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Neighbour charged in fatal stabbings

Man, 31, accused in slayings of mother, grandmother described as 'more than polite'

Oct 15, 2008 04:30 AM

SHABNAM JANET JANANI
STAFF REPORTER

An east Toronto neighbourhood shocked by the stabbing deaths of two women in their home early Monday got another jolt yesterday with news that the man accused of killing them lived next door.

Nathaniel O'Brien, 31, of 79 Rotary Dr., in the Meadowvale Rd.-Sheppard Ave. E. area, appeared in court yesterday charged with two counts of first-degree and one count of attempted murder. He was remanded in custody until Nov. 28

Police spokesperson Tony Vella said yesterday that O'Brien is "known to police."

Residents were awoken by a piercing scream from 81 Rotary Dr. at about 7 a.m. Monday. Neighbours said Sara John, 20, ran from the home and pounded on doors screaming for help, leaving a trail of blood on porches and walkways.

O'Brien was arrested soon afterward. Inside the home police found the bodies of Sara's mother, Susan John, 43, whom friends called Suja, and Sara's 65-year-old grandmother Saramma Varughese. Autopsies are scheduled for today.

Sara, a York University student, was taken to hospital with injuries sustained in the attack.

One neighbour of both the victims and the accused yesterday described O'Brien as a "suspicious" person in the neighbourhood.

But a woman who lives on the other side of the O'Brien home disputed that description.

"Mr. and Mrs. O'Brien are very lovely people and their sons (have) always been more than polite, including the one that was arrested," said the neighbour, who wouldn't give her name.

"They have three or four sons. I don't know them personally, but they are quiet people. I know he (Nathaniel O'Brien) had lived with his parents and then he moved out and again came back for a month or so."

The John family, said to be from Kerala state in India, moved into the home about two years ago and have been very active in the Church of South India on Lawrence Ave. W. and Jane St.

Church members filed to the home Monday, at first apparently bringing Thanksgiving greetings. More came later as word of the stabbings spread, then went to the hospital to check on Sara.



SUBMITTED PHOTO
Susan John, 43, of Toronto and Saramma Varughese, 65, of Toronto were pronounced dead at the scene, 81 Rotary Dr. early yesterday morning. (Oct. 14, 2008)

He was remanded in custody until Nov. 28

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Sara took part in a 30-hour fast in August and wrote in the church's newsletter about recognizing God's blessings on her.

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Residents said the area had so far escaped the violence that has plagued other parts of the city.



"I feel sad and very scared," said Maria Chaves, who has lived on Rotary Dr. for 15 years.

"This is a quiet neighbourhood and we never had any problems," Chaves said while putting her garbage bin into her garage.

"As neighbours, we used to talk over the fence. At Christmas time we exchanged presents," said another neighbour.

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