

Husband charged after wife faced night of terror in alleged Southampton kidnapping, assault

Wednesday, February 17, 2010

SOUTHAMPTON - Police say a fight between a Springfield couple Sunday night escalated Monday into violence and death threats after David Smith allegedly kidnapped his wife from their son's home before returning to town, where he was arrested in a restaurant.

Smith, 59, broke down in tears as he pleaded innocent Tuesday in Northampton District Court to charges of assault and battery, kidnapping, intimidating a witness, threatening to commit a crime, assault and battery with a dangerous weapon (shod foot) and assault to commit a felony.

The incident began Sunday night, when Valarie Smith left a dispute with her husband, David Smith, in their Chipmunk Road home in Springfield to stay at their son's house on Valley Road in Southampton, according to Southampton police.

The couple had been fighting, Smith told police, and he had threatened her repeatedly with a metal pipe.

The next day, as Smith left her son's home, her husband appeared, and when she opened the window of her car, he grabbed her hair, forcing his way into the car, said Southampton Police Chief David Silvernail.

The chief said Smith threatened to kill his wife as he drove them to Brattleboro, Vt., which is where they married and honeymooned some 40 years ago. As they drove, Smith repeatedly confronted his wife about a suspected affair and forced her to empty the contents of her purse between his legs, according to court documents.

"He threatened to shoot her, he said he was going to kill her, he said he was going to blow her head off," Silvernail said. He said police have not recovered a weapon, but Valarie Smith told police that her husband repeatedly gestured as if he had a gun under the left side of his coat.

"She fully believed he had a gun," Silvernail said. "She went along with him and pacified him during the trip just trying to stay alive."

During the ordeal, Valarie Smith made six calls to the couple's adult daughter, Silvernail said, and left the phone line open so her daughter could hear the threats being made. When Smith noticed she was using her cell phone to call for help, he removed the battery and threw it in the back seat, according to court documents.

After she managed to convince her husband that she wouldn't press charges, the couple started back home from Vermont and decided to meet with their son at the Opa Opa Steakhouse and Brewery on College Highway, according to police.

"She did a fantastic job of keeping the issue from getting worse," Silvernail said. "She was under the threat of being murdered by her husband."

While the couple was en route, their daughter, from East Longmeadow, alerted police to the situation. When a plan was made with the couple's son for them to meet him at a local restaurant, he informed the police where they would be.

Silvernail said the arrest was made without incident around 3 p.m. Monday at the restaurant. The attack was the first alleged kidnapping he had seen in Southampton in years, Silvernail said. He applauded local officers who responded calmly to a much more serious situation than they expected.

"I can't think of another circumstance like this that we've dealt with," Silvernail said. "It all unfolded rather quickly. The officer wasn't aware of the whole severity of the situation."

In court Tuesday, Judge Richard J. Carey ordered Smith sent to Bridgewater State Hospital for 20 days, where he will complete a mental health and competency evaluation before his pretrial hearing set for March 3.