

Man accused of killing wife

Found shot in car at state school

A 31-year-old Newark man was accused of fatally shooting his wife after he was found seated in a car next to her body yesterday afternoon on the grounds of Willowbrook State School.

The husband, Earl Branch, was arraigned in Brooklyn Night Court on a homicide charge and held without bail for a hearing June 5 in Criminal Court, Stapleton.

The victim, Essie Branch, 29, an attendant at the state institution for the past five years, was shot in the left side of the chest. She was pronounced dead at the scene by Dr. Paul Slater of St. Vincent's Medical Center.

A .22 caliber revolver was found in the rear seat of the car, police said. There were five live rounds and one expended shell in the gun's chamber, they reported.

A motive for the crime has not been determined and there were no witnesses to the shooting, police said.

The Branches, police said, were apparently living together, as both had identification lists with their address as 137 Dewey Street.

The body was found in the front seat of a 1968 Cadillac which is registered in Branch's name, police said. The car was parked in front of Building 22 where Mrs. Branch worked.

According to police, about 3 p.m. Branch walked into the building, which houses physically handicapped adults, and asked a supervisor, whose name police are withholding, if he could speak with his wife.

"It's about mother," he said. The supervisor told Branch his wife was on her lunch period and would be back shortly. The man said he would wait outside, thanked the supervisor and left the building, police said.

When Mrs. Branch returned, (Continued on Page 2)



Dr. Paul Slater of St. Vincent's Medical Center examines Mrs. Essie Branch, 29, for signs of life, shortly after she was shot. Police arrested her husband, Earl, 31, on a homicide charge.

She was told her husband was sitting next to her in the car. About 10 minutes later, the supervisor later told police, she looked out a window and saw the woman slumped in the front seat of the car with her head resting on the dashboard. Her husband was sitting next to her. The supervisor walked out to the car, she said, because she thought Mrs. Branch had fainted. After hearing bad news about her mother.

Police said that Branch, when asked where the gun was, surrendered it to a Willowbrook guard who ordered him to place it on the back set of the car. Branch reportedly offered no resistance to the special guards or to the city police. After he was taken to the New Dorp stationhouse, Branch broke

down and cried after learning that his wife was dead, but refused to discuss the incident, police said.

According to Detectives Vincent Smith and Stanley Esposito, who are in charge of the investigation, the woman was the mother of five children, ranging in age from 3 to 10. They are being cared for by Mrs. Branch's sister, Mrs. Eleanor Floyd of 509 Aron Ave., Newark.

The detectives said Mrs. Floyd was unable to shed any light on the case.

Mrs. Branch's body was taken to the City Morgue, Manhattan, where an autopsy will be performed today to recover the bullet. The bullet's markings will be then matched against marking taken from test shooting of the weapon found in the car.

In addition to homicide, Branch was charged with possession of a dangerous weapon.