

Murder suspect held for trial

By CORINNE ABATT
FARMINGTON HILLS—The pre-trial hearing on the rape-murder of 11-year-old Kelly Curley was concluded Thursday in Farmington Hills 9th District Court.
 Presiding Judge Michael Hand ordered suspect George Onifer to stand trial for the slaying and be held in the Oakland County jail without bond.
 Through the three days of the hearing, prosecuting attorney Raymond Morrow built a tightly knit web of circumstantial evidence. On the final day of testimony, researchers of the Detroit Police crime lab presented their findings which linked Onifer with the slaying.
 The lab had checked the girl's cloth-

ing and material taken from Onifer's Ford stake truck. Other testimony placed Onifer near the scene of the crime.
 The Curley girl disappeared from her home neighborhood in northwest Detroit sometime after 5:30 p.m. Tuesday, March 18. Her body was recovered from a pond west of Halstead between Twelve and Thirteen Mile roads in Farmington Hills Thursday, March 20.

PROSECUTION WITNESS, Arnold Garrett, owner of a service station at Grand River and Halstead, placed Onifer near where the body was found early Wednesday morning, March 18. Garrett said he arrived at his station shortly after 6 a.m. on Wednesday. Several minutes later George Onifer walked into the station and told him his truck was stuck in the mud near

Halstead and Thirteen Mile roads. Garrett said he didn't walk back to the truck in the field, but handed Onifer the tow line and told him to attach it to the truck. Garrett took the license number of the vehicle — he always does this when towing across property boundaries.
 Onifer was tentatively identified in a police line-up by James Johnson of Detroit as the man he saw driving a truck on Lahser Tuesday afternoon, March 18.

Johnson said he became suspicious when the driver of the truck — which he never saw the child again after his first glimpse at the intersection. Johnson said. He couldn't tell whether it was a boy or girl, but suspected it was a girl because of the hair which was shoulder length or longer.
 Johnson said he noticed the driver of the truck kept only his left hand on the steering wheel and his right down as if he was holding something.
 On Saturday, March 22, Johnson tentatively identified Onifer as the driver of the truck he followed.

described as "weaving in and out of the lane, accelerating and decelerating" to Freedom and Drake roads in Farmington Hills. Johnson identified the vehicle as a "green, stake body truck" but said he couldn't get the license number because the plate was splattered with mud.

Johnson said he had some fear for himself describing the truck driver as "about 6'7", pretty good build, powerful." He told the court the driver was wearing "a plaid jacket, green work pants, and construction boots".
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Calendar of a crime

Tuesday, March 18
 8 a.m. Last time Mrs. Patricia Curley sees her 11-year-old daughter, Kelly, alive. Kelly serves her mother breakfast in bed before leaving for school.
 5-5:30 p.m. Kelly calls her mother at work to report she is home from school and ask if she can walk to the store for candy.
 5:40 p.m. James Johnson is returning home after going to the store for a paper. He stops at the corner of Lahser and Grove for traffic and catches a glimpse of a child trying to get out of a stake body truck. He pulls ahead and waits for the truck to pass him.
 5:56-6:30 p.m. Johnson follows the truck south on Lahser Road to Five Mile Road, west on Five to Farmington Road, north on Farmington Road to Freedom Road, west on Freedom to Drake.
 6:30 p.m. Johnson decides to go home and call 18th Precinct Detroit Police. Truck last seen continuing west on Freedom.
 7 p.m. Johnson reports his suspicions to Detroit police.

Wednesday, March 19
 6:30 a.m. Arnold Garrett of Grand-Halstead service station, talks to George Onifer and agrees to take him in the wrecker to where Onifer's stake body truck is stuck in the mud.
 7:31 a.m. Kelly Curley's calendar starts.
 Afternoon, Kelly's aunt discovers her niece wasn't in school that day.
 Mrs. Curley files a missing person report with the Detroit police.
Thursday, March 20
 2 p.m. Brian Buckler and two friends are hiking a path along Halstead Road between Twelve and Thirteen Mile roads when they see a body in a pond.
 2:30 p.m. Police are notified, arrive at the scene and recover the body of Kelly Curley.
Friday, March 21
 Morning, Mrs. Curley identifies Kelly's body at the Oakland County morgue.
 9:45 a.m. Oakland County medical examiner, Dr. John Barton performs an autopsy.
 Johnson calls Detroit police and makes a statement about the truck he followed Tuesday evening.
 Arnold Garrett contacts Farmington Hills police to make a statement about the truck he pulled from the mud near Halstead.
 George Onifer is picked up in Brooklyn and arrested by Farmington Hills police on a first degree murder charge.

Saturday, March 22
 Johnson tentatively identifies Onifer in a police line-up as the driver of the truck he followed.
 Onifer's blue truck is brought to Farmington Hills to be searched and dusted for prints by a Detroit Police Department investigation team.
Friday, March 23
 11:35 a.m. Pre-trial hearing on the murder of Kelly Curley begins.
Thursday, April 3
 Judge Michael Hand orders Onifer to stand trial for the murder. He is being held without bond in the Oakland County jail.

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