

Spirit of competition dominates Sports Nite

By ANDREW D. SMITH
Staff Writer

TRENTON — The theme for this year's Trenton Central High School Sports Nite is "Hooray for Hollywood," but none of the students competing last night was dressed like Fred Astaire or Ginger Rogers.

Instead, characters like Superfly and Foxy Brown dominated the scene.

"We picked movies and characters that we thought we could do a good job with," said Black Team co-captain Corrin Hampton.

The movies they selected for the various events and performances

may have hailed mostly from the '70s, but the mood at the high school was far from mellow.

The Red and Black teams competed ferociously throughout the evening in events ranging from dance numbers to relay races.

"The only thing we're competing for here is pride," said senior Shaun Inman, "but both these teams really want to win."

"By the last night," said Luis Calzada, another senior, "people will be crying and passing out. Sports Nite is a tradition, and people here take it very seriously."

They sure do. Both the students and the 1,000 people in the audience were screaming in support of their favorite team.

The noise was deafening. No one who attended last night's competition walked away wondering why Trenton teams are nicknamed the Tornadoes.

According to Mark Bailey, a health teacher at Trenton High who has coordinated Sports Nite for the past five years, the event began in the early 1930s. The school discontinued Sports Nite during the '70s and '80s, but several years ago it was resurrected.

"All juniors and seniors participate in Sports Nite as part of their gym classes," said Bailey. "The idea of it is to involve the kids in something that will teach them teamwork, planning and responsibility. And, of course, it's supposed

to be fun."

It was fun for the Black team early last night. That team took a 4-1 lead after winning the men's and women's tug-of-wars. It later extended its lead to 8-2, but the Red team made a late run to win four of the last five events.

At evening's end, the Black team held a 9-6 lead over its opponent.

The team that accumulates the most points over the course of three nights will be the 1998 Sports Nite champion.

"The Black team may have won tonight's battle," said Bailey, "but that doesn't mean that they'll win the war. The only thing that's predictable about this competition is that it's unpredictable."

Trenton Times, March 12, 1998

Team players



Trenton Central High School students show their spirit and their moves as they perform at the gymnasium of the high school last night for Sports Nite '98

Staff photo
by Keith Bedford

Trenton Times, March 14, 1998

'Sports Nite' rallies spirit of fun for Trenton students

By JOHN MCGOURTY
Staff Writer

TRENTON — A late victory by the red team in girls' volleyball wasn't enough to overcome black's early lead at Trenton Central High School's Sports Nite.

Black, led by Capts. Corrin Hampton and Richard Player, beat Red, led by Capts. Talitha Murray and Jalal Shabazz, 25-23.

More than 2,000 students, parents, teachers and administrators packed into Tornado Alley for the school's fun highlight of the year.

Dancing, music, art and sports highlighted the program, dubbed "Hooray for Hollywood." Students under the direction of cheerleading coordinator Sharon Grady and choreographer Lois Enourato kept the program upbeat from the opening "Ushering in Sports Nite" with students dressed in usher costumes and holding flashlights to the closing school song, when rival teams met on the floor to shake hands and dance.

Black marching Capts. Johanna Feliciano, Alisia Taylor, Maxine McMillan and Aquiva Williams led their team while Capts. Raynette

Porter, Maritza Ramos and Antonio Travers led Red.

"It ended on a really fun, high note," said coordinator Mark Bailey. "That's what the show is all about."

DANCING to "Grease," Black team cheerleaders, led by Capt. Monica Matlock, downed the Red team, led by Capt. Tiffany Stevens, whose theme was "School Daze."

In aerobics, Black, led by Capt. Candice Branch, beat Red, led by Capt. Alecia Campbell. The boys' Black tug-of-war team needed less than a minute to defeat Red, but the Red girls won an epic, 8-minute struggle.

Tap dance was one of the highlights as Black, led by Capt. Nicolette Diaz, doing "Singing in the Rain," tied Red, led by Capt. Liana Bryan, which did "Annie."

Jermaine Langston led Red over Black's Jazmyn Reasoner in the team band solo. Richard Player's solo dance in "Fame" helped Black Capt. Keya Baker's team beat Red, led by Capt. Telechia Kelly, which did "The Color Purple's Church Theme" in modern jazz. The Black team's video dance to "Saturday Night Fever," led by Capts. Tanya Kauffman and Efrain Martinez, beat Red's "Krush Groove," led by Capts. Fatima McCoy and Rodney Genwright.

