

Trial reflects strained city-suburb feelings

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Vera Massey Jones, Pitts referred sarcastically to Sweeney as a college graduate as well as to her suburban roots.

Sweeney, who now lives in Florida, accompanied Joanne Was and her daughters, Mellina and Toni, as well as friend Debbie Germanis, to

the fireworks show June 28, 1991. The five women filed a police report that six black women, including Rutherford, assaulted the group that night.

RUTHERFORD is the only one of the six defendants to stand trial in connection with the June 28 assault of three suburban women, including

Was. Rutherford was acquitted of armed robbery stemming from the incident.

The other women pleaded no contest to a variety of charges. Rutherford pleaded not guilty to the assault charge.

Pitts and Royal also questioned Sweeney, Germanis, and Mellina and Toni Was about a multimillion law-

suit against the city of Detroit, Mayor or Coleman Young, the Detroit City Council, Wayne County executive Edward McManama, Wayne County Sheriff Robert Ficano and Detroit Police Chief Stanley Knox stemming from the fireworks incident.

"Are you aware you are asking for a \$1 million in this lawsuit?" Royal asked Mellina Was. "No I am not," Was replied.

Royal and Pitts also asked about the group's attorney, Larry Bennett, who sat in court Tuesday, the first day of the trial, and left mid-day Wednesday, when the defense attorneys began to question witnesses on whether Bennett was instructing them in how to testify.

Judge Massey Jones admonished Bennett from entering the witness

room where the Was family and friends were sequestered during testimony. Bennett told Massey Jones he has a right to speak with his clients. She agreed, but not in her courtroom.

TENSION ROSE Wednesday when Pitts asked Sweeney if ... met with her attorney Bennett before testifying. "I'm not on trial here. She has an attorney," Sweeney said, pointing to Rutherford.

In later questioning, assistant prosecutor Lindsey asked Germanis, "does your civil lawsuit depend on the outcome of this case?" "No," she replied. Throughout testimony, none of the witnesses — Debra Sweeney, Toni Was, Mellina Was, Debra Germanis — could say they saw Rutherford punching, grabbing or striking that night. Witnesses identified Rutherford in police line-ups a day or two after the incident.

Royal and Pitts, however, questioned the witnesses on whether they realized that Rutherford took the fourth position in the line-up — the same position in the line-up of at least two other black women who have since pleaded no contest to charges in the Freedom Festival incident.

Despite consistent questioning from Pitts and Royal, the witnesses testified they never saw Was drinking beer outside of the Omni Hotel, and they never heard her make racial slurs at the black women involved in the incident or a black man who tried to help Was when she was beaten.

Judge slaps lid on reporter's notebooks

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guards noticed the photographer's camera bag. Massey Jones complained throughout the week that the media was "turning her (Rutherford) into a piece of meat."

Attorney John Royal — who with attorney Cornelius Pitts is defending Rutherford — made a motion Thursday requesting that "film media" be banned from the courtroom. He asked that the option remain to also exclude other media if necessary.

"Cassandra Rutherford's right to a

fair trial is in jeopardy here," Royal said. "We are concerned with the impact of these proceedings on the defendant." Wednesday afternoon, when Massey Jones had asked a Free Press photographer to demonstrate the noise level from his camera, attorney Pitts stood up and asked for some time for a weeping Rutherford.

"This young lady who previously in the past was portrayed as a villain in our society, is showing she's human. She's about to crack," Pitts said, referring to the media atten-

tion. "My client is now suffering and now I'm getting upset about it. She can't walk out of the room without people looking at her."

WHEN FREE Press attorney Michael Grushkin attempted to talk, Massey Jones pointed her finger at him and said, "No. You are not permitted to speak." Massey Jones also encouraged Royal and Pitts to file a motion to ban the media.

The Free Press petitioned the Michigan Court of Appeals to stop Massey Jones' interference in the

media. The Free Press earlier in the week successfully petitioned the appeals court to hear its request to have a photographer in the courtroom.

Royal told Massey Jones as he argued his motion to ban film media that he believed jurors were concerned that they were being "closely observed and monitored." He also criticized note-taking. "My client cannot get a fair trial under these circumstances."

Royal also told the court that with the media focus there was too much

attention on Rutherford rather than the legal issues brought forth in the trial.

But Free Press attorney Herschel Pink told Massey Jones that the Rutherford trial has not received a lot of publicity.

