

Benette

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kid, maybe 65 lbs soaking wet.” He suffered from night terrors that were so severe he begged to sleep on the floor in her room.

“I have a lot of love in my heart for that child. No matter where life has taken him at this point, I remember that child who cuddled up and watched a movie, and wanted good things in his life.

“I’m not saying he was a completely innocent child. He was a product of his environment, and the sad thing is, he was taken out of that environment and he was thriving.”

It was at Stone’s home in 2006, that Parrish met two friends of the family: Danielle Curtis and her future husband, LD.

“LD was like an uncle to Madeline’s kids, and Parrish was over there all the time,” Curtis said. “And actually, Parrish called him his uncle.”

LD had grown up on the streets and had been in trouble in his youth, Curtis says, but he had left that behind and built a stable life as a construction worker. LD was drawn to Parrish. He took him fishing and brought him to family gatherings.

Parrish’s sojourn at the Stone home came to an abrupt end after his father reported him as a runaway. A caseworker told Stone she couldn’t let him stay at her home any more.

“He said, ‘You’ve got to let him go. We have to take him.’ We stuck him back with his dad and it lasted one day. He ran away again and showed up at my house.

“That’s the way his dad covered his butt. He’d beat the crap out of him, then when he ran away, he would call him in as a runaway to cover his butt.”

Stone says she had family foster children in her home and felt she couldn’t fight DHS. So she told Parrish he couldn’t stay any more. She still feels bad about that decision.

“He had to have been mad,” she says. “If the one person who believed in you the most walked away? I think in his heart he knew I loved him. I’d take him again today.”

Sometime during 2008, LD called Parrish’s mother in Chicago and asked her to take her son to live with her. But she refused. Curtis says she knows because she was present when he made the call. LD also reported abuse in 2008, she says, but Parrish was not removed from the home.

“They had proof this person was beating this child –and they put him back there saying, this is what’s best for this child – they need to work it out.”

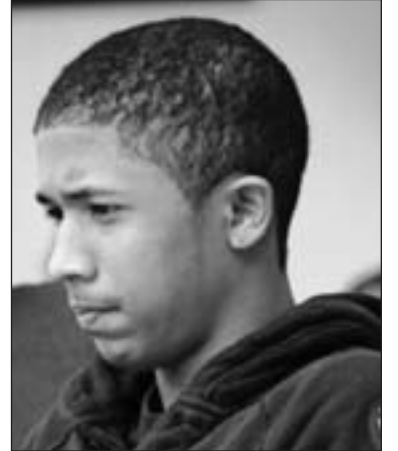
In early 2009, Parrish was expelled from Mt. Tabor Middle School. Schools can’t release students’ confidential



People who knew Yashanee remember her magnetic personality and million-dollar smile.



A Grand Jury indicted Parrish Bennette Jr. on charges of manslaughter and murder on April 8.



Parrish Bennette Jr.

records so the reason is unclear. During his time at Mt. Tabor, Parrish got into a minor scuffle with the son of this reporter. And he once got into trouble, along with others, for setting lighter fuel on fire in the parking lot of a nearby convenience store. But a friend from Mt. Tabor says the expulsion came after he skipped school to go to the mall and buy socks for his basketball game.

Now 14, Parrish enrolled in Open Meadow Middle School. Principal Elizabeth Jensen says he was a good stu-

dent who excelled in reading and met grade standards in math. Jensen said, “But we’d see anger outbursts, coming in and being distraught over where he was going to stay, because he knew that going back to dad’s wasn’t going to be an option for a while.”

“We have a saying here at Open Meadow, that ‘hurt kids hurt kids,’” she says. “And he was definitely hurting. I’m not a psychologist, but I’d say, ‘What happens to a child who is abandoned by his mother?’ We talk a lot about absent fathers, but the trend I see is that we have mamas who are missing, and that has much more impact on a child.”

A former staff member at the school said the father and son had similar ways of dealing with stress, which led them to clash. Yet Jensen says staff at Open Meadow never saw any signs of physical abuse during Parrish’s five months at Open Meadow. In fact, she says, Parrish Bennette Sr. was committed to getting his son to school and working with the school to help him succeed.

At the same time, Parrish made no secret of his difficulties at home.

“I definitely saw him multiple times, coming into the building with a duffel bag and saying, ‘I’m not going back to my dad.’”

“He had lots of friends, and he was behaving,” Jensen said, “But we’d see anger outbursts, coming in and being distraught over where he was going to stay, because he knew that going back to dad’s wasn’t going to be an option for a while.”

Jensen is one of the few people who knew Parrish and also Yashanee. Both went to Open Meadow. But their paths never crossed at the school because they attended at different times.

During spring 2009, Danielle Curtis and LD took Parrish fishing. During the day, Curtis says, Parrish had called his father periodically, but getting back they were half an hour late.

“It was all fine on the phone, but then when we got there to drop Parrish off, his dad was very hostile. He was very mad. He grabbed Parrish and pulled him into the apartment. He wouldn’t listen... He shut the door and we could hear scuffling. So we hung around, and 20 minutes later Parrish came out of the house. His dad had kicked him out.”

It was around that time, Curtis says, that Parrish began staying with another school friend’s family in North Portland. But, according to Curtis that relationship turned ugly. She says Parrish told her the mother accused him of threatening her during an argument, after she found a box cutter inside his backpack. He told Curtis he needed the box cutter for protection.

“I’m not saying Parrish didn’t have issues,” Curtis said. “He did. He didn’t trust anyone. And he was never taught respect, although he did respect LD.”

The couple told Parrish they would try to get custody. “The whole time he was asking us, begging, can we have him,” Curtis says. “And we knew his case worker because we had custody of LD’s nephew for a while. LD told him, ‘Hold on Buddy. We’ve got to do this the right way. I can’t just take you.’”

That dream ended on June 9, 2009, when LD had a massive stroke. He sank into a coma and finally died July 1. Parrish attended the funeral, but then Curtis lost sight of him. Her husband’s death crushed Parrish’s hopes for a better life, she says.

“I know his death was really hard on Parrish, because he was the only one sticking up for him. And he promised him; he promised, ‘we’re going to work this out.’”

A friend of Parrish’s also pinpoints this moment as a turning point.

Parrish “went crazy” when LD died, he said. Before LDs death he was loving, caring and scared of gangs. After, his

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dent who excelled in reading and met grade standards in math.

“He’s definitely a smart kiddo,” she says. “He is really very, very sharp. I was shocked when I found out he was being of accused of this because that’s not the Parrish I knew,” she says.

But Jensen also recognized Parrish had problems. She

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