Black Capt. Dorian Ramirez's program cover design edged Red Capt. Phillip Johannes. Black art Capt. Dustin Overton's window murals were picked over Red Capt. Anastasia Hauldrige

A "Mortal Kombat" karate exhibition was led by Phillip Johannes and Bruce Davis. Student scorekeepers included Lakeetra McClaine, Jessica Maldonado and Lillian McRae. Pablo Diaz and Denise Ramsey were master and mistress of ceremonies.

CRASH & SLASH

By CHRIS DOLMETSCH
Staff Writer

Intruder fatally stabs teen at dance

An Eisenhower Avenue man stabbed a 16-year-old student to death late Friday night during a fight that started when members of a West Ward gang crashed a teen dance on North Warren Street and started shocking people with a stun gun, cops said. The drama began at about 10:30 p.m. at a dance in the old Elks Club building at 124 N. Warren St. attended by 100 to 150 people,

Detective Capt. Joseph Golden said.

The informal dance, which was raising money for the Mercer County Youth Club, was sponsored by the National Association of Negro Business and Professional Women's Clubs. Most of those in attendance were in their late to early teens, he

said, although there were chaperones present.

A line of people was waiting to pay to get into the dance when a group of 10 to 20 people — mostly members of the Villa Clan gang from West Trenton — crashed the gate, Golden said.

The group bullied its way into the large dance hall and started

pushing guests around as they danced, Golden said.

Then, one of the crashers pulled out a low-voltage stun gun known as a "tazer," normally used for personal self-defense, and started shocking people.

The shocks apparently angered one group of dancegoers, who started to fight with the gang members. During the fight, which police said involved about 12 people, 18-year-old gang member Wilfredo Jamar "Marty" Rivera allegedly plunged a knife into the left side of 16-year-old Trenton Central High School student Corey L. Henley of Woolverton Street, puncturing the left side of his heart.

"He got stabbed and fell to the floor," Golden said. "And once he fell, Rivera and his buddies fled on foot. A lot of other people also left, and a lot of people rushed to his aid."

Emergency crews rushed Henley, who was attending the dance with several friends and relatives, to Capital Health System at Fuld, but it was too late. He was pronounced dead at 11:36 p.m.

Police interviewed numerous witnesses, several of whom identified Rivera as the stabber. Detective Anthony Manzo soon found Rivera hanging out on Oakland Street and arrested him.

Cops charged Rivera with murder and weapons offenses and committed him to the Trenton police lockup without bail pending an arraignment scheduled for tomorrow.

Detectives continued an investigation last night. They weren't sure if Henley knew his attackers or if the stabbing stemmed from a prior argument, as many of the teens at the dance had attended Trenton Central High School's annual Sports Nite celebration earlier in the evening.

However, Golden pointed out that the party was peaceful until the gang-bangers showed up.

"Most of the attendees were orderly and having a good time until this group crashed the party," he said.

Henley's father declined to comment when contacted at the family's Woolverton Street home last night.

Detectives are looking to see how much involvement the Villa Clan, a West Ward gang unknown to police until Friday night, had with the murder.

"This is the first information we've gotten on it," Golden said. "Apparently, other people know of its existence, but we're not sure if it's a really organized gang or what. We don't have a lot of information on it right now. But we will shortly."

Police are still searching for the weapon used to stab Henley, believed to be a three-inch switchblade-type knife.

It is the second homicide in the city this year.

Manzo is the primary investigator. Detectives Joe Salvatore, Jack Kemler, Dave Maldonado, Al Tormondson, Edgar Rios and Carmine Martucci are assisting, with the help of youth detectives Ray Young and Darryl Berry.



A dance at this Trenton club turned bloody.

Trentonian Photo/BOB CASTELLI

Fatal stabbing leads to arrest of teenager

By MICHAEL RATCLIFFE
Staff Writer

TRENTON — A 16-year-old boy was stabbed to death Friday night at a dance party and police have arrested a suspect in the murder, according to Detective Capt. Joe Golden.

Corey L. Henley died only an hour after one of his lungs and his heart were pierced by the knife that was allegedly wielded by 18-year-old Wilfredo Jamar Rivera, Golden said.

The stabbing occurred about 10:30 p.m. after a group of young men crashed the dance at the Elks Club in the 100 block of North Warren Street.

The dance, sponsored by the National Association of Negro Business and Professional Women's Club, was a fundraiser for the Mercer County Youth Club and was attended by scores of teenagers, some of whom had attended Sports Nite festivities at Trenton Central High School earlier in the evening, Golden said. He said the party was orderly until between 10 and 20 young men arrived.

Police have identified the group of party-crashers as part of a gang called V.C. — "Villa Clan" — that frequents the area of Hoffman and Stuyvesant avenues, Golden said.

