

Suspect labeled 'Strange ... shrewd'

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The transient charged with kidnapping Jennifer Schweiger is just as mysterious as her disappearance.

Andre Rand was described by those who routinely saw him as a shrewd, enterprising loner who avoided talking about his past and despised animals.

"It's pretty hard to put a finger on where he was coming from," according to Matthew Matejko, a social worker at Brighton Heights Reformed Church, 320 St. Mark's Place.

Rand gave police that location as his home address, but Matejko said it had been several months since the homeless man last visited the church.

"He stopped in here rarely and would drive around on a little bicycle — stop by for a sandwich or two, and say hi."

Matejko said Rand was "very ambitious" and had a sign-making business at a Bay Street business location.

"As far as I know, he was still homeless," Matejko said.

The social worker said Rand felt uncomfortable talking about himself during an interview at the men's shelter.

"He was very friendly, cooperative, (but) not willing to disclose anything about his past. He was very independent. It took him a while to admit to us he was homeless."

An employee at a Westerleigh

bakery, who wished to remain anonymous, said she believed Rand owned a bicycle store on Watchogue Road in 1981.

"I think he lived in there," she said.

The woman said the store employees referred to Rand as "Dirty Harry," because of his motley appearance.

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"The last time he came into the store was November. He used to get stale rolls for a \$1. He would pull out a \$100 bill and (ask for) change of the bill as a joke," she said, shaking her head.

Wes Schulz, a security officer at the Pathmark supermarket at 1351 Forest Ave., Port Richmond, said Rand frequented the store late at night.

"He's got to be a loner. I've hardly ever seen him with anybody or talking to people ... I've worked in this store for more than 2½ years — midnights."

Schulz said following Jennifer's July 9 disappearance, Rand started coming to the store with two boys. Neighbors of the Schweiger family said they also saw Rand with the boys.

Westerleigh residents and police interviewed during the search said Rand was known to ride around on a bicycle on a daily basis, canvassing the area for returnable bottles.

"He sold that bike in this store to a late night cashier about a week after the incident happened," Schulz said.

"He's been around this area for a long time. He was arrogant and very nasty. There was always something strange about him. You ever look at somebody and he looks strange?"

Police said, at one time, Rand may have gone by another name, Bruchette. A Port Richmond woman last night said Rand introduced himself to her at a local bus stop two years ago as Daniel Fhy.

The woman said Rand told her at one point to get rid of her five cats and two dogs "because he despised animals."

Rosemarie Azzara described Rand as "nice to children in the neighborhood."

She said Rand was always around the neighborhood and would rush to help out at accident scenes and emergencies. Mrs. Azzara said Rand did not grub money and always seemed to have a little cash on hand.

"It's like he's two different people. He's completely different now from when I've seen him in the neighborhood," she said, referring to the way Rand acted in court yesterday.