

# Boy, 5, was starved to death

## Weighed 22 pounds: Grandparents accused of treating him 'like a dog'

Shannon Kari - CanWest News Service

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Five-year-old Jeffrey Baldwin was locked in his room, treated like a "dog" and kept alive for the foster-care money he generated, the Crown alleged yesterday at the murder trial of the dead boy's grandparents.

Norman Kidman and Elva Bottineau, both 53, are charged with first-degree murder in the November, 2002, death of their grandchild, who weighed less than 10 kilograms (22 pounds) when he died. The couple are also charged with the unlawful confinement of Jeffrey and his then-six-year-old sister.

The Catholic Children's Aid Society of Toronto placed Jeffrey in the care of his grandparents in 1998 because of allegations of abuse. The children's aid organization did not check its own files at that time, and was unaware Mr. Kidman and Ms. Bottineau had prior convictions for assaulting children.

Crown attorney Bev Richards outlined a series of horrific details about Jeffrey's physical condition as she began the prosecution's case before Judge David Watt. The Superior Court judge previously ruled in favour of a defence request and is presiding over the case without a jury.

Emergency personnel who responded to a 911 call placed by Ms. Bottineau on Nov. 30, 2002, found Jeffrey's lifeless body on a kitchen counter, wrapped in a towel, in the east-end home.

An autopsy determined the young boy was 93 centimetres tall and weighed 9.68 kilograms when he died, just six weeks before his sixth birthday. Prior medical records indicated he weighed slightly more than that when he was just a year old.

The cause of death was found to be "chronic, severe malnutrition," Ms. Richards said. The boy had "acute bacterial bronchial pneumonia," and probably went into septic shock in the hours before his death. Jeffrey had abrasions on his body and "caked-on" collections of bacteria on his skin that were estimated to be one millimetre thick, she said.

Six adults and six children lived in the Woodfield Road home owned by Mr. Kidman and Ms. Bottineau. Jeffrey and one of his sisters lived in a bedroom with a "hook lock" on the exterior door frame. The bedroom reeked of urine and feces to the point the "smell was right in your clothing," even after someone left the room, Ms. Richards said.

A 24-year-old daughter of the couple (not Jeffrey's mother) lived in the home with her boyfriend, James Mills. The prosecution said yesterday Mr. Mills will testify that Jeffrey was singled out, and he looked like "skin and bones" and was "treated like a dog." The boy was so thirsty he would sometimes lick water out of the toilet, Mr. Mills told police.

Mr. Mills has also claimed Ms. Bottineau explained that if she sought help for Jeffrey and his sister it would "ruin" her foster-care cheque. "Those two kids are \$600 to me a month," Mr. Mills said he was told. He reportedly did not go to the authorities because he was afraid of being ordered to move out.

Mr. Kidman and Ms. Bottineau, who have been in custody since March, 2003, both pleaded not guilty yesterday.

Ms. Bottineau was previously convicted in 1970 of assault causing bodily harm in the death of her five-month-old daughter, and was sentenced to a year's probation. Mr. Kidman was convicted of assaulting two of Ms. Bottineau's children in 1978, and received two years' probation.

This information was contained in the files of the Catholic Children's Aid Society when the couple won custody of Jeffrey. A senior official in the organization told the National Post in 2003 that it was "astonished" at the failure to check its records, and it would correct a "significant flaw" in its policies.

The trial continues today with testimony from a senior pediatric specialist at the Hospital for Sick Children.