The gang members "started pushing people and acting rowdy," Golden said. He said one of them had a stun-gun device that he used to shock several people.

Tensions at the party continued to rise and the pushing became more animated, Golden said. Then a fight erupted between Henley and several gang members, Golden said.

BEFORE THE party's civilian chaperones could intervene, Rivera allegedly used a switchblade-style knife to stab Henley in the left side, Golden said. The blade, which was at

least 3 inches long, punctured Henley's left lung and pierced his heart, the detective captain said.

"When the fighting started, most of the kids tried to get out of the way," Golden said. "It was pretty chaotic."

Once Henley collapsed from his wounds, the gang members fled the building, Golden said.

Henley, a resident of Woolverton Street, was rushed to the trauma unit at Capital Health System at Fuld hospital, but he was pronounced dead at 11:36 p.m., Golden said.

Based on information supplied by witnesses and uncovered by the police, Detective Anthony Manzo arrested Rivera about 1:30 a.m. on Oakland Street, Golden said.

Rivera, a resident of Eisenhower Avenue who also uses the alias "Marty Rivera," was charged with murder and weapons offenses. He was held without bail in the city lockup yesterday, Golden said.

The murder weapon has not yet been recovered, Golden said, adding that Henley's murder is the second in the city this year.

The investigation is being conducted by Manzo with Detective Lt. Joe Salvatore, Detective Sgt. Jack Kemler, and Detectives Dave Maldonado, Ed Rios, Al Tormondson, Carmine Martucci,

Ray Young and Daryl Berry.

Golden said detectives are investigating any possible disagreements between Henley and Rivera.

He said detectives hope to interview several more witnesses and, depending on what information is uncovered, additional people may be charged.

He also said detectives will scrutinize the V.C. gang.

Anyone with information about the murder or the gang is asked to call the city police's confidential tip line at (609) 989-3664.

SITE OF SLAY HAD BEEN TOLD TO CLOSE

By CHRIS DOLMETSCH
Staff Writer

The club where a 16-year-old city high school student died during a fight Saturday night had been ordered six months ago to stop holding dances in its hall, city officials said yesterday.

Trenton officials sent the order to the owners of "The Temple," a former Mason's lodge between Hanover and Ferry streets, housing director Len Pucciatti said.

"Clearly they were told not to be there," said Pucciatti, who could not say exactly why the city issued the no-party order.

Nevertheless, the owners of the building on North Warren Street — whose names were not available yesterday — ignored the notice. On Saturday night, they held another teen dance, sponsored by the National Association of the Negro Business and Professional Women's Clubs.

The consequences were tragic.

Police said a group of 10 to 20 members of the Villa Clan gang from West Trenton crashed the dance and started fights by shocking people with a stun gun.

During one of the fights, police said, 18-year-old Wilfredo "Marty" Rivera plunged a knife into the left side of 16-year-old Corey Henley of Woolverton Street.

Henley suffered stab wounds to the lungs and heart and collapsed immediately. He was taken to Capital Health System at Fuld, but died about an hour later.

Detective Anthony Manzo later arrested Rivera and charged him with murder and weapons offenses. Manzo also recovered the murder weapon, a 3-inch switchblade, in the gutter of a city street.

A flier distributed to students at Trenton Central High School last week advertised "tight security" at the dance,

billed as an after-party for the school's annual Sports Nite celebration.

But yesterday, that was little comfort to Henley's family, which was outraged at the lack of guards at the dance.

"People were stepping on my son's head," said Henley's mother, Sylvia Smith-Ubah, between sobs yesterday afternoon. "He was on the floor. My baby was dying on the floor, and all the sudden they were going to call the cops as soon as my son was dead? The cops should have been called a long time ago. I don't think it was fair. I really don't think it was right."

Deputy Chief Joe Constance said yesterday Trenton police are continuing to investigate the murder and may file additional charges.

They are still trying to determine if Henley knew his attackers and how much involvement the Villa Clan, a loosely-organized gang out of West Trenton, had in the murder.

"We don't know that it exists," Constance said. "We don't know if it's a real gang. It may just be a bunch of young punks hanging together that call themselves a gang."

Rivera was arraigned yesterday in Trenton Municipal Court and committed to the Mercer County Detention Center in lieu of bail.

Pucciatti said the city may take action against the owners of the building once the police investigation is finished.

Mayor Doug Palmer said the city will prosecute all those responsible for Henley's death to the fullest extent of the law. He said incidents like this only help bolster residents' fear of youth-oriented gatherings — and urged young people to take their actions more seriously.

