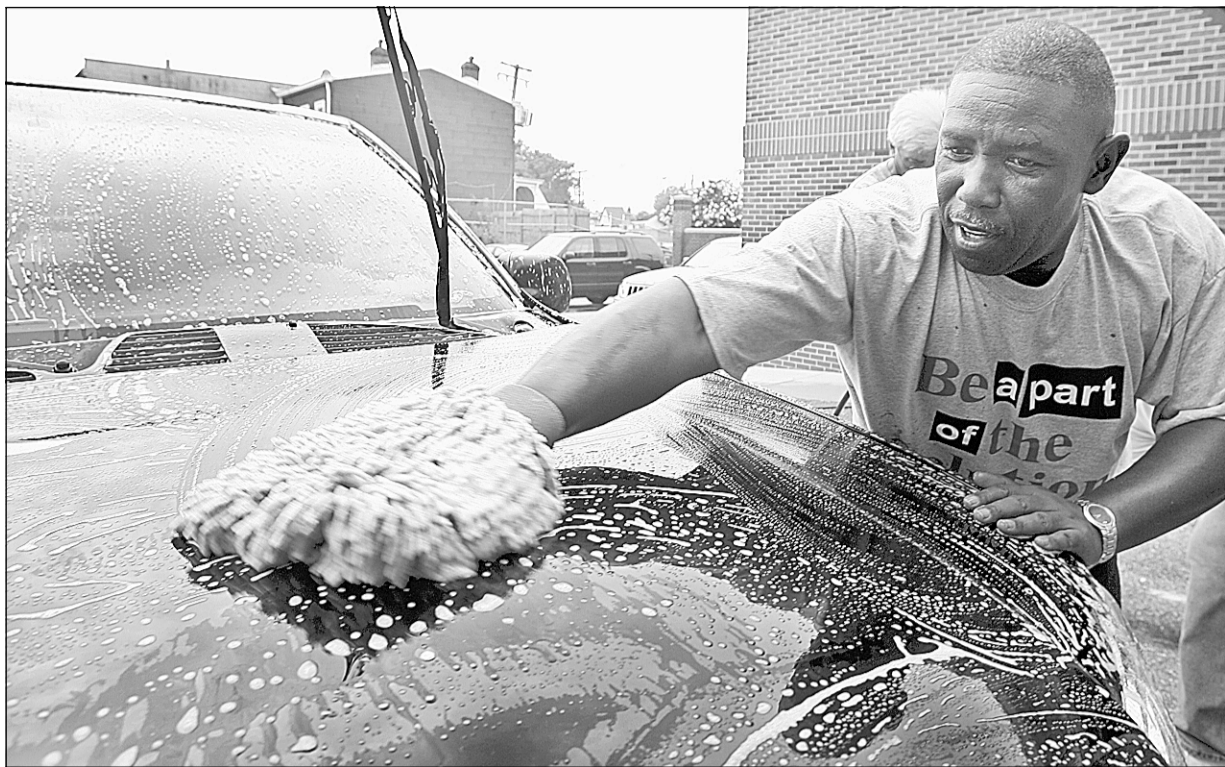


Clean chief

Richmond Police Chief Rodney Monroe and his command staff washed cars yesterday at the 1st Precinct parking lot at 25th and Q streets. Each quarter, Monroe and his staff wash cars for sector officers who have the greatest reductions in major crimes. This quarter, the honorees are in Sector 113, which had a 38 percent reduction.



CLEMENT BRITT/TIMES-DISPATCH

Man accused of stabbings faces new indictments

BY TOM CAMPBELL
TIMES-DISPATCH STAFF WRITER

A grand jury this week raised the stakes for Jason Andrew James. New indictments charge him with two capital murders for the March 25 stabbings of his cousin and her father.

James, 20, had been charged with two first-degree murders in the deaths of Angel Jackson, 25, and Herbert L. Sharpe Jr., 51, in a struggle authorities said started when Sharpe interrupted an attempted sexual assault by James on the woman.

James now also is charged with statutory burglary, accusing him of entering the Sharpe home to commit a crime with a deadly weapon about 4:45 a.m. that morning. Police say he wielded a knife.

He also is charged with malicious wounding of Sharpe's wife, Blondene Sharpe, 49, and with aggravated malicious wounding of the Sharpes' son, Bryant Sharpe, 19, in the altercation.