"Quite frankly, there's been underwhelming publicity. It has been front page news. It may have been last summer. It isn't overwhelming. It's been laid back. At that time, a speaker from Plymouth-Canton Community Schools will talk about that district's recent successful school bond issue campaign."

If it had not been defeated, Clarenceville's bond issue would have spent \$3 million to update each of the district's four school buildings with the technology needed for the workplace of the 21st Century.

The remaining \$16 would have been spent to renovate buildings, remove asbestos, improve heating and water systems, bring schools up to code and make buildings more energy efficient.

The committee might eventually come up with a scaled down list of things to be done with the bond money and a request smaller than 4 mills.

Donald Schickler, Sandy Canfield, Valerie Globish and Keith Koch. So far, committee members have toured all the school buildings. Their next meeting is Feb. 26. At that time, a speaker from Plymouth-Canton Community Schools will talk about that district's recent successful school bond issue campaign.

Individuals or businesses interested in obtaining additional information on the services and how to apply are asked to call 354-9167.

Clarenceville eyes 2nd bond sale attempt

By Marie Chesney staff writer

Clarenceville School District officials plan an in-depth review of last year's unsuccessful bond election before deciding whether to put another bond question before Clarenceville voters.

"We're in the beginning stages of reviewing what went on in last year's bond issue," said Superintendent David Kamish. "No decision has been made yet" on whether to seek another bond issue.

In last June's special election, one of the largest turnouts of Clarenceville voters in years defeated the district's plans to spend \$19 million to fix up its four schools.

By more than a three-to-one margin, voters spurned a \$19 million bond issue that would have led to a 4-mill tax increase that would have cost the average district homeowner

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— David Kamish school chief

an extra \$150 a year.

The district encompasses the northeast part of Livonia, southeast corner of Farmington Hills and northwest corner of Redford.

RIGHT NOW, the district relies on a one-half mill building and site levy to fix up its buildings. That levy, set

to expire in 1995, generates about \$105,000 a year. Kamish said that one-half mill is not nearly enough to take care of building repairs.

"It's just takes care of immediate things, such as repairing roofs to keep the buildings structurally sound. Money is set aside for small problems. It doesn't allow us to go

into technology."

While the need to upgrade buildings and invest in technology might be crucial, district officials are wary of bringing another issue before the voters until they tap into residents' views and build up a general consensus for another bond issue.

To do both, the district has put together an 18-member committee composed of school officials, employees and residents.

"We redesigned the steering committee to include a greater representation of both employees and community members," Kamish said.

DISTRICT COMMITTEE members are: Kamish, Ralph Skrocki, Grover Lewis, David Simowski, Carl Wagner, Ellen Davis, Jesse Baker, Linda Abbott, Dick Wood, Al Adams, Robert Wolf and Faye Belanger. Residents on the committee are Ernie Ahern, David Glenn Lemmon,

Job service helps those who are down but not yet out

By Alice Collins staff writer

Curtis Daniel, a laid-off electronics technician, puts on a three-piece suit every weekday, goes to the Southfield Employment and Training office and spends hours in an organized job search.

"I got to the point that I was really depressed at the end of the year. Things are looking much better now," he said.

Debra O'Brien, a wife and mother of three, was laid off in mid-

December when Mills Products, a Farmington Hills appliance parts factory she'd worked for 14 years, moved its operation to Tennessee.

She hasn't ruled out factory work. "But I'd like to find a job in the medical field now. The problem is I'm finding I need more schooling and I can't afford that right now."

Her family is getting by because her husband is working. But there's concern that he too may be laid off in the future.

Mike A., an electronics engineer with a BS degree, was included

in a massive layoff by Xycom in Saline about six months ago. His job search for a position as an electronics engineer or technician led him to SET for assistance.

"Basically, my work is computer board design and manufacture," he said. Mike, his wife and two young children have moved in with his parents during this crisis.

THE THREE JOB searchers are among the 16 dislocated workers currently being assisted by SET, which is a federally funded place-

ment service sponsored by the city of Southfield.

The agency, among other programs, offers a variety of free re-employment services for Oakland County residents who are laid off, about to be laid off or have been long-term unemployed. Among the services are instruction in basic skills like reading and mathematics; resume updates; job search skills; on-the-job training positions; and job referrals and placements.

"The unemployment situation is definitely a lot worse now than ever

before," Ellen Bagley, SET job developer coordinator, said last week.

Individuals or businesses interested in obtaining additional information on the services and how to apply are asked to call 354-9167.

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