"I hope that they really truly understand the circumstances," Palmer said. "This young man was only trying to have fun and this should not

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Corey Henley (below), 16, of Woolverton Street, was murdered while attending a dance sponsored by the National Association of the Negro Business and Professional Women's Clubs Saturday. This flier advertised the dance as having tight security.



have happened. Life does not come cheap. Life is precious. And I hope that these young people will begin to understand and

fully realize how precious life is."

"It just doesn't make any sense," Palmer said. "It's ridiculous."

Stabbing suspect denies being gang member

By EMILY J. HORNADAY
Staff Writer

TRENTON — Wilfredo Jamar "Marty" Rivera, accused of fatally stabbing a city teenager at a dance party Friday night, said during his bail hearing yesterday that it was an accident and denied being part of any gang.

Rivera, 18, of Eisenhower Avenue is charged with murdering Corey L. Henley, 16, of Woolverton Avenue, who died after being stabbed about 10:30 p.m. Friday. He also is accused of weapons offenses and possession of crack cocaine.

If convicted of murder, Rivera could be sentenced to life in prison, 30 years without parole.

Assistant Prosecutor Dennis Slaboda told Superior Court Judge Thomas DeMartin that Henley

and about 150 other teens were attending a dance at the Elks Club on North Warren Street.

About 10 p.m., 15 or 20 youths crashed the party after leaving Sports Nite at Trenton Central High School, Slaboda said.

Slaboda said the gate crashers appeared to be part of a gang that calls itself VC for "Villa Clan."

A fight broke out after Shawndale Hariston, another alleged member of the gang, set off a stun gun inside the building, then was bumped and dropped the stun gun, and was knocked to the ground and kicked, Slaboda said.

Slaboda said Rivera pulled a folding knife, went to help Hariston, then stabbed Henley, who suffered a puncture wound to his heart and a lung.

Prior to going to the dance, Slaboda said, Riv-

era and Hariston were at Rivera's home where Rivera described the knife as his "baby" and told Hariston that a stab wound is worse than a gunshot.

Slaboda said a bloody folding knife was recovered from where Rivera told police he had discarded it after the incident.

RIVERA'S ATTORNEY, Assistant Public Defender David Hamilton, told DeMartin that the stabbing was the result of a "rush of activity" when the fight broke out and that his client was "not part of any gang activity."

Rivera, who initially wanted to talk directly to DeMartin, also told Hamilton to stress that he had not intended to harm anyone.

DeMartin set Rivera's bail at \$250,000 cash. The teenager is being held in the Mercer County Detention Center.



Public defender David Hamilton confers with Wilfredo Santiago yesterday during his bail hearing.

Staff photo by Frank Jacobs III

Trenton Times, March 18, 1998

Suspect in melee surrenders

By JOHN MCGOURTY
Staff Writer

TRENTON — A second man has been arrested in last Friday's melee at a North Warren Street club that left a city teen dead, police said.

During the fight at the Elks Club in the 100 block of North Warren Street, Corey Lamont Hendley, 16, of Woolverton Street was stabbed in the lungs and heart with a knife allegedly wielded by 18-year-old Wilfredo Jamar Rivera of Eisenhower Avenue, police said. Rivera is an alleged member of the Villa Clan, a small gang operating in the area of Stuyvesant and Hoffman avenues, police said.

The stabbing occurred about 10:30 p.m. after a group of 10 to 15 young men crashed the dance, police said. Hendley died about an hour later in a Trenton hospital. Rivera was arrested a few hours later by Detective Anthony Manzo and charged with murder, police said. Manzo also

recovered the knife allegedly used in the stabbing, police said.

Herman Shandale Hairston, 19, of the 900 block of Prospect Street surrendered to Manzo at police headquarters at 10:15 a.m. yesterday and was charged with unlawful possession of a weapon — a stun gun, Detective Lt. Douglas Rowland said. Rowland said Hairston carried the stun gun into the club and threatened people with it. Witnesses told police the stun gun was used on some of the people in the club, but so far no one has come forward to say they were assaulted, Manzo said.

The dance, sponsored by the National Association of Negro Business and Professional Women's Club, was a fund-raiser for the Mercer County Youth Club and was attended by scores of teenagers, some of whom attended Sports Nite festivities at Trenton Central High School earlier in the evening, police said.

Detective Sgt. Jack Kemler said, "The investigation is continuing and we are seeking anyone who may have been struck with the stun gun

or anyone who witnessed someone who was struck with the stun gun."

Anyone with information about the incident is asked to call the Trenton police confidential tipline at (609) 989-3664.

