

# Rand admits meeting Jennifer

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The Andre Rand kidnap-murder trial opened yesterday in the Supreme Court with the defense admitting for the first time that Rand and 12-year-old Jennifer Schweiger were together on the afternoon of July 9, 1987, the day she vanished from near her home in Westerleigh.

But Rand's lawyer insisted that the 44-year-old drifter was only attempting to do a good deed by returning the girl to the former Staten Island Developmental Center in Willowbrook after the two had met and he had assumed from her physical appearance that she was a resident and may have wandered away. The girl had Down's syndrome, commonly called Mongolism.

The lawyer, Jerome V. Giovinazzo, said the two became "separated" as they walked to the center's administration building, and his client never saw her again.

Rand was a former employee of the center where he maintained a crude campsite on the grounds. It was near the campsite that volunteer searchers — among hundreds

who carried out the largest search for a missing person in Staten Island's history, according to an assistant district attorney — found the girl's decomposed body in a shallow grave the following Aug. 12.

Rand is being tried on an indictment that charges kidnapping and murder. Each charge carries on conviction the identical maximum punishment — 25 years to life in prison.

Assistant District Attorney John Loughrey confirmed in his opening statement that there is no forensic evidence and that the prosecution's case of circumstantial evidence is anchored on the testimony of a group of seven witnesses who identified Rand as the man they saw walking hand-in-hand with Jennifer at about 2 or 3 p.m., beginning at a point near her home and proceeding along a route that took them onto the grounds of the developmental center.

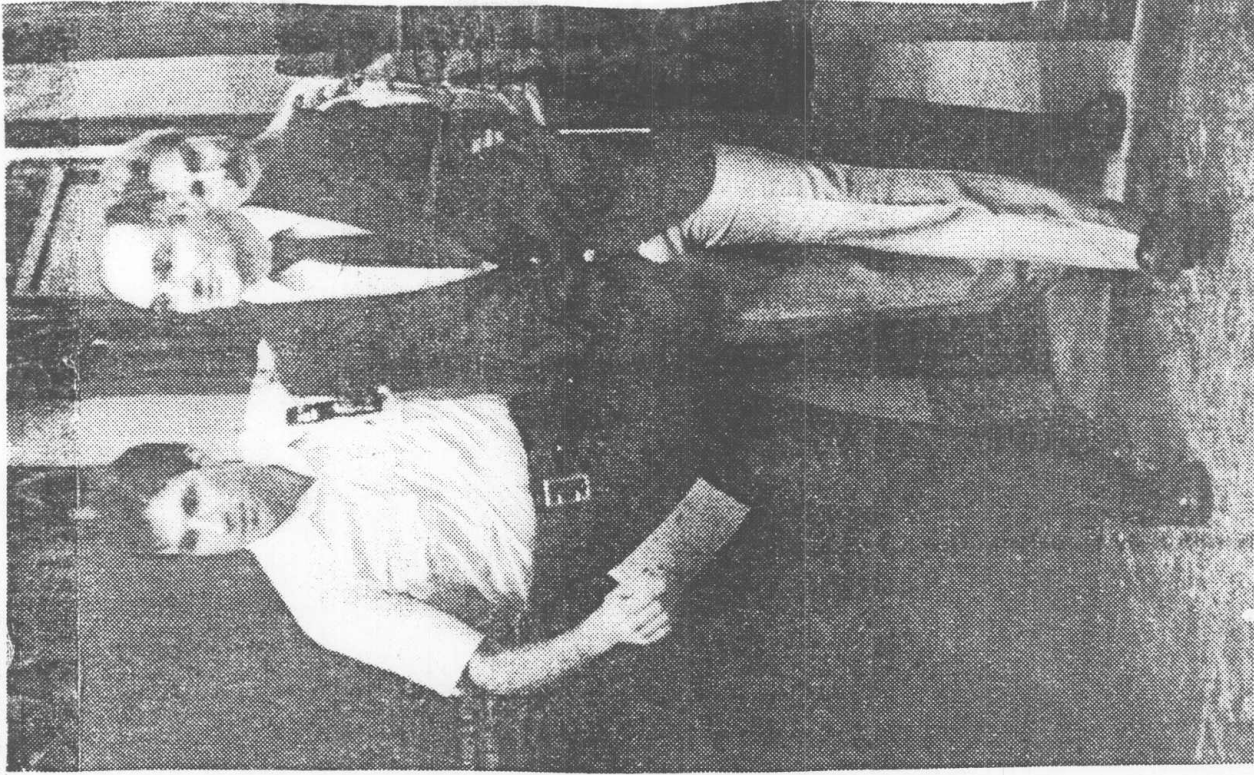
Loughrey and Giovinazzo outlined their respective cases in opening remarks before Justice Norman J. Felig and a jury of eight men and four women. Giovinazzo offered no further

details about the separation. However, he said the defense plans to call two witnesses. One will testify he saw the girl walking with a man at 4:15 or 4:30 near the Bradley Avenue exit of the Staten Island Expressway in Meiers Corners, but the man was not Rand, whom the witness knew.

The other witness will testify she saw Jennifer walking alone at 5 or 6 p.m. on Victory Boulevard near Mountainview Avenue, also in Meiers Corners, the lawyer said.

Jennifer's mother, Karen, was among the first-day witnesses. The Schweiger family, which also includes her husband, Kenneth, and their 19-year-old son, also Kenneth, moved to New Jersey after the tragedy.

Mrs. Schweiger testified the last time she saw her daughter alive was about 1:45 p.m. when she left to go outdoors to play while Mrs. Schweiger filtered the family's back-yard swimming pool so that it could be used that day, a hot summer day. Jennifer's brown hair was in two pigtails that had been braided together. She wore



ADVANCE PHOTO/STEVE ZAFFAR

Andre Rand is escorted into Richmond County Supreme Court for the start of his murder-kidnap trial.

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