And he faces a charge of abduction in the alleged assault on Angel Jackson.

According to the prosecution case, James used a key he had stolen earlier to get into the house that morning. Herbert Sharpe heard noises coming from Angel's bedroom and woke his wife. They found Angel's door locked; Sharpe forced it open.

James was in the room and Angel was screaming; her panties were pulled down to her knees, the prosecution says. The case states that Herbert Sharpe grabbed James, the struggle ranging through the house. Sharpe ran to a neighbor's house for help and collapsed on the porch. Angel Jackson collapsed on the landing outside her bedroom.

The prosecution says James fled before police arrived but turned himself in that evening.

His trial is scheduled for the week of Jan. 22.

• Contact staff writer Tom Campbell at tcampbell@timesdispatch.com or (804) 649-6416.

ID data

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keeping the confidential data secure. While not providing any details of the investigation, she implied police were looking into a breach of security by others.

Circuit Court Clerk Linda Bachelor Smith said her response when Hampton resident Albert Viera questioned her about the information available to him on the computer terminal was to suggest he contact Ostergren.

"I'm a citizen as well," she said, "and unfortunately my [Social Security number] is out there as well."

Viera said he had gone to the clerk's office to look up the owner of a property he rents. He had dealt only with a property manager and wanted to know who the owner was, he said.

After workers in the clerk's office directed him to the computer terminal, Viera said he was surprised to find he could look up his own Social Security number and those of just about anyone he could think of.

He and Ostergren said the computer program appeared to contain information about everyone who paid any sort of city tax, from property tax to dog-license fees. Although not all the records included Social Security numbers, he said, "you really had to look harder for the ones that didn't

than for the ones that did."

Viera said he was troubled because the information could be used for identity theft.

Social Security numbers that have been included in legal documents filed in the clerk's office are legal public records, although state lawmakers have been working to end their prevalence, said Forrest M. Landon, executive director of the Virginia Coalition for Open Government.

Officials yesterday would not say precisely what law bans dissemination of the treasurer's database. Ostergren pointed to a section of the law that makes it illegal to "disseminate, publish, or cause to be published any confidential tax document."

Commonwealth's Attorney Linda D. Curtis and the police chief, through a spokeswoman, confirmed the investigation was under way.

Cpl. Paula Hooks, the police spokeswoman, said that police had confiscated some of the computer's hardware for forensic investigation. Officials said Jordan confiscated the computer hardware on Wednesday.

"We have several folks in the agency that deal with computer crime," she said. "It's still in the early stages of investigation."

• Contact staff writer Andrew Petkofsky at apetkofsky@timesdispatch.com or (757) 229-1512.

Teen pleads guilty to murder in Richmond

A 17-year-old pleaded guilty yesterday to fatally shooting a man in Gilpin Court last summer.

Travis Thomas pleaded guilty to second-degree murder and will be sentenced Sept. 13 for the shooting death of Dammon D. Smith, 22, was shot to death June 26, 2005, in Gilpin Court.

Thomas, who was 16 at the time of the shooting, faces five to 40 years in prison.

Prosecutor Elizabeth Hobbs told Richmond Circuit Judge Walter W. "Pete" Stout III that Smith was hanging out with some friends in the 1200 block of St. James Street. Three men approached Smith, and all three fired shots at him — one with a 9 mm weapon, one with .32-caliber revolver, and another with a .38-caliber revolver.

Thomas later told detectives that he heard the gunshots, ran into his apartment to get a double-barreled, 20-gauge shotgun and ran to the shooting scene, Hobbs said.

One of the other men said to Thomas, "Finish him off," so Thomas told detectives he pulled the trigger, but the gun didn't fire. Again, he pulled the trigger, but nothing happened.

On the third try, after some adjustment, Thomas fired one round into Smith's back, creating a 2-inch hole, Hobbs said.

A firearms expert said the wound indicates Thomas was within 12 feet when he fired the shotgun, Hobbs told the court.

Thomas' shot was one of two that was fatal to Smith, she said.

No one else has been prosecuted for the slaying.

