



Heath Stocks

Friend recalls an angry son. 'I never thought he'd ... do it'

BY JUDD SLIVKA
AND JOE STUMPE
ARKANSAS DEMOCRAT-GAZETTE

ARKADELPHIA — The beige aluminum blinds of apartments 415 and 416 at the Whispering Oaks apartment complex were shut tight Monday, closed against the sun and outsiders curious about Heath Stocks.

Stocks, a 20-year-old former student of Henderson State University in Arkadelphia, was arrested Saturday on suspicion of capital

murder in the shooting deaths of his mother, father and 18-year-old sister Friday night.

He remains in a cell in the Lonoke County jail, carefully watched to make sure he doesn't kill himself.

Until December, Stocks lived in Apartment 415 on the ground floor of a privately owned building on campus and attended Henderson State University.

Before he withdrew from
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school he padded around on the apartment's steel-gray carpets, ate at the wood-grain breakfast bar, and sat on the gray, pink and blue furniture.

He partied in this apartment, and in Apartment 416, where police found him Friday night to tell him about his family's deaths; then to arrest him.

"He was like a brother to me," said Keith Anthony, Stocks' best friend and roommate until Stocks dropped out of the university.

"He was the greatest friend I ever had. I just can't comprehend doing this. Him and his dad didn't get along at all. But he loved his sister so much. I can't comprehend why he did it to his sister. She was the one applying to all the expensive schools and he was so proud of her. It's why I find it crazy that he did it."

A Lonoke County deputy sheriff found the bodies about 11 p.m. Friday after going to investigate a 911 hang-up call. After entering the Furlow house, the deputy found the bodies of Joe Stocks, 46, a self-employed truck driver; Stocks' wife, Barbara, 43, who worked at Lonoke High School's computer laboratory; and the Stockses'

daughter, Heather, 18, an honor student and captain of the Lonoke High School cheerleading team.

Police speculate that there was a serious conflict between Heath and Joe Stocks. Anthony, Stocks' confidant, doesn't disagree.

"He talked about this a little bit, but nothing to this extent. He was just blowing off steam. I never thought he'd get up and do it. He was always saying how he wanted to do something to (his father). I thought he wanted to fight him and show him how much he hurt him and how bad he made him feel."

Even though the Stocks males had a strained relationship, Anthony said Heath and his mother got along well.

"She'd call him every week and send him money," Anthony said. "He had a great life and didn't need anything. He gave me three shirts that were \$100 each. Just gave them to me. He had a great life and when he had to go into the real world, that did it, it put him over the top."

Before withdrawing from college, Heath Stocks had planned to enter the Army and go into the Special Forces. But in October he was arrested on a drunken driving charge and his demeanor changed, Anthony said.

"Before that, he'd always go to classes," Anthony said. "And we'd

drink but not like what he started to do. After the DUI, he quit going to class and would stay up to 3 or 4 in the morning and wake up at 4 or 5 in the afternoon and start drinking again."

Anthony said Heath Stocks, an offensive lineman on the 1994 Lonoke High School football team that won the state's Class AA crown, had a quick temper.

"He was aggressive," Anthony said. "I knew how to handle him, but other people would smart off to him and he'd get in their face. He would just blow up, but I could go over to him and say 'Hey, calm down,' and he would. He didn't have many friends, just a lot of acquaintances. To be friends with him you had to look past his temper."

On Sunday, 80 miles away, Heath Stocks spent the day shifting from his cell to the jail visitor's room and back. About 10 relatives were allowed to visit him while a deputy waited outside the cell, Sheriff Charlie Martin said.

"It was emotional, naturally, but everybody seemed ... they showed support for him," he said.

Martin took time Monday to answer questions from about 60 students at Lonoke High.

"Basically, just, 'Why?'" Martin said of the students' questions. "That's what everyone wants to

know. It's hard to say."

Investigators are trying to determine why the Stocks were slain, he said. He wouldn't characterize Heath Stocks' statements to authorities as confessions.

Stocks is scheduled for arraignment at 11:30 a.m. today at the Lonoke County jail.

A memorial service for the family has been set for 10:30 a.m. Wednesday in the Lonoke High School gymnasium, to be followed by a private service at Concord United Methodist Church in Furlow.

The unincorporated rural community of spacious lawns, barbed-wire fences and one-story houses has about 700 people and is where former U.S. Sen. Joe T. Robinson grew up. It has been stunned by the shootings of the three residents.

"We are grieving," said the Rev. Robert Marble. The family attended the Concord church where Marble preaches. "We have been reminded that we are not removed from a world at war. It has come here to roost."

The family's home, a short drive from the church, remained sealed off by yellow police tape Monday. The number of area residents coming to see the scene of the slayings had slowed to a trickle, said one neighbor.