suspect Denies Voodoo Motivated Her

JUL 18 1978

Mrs. Gail Trait (accused) Monday in the mutilation killing of her four children, claimed she killed them "to save their souls" but denied that voodoo or black magic had motivated her. Chief Leo J. Donovan of the Homicide Bureau said Monday.

Mrs. Trait, 26, was charged with the murders early Monday after being questioned by homicide investigators. Police received information that she believed she was under a "voodoo curse" prior to the slayings but Chief Donovan said she denied it.

He added that a preliminary check into Mrs. Trait's background showed no record of aberrant behavior.

Police said that late on Sunday night, Mrs. Trait stabbed to death her daughters Kyllia, 9; Inez, 4; Amina, 6; and her son Demario, 2, in the apartment of her mother at 122 Montana Ave.

Police said that the boy's right leg had been hacked off at the hip, his right hand had been cut off at the wrist and his eyes were gouged out.

Police recovered a 13-inch butcher knife and a 7-inch paring knife as the probable murder weapons.

Mrs. Trait was booked on four counts of 2nd degree murder and criminal possession of dangerous weapons (the knives) but she stood silent at arraignment in City Court Monday morning.

Held Without Bail

She failed to respond to her name and failed to answer questions Judge Alois C. Mazur asked her from the bench.

Judge Mazur ordered Mrs. Trait held without bail and did not enter a plea for her on the murder and weapon counts.

He ordered her taken to the Erie County

MURDER SUSPECT
Continued on Page 12

Murder Suspect Denies Voodoo Was Motivation

JUL 18 1978

★ From Page 1

Holding Center for a mental examination and adjourned the arraignment until 2 Wednesday afternoon.

James W. Minter, deputy director of the Buffalo Psychiatric Center said Mrs. Trait was not a patient at the center.

"To the best of our knowledge she hasn't been here. Not under that name (Gail Trait)," Minter said.

Police said Mrs. Trait moved into the Montana Avenue apartment of her mother, Dorothy Williams, from Victoria Avenue with the children on Saturday. Mrs. Trait was separated from her husband,

Yelling Reported

On Sunday night, neighbors said they heard yelling from the apartment where the killings took place but they thought Mrs. Trait was merely disciplining her children, and the neighbors didn't want to meddle.

Chief Donovan said there are indications that the knife attacks might have started while some of the children were on a living room couch, watching television.

"There was blood on the couch and the television was on when we arrived," the chief said.

The bodies of the boy and the oldest girl were found on the kitchen floor and the two other girls' bodies were found in the living room.

A blood-smeared anatomy book (aid on the kitchen table near the dismembered parts of the boy.

Shortly before midnight, Mrs. Trait stumbled down the stairs and fainted, her landlady, Mrs. Louise Petersen told police. Mrs. Petersen called 911 and a fire rescue squad and then police were dispatched to the house.

Mrs. Trait, covered with blood and suffering from cuts on the hands, was taken to the Erie County Medical Center for treatment.

Funeral arrangements for the four children were still incomplete late Monday. Mrs. Barbara Cox of the H. Alfred Lewis Funeral Home, 968 Jefferson Ave., said the family was considering holding services Friday but postpone a decision until more family members are notified.

8/1978