— Paige Akin Mudd

Bridge

— FROM PAGE B1

June 8-11, went more smoothly than expected as motorists apparently heeded officials' strong urging to find alternative routes while northbound traffic was shifted. After dealing with unexpectedly light traffic throughout that weekend, workers were able to finish moving the three northbound lanes by Sunday morning, 21 hours ahead of schedule.

Traffic this weekend is expected to be worse than in June because there is no major detour available southbound to force drivers to take another route.

Project officials say work on the bridge, which will raise its clearance over the river by about 28 feet, increase the travel lanes from six to eight to match the Capital Beltway and add lanes for merging and exiting and mass transit, is on schedule to be completed by 2008.

• Contact staff writer Shaun Bishop at sbishop@timesdispatch.com or (804) 649-6341.

Avoid it if possible

Southbound long-distance travelers are being urged to avoid the Woodrow Wilson Memorial Bridge this weekend.

- One alternative is for motorists to take U.S. 301 south near Baltimore, then continue across the Potomac River and to Interstate 95 south just north of Richmond.
- Local drivers can also use the Interstate 495 Capital Beltway west of Washington, crossing the Potomac at the American Legion Bridge, or Interstate 395 through the capital city.

For more information: www.wilsonbridge.com, or call (877) INFOWB (877-463-6992). Personnel will be on duty to answer questions tonight from 7 p.m. to 2 a.m., and tomorrow and Sunday from 6 a.m. to 2 a.m. Recorded information will be provided overnight, the bridge project said.

On the radio: 1620 AM near the Wilson Bridge

Thermal camera Langley drew up works on shuttle

Shows heat patterns; image change could spot invisible flaws

BY JILL SAKAI
TIMES-DISPATCH STAFF WRITER

For Michael Gazarik, Wednesday's spacewalk was a chance to see his work in action.

Gazarik watched from Johnson Space Center in Houston as astronauts Piers Sellers and Mike Fossum successfully operated a NASA Langley-designed thermal camera on its trial run during their third spacewalk of the shuttle mission. Their video images

showed the camera is capable of detecting invisible damage to shuttle materials.

"I'm surprised that you didn't hear the screams of joy when we looked at the data this morning," Gazarik said with a laugh when asked about reaction at mission control. He is lead engineer of the thermal camera team at NASA Langley Research Center in Hampton. "We were very relieved and very excited."

The thermal camera, just larger than an ordinary camcorder, images heat emitted from surfaces. Even invisible damage, such as tiny cracks or separation of layers of materials, shows up in pictures as changes in the heat-emission pattern.

During the more than seven-hour spacewalk, Sellers and Fossum recorded video of the leading edges of each of Discovery's wing. Because these regions encounter extremely high temperatures — up to 3,000 degrees — during re-entry, wing edge damage leaves the shuttle especially susceptible to danger such as the breakup of Columbia in 2003.

These images were taken to compare with similar images

taken on Earth rather than to evaluate Discovery's condition, but they showed no damage.

Sellers also took video images of intentionally damaged test samples sent up in Discovery's cargo bay as well as two material samples on which he and Fossum had tested crack repair techniques. One of the test samples had impact damage from foam, similar to that sustained by Columbia.

Although the impact was not externally visible, thermal images of the sample clearly revealed the damage.

Gazarik said the astronauts enjoyed using the camera and found it easy to operate.

"Oh yeah — it's focusing like a champ," Sellers said in footage of the spacewalk broadcast by NASA, as he hovered about 6 feet above the samples in Discovery's cargo bay. "I think it's going to work pretty good."

Before re-entering the shuttle, Fossum also briefly turned the camera on Sellers. "Now we'll see if you're working hard," he said, joking, according to Gazarik. Exertion increases the amount of heat people give off.

Sellers discovered one minor difficulty when bright sunlight made the camera's visual display hard to see. He used sunshades on the display to fix the problem.

After preliminary analysis of the thermal images, Gazarik said the camera is well on its way to becoming a standard damage detection tool.

"At this point I think we have a system that we've demonstrated can work and we're good to go," he said.

"You sweat the details and you plan the work, you overcome roadblocks... it's a real accomplishment to see your work in progress [being] used," Gazarik said.

The thermal camera will stay on the space station and is scheduled for use by astronauts Jeff Williams and Thomas Reiter on a spacewalk in early August.

• Contact staff writer Jill Sakai at jsakai@timesdispatch.com or (804) 649-6860.

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