"Rivera and Hairston were the two main guys in the Villa Clan," Manzo said. "The arrests should cut the head off that whole gang. These guys have been together for about five or six years, since they were in junior high school. They've been involved mostly in street robberies, in many cases drug dealers who don't report such incidents to police but we've heard about them through the grapevine."

Rowland said other members of the Villa Gang have been interviewed during the investigation and more arrests could follow.

A funeral service will be held today for Hendley, a student at Trenton Central High School, at 11 a.m. at Bethlehem Baptist Church, 439 Centre Street with Merlene Williams, pastor, officiating. Interment will be in Ewing Cemetery.

Trenton Times, March 20,

Sports Night a great success

I am writing to express my enthusiasm for the Trenton Central High School annual Sports Night event held recently. The three nights of competition at the high school gymnasium were filled with excitement and fun. It was a wonderful opportunity for the students and the community to share in camaraderie and competition while reinforcing the values of good sportsmanship. I beamed with pride when I attended the first night and felt a chill along my spine as I watched our youngsters cheering each other on and members of our community joyously supporting our kids.

The costumes, choreography, team spirit and community involvement were as exciting as the events.

Through Sports Night the talent, skills and abilities of our young people are showcased in a spirited night of good-natured fun and competition. It brings out the best of what a good community is all about.

Congratulations to the Red and the Black teams. In the end, they all are winners because they have had an opportunity to practice becoming team players and good sports while bringing our community together in support of our schools and our youngsters. Thanks to the students, teachers, volunteers and contributors, Sports Night 1998 was a most successful event.

Douglas H. Palmer
Mayor
Trenton

Trenton Times,
March 23,

'Sports Night' success

I am writing to express my enthusiasm about the Trenton Central High School annual "Sports Night" event held recently. The three nights of competition at the high school gymnasium were filled with excitement and fun. It was a wonderful opportunity for the students and the community to share in camaraderie and competition while reinforcing the values of good sportsmanship. I beamed with pride when I attended on the first night and felt a chill along my spine as I watched our youngsters cheering each other on and members of our community joyously supporting our kids.

As exciting as the events are the costumes, choreography, team spirit and community involvement. Through "Sports Night" the talents, skills and abilities of our young people are showcased in a spirited night of good-natured fun and competition. It brings out the best of what a good community is all about.

Congratulations to the Red and the Black teams. In the end, they are all winners because they have had an opportunity to practice being team players and good sports while bringing our community together in support of our schools and our youngsters. Thanks to the students, teachers, volunteers and contributors, "Sports Night" 1998 was a most successful event.

Douglas H. Palmer
Mayor
Trenton

Trentonian, March 31, 1998

Healthy fun

I recently went to "Sports Night" at Trenton High, with the red team against the black team. What an absolute enjoyable and pleasant evening I had watching these youngsters compete against each other, as well as the positive energy that was displayed. Congratulations to both teams for the excellent sportsmanship they showed to each other. I had a ball. I can't wait for the next one.

Happy Spectator

Trentonian, March 20, 1998

Teenager indicted in fatal stabbing at dance party

TRENTON — An 18-year-old city man was indicted on murder charges yesterday, accused of fatally stabbing a city teenager at a crowded dance party in March.

Wilfredo Jamar "Marty" Rivera of Eisenhower Avenue is accused of killing Corey L. Henley, 16, of Woolverton Avenue on March 13, said Executive Assistant Prosecutor Dennis Slaboda. In addition to murder, Rivera was also indicted on weapons offenses and possession of a controlled

dangerous substance, Slaboda said.

If convicted, Rivera could be sentenced to life in prison, required to spend 30 years in jail without parole.

Henley and about 150 other teens were attending a dance at the Elks Club on North Warren Street the night of the killing, prosecutors have said.

About 10 p.m., 15 or 20 youths crashed the party after leaving Sports Nite at Trenton Central High School, prosecutors have said.

Prosecutors have said that the gate crashers appeared to be part of a gang that calls itself V.C., for "Villa Clan."

At about 10:30 p.m. a fight broke out after Shawndale Hariston, another alleged member of the gang, set off a stun gun inside the building, then was bumped and dropped the stun gun and was knocked to the floor and kicked, prosecutors have said.

Rivera allegedly pulled a folding

knife, went to help Hariston, then stabbed Henley, who suffered a puncture wound to his heart and lung, prosecutors have said.

Henley died at Capital Health System at Fuld hospital about an hour after the assault.

Before going to the dance, Rivera and Hariston were at Rivera's home where Rivera described the knife as his "baby" and told Hariston that a stab wound is worse than a gunshot, police have said.

Trenton Times, September 17, 1998