

PROSECUTOR: VICTIM NAMED HIS KILLER

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Thomas Garafolo died a painful death - and as he gasped his last words, police said, he may have uttered the name of one of his killers.

The 52-year-old Quogue man was stabbed as many as 22 times in the neck and torso as he was being strangled in his own car, Suffolk police said after the second of two suspects in the Sunday killing was arraigned in First District Court in Central Islip.

After he was attacked, a bloodied and badly beaten Garafolo knocked on the door of a Granny Road home in Medford asking for help, about 100 feet from where he was attacked.

Garafolo managed to say, "Rick and another guy did it," Suffolk Police Deputy Insp. Robert Oswald said. Garafolo was pronounced dead a short time later at Brookhaven Memorial Hospital Medical Center.

Police said Garafolo referred to Fredrick Hollman, 20, of 48 Woodlawn Ave., Ronkonkoma, one of two suspects charged in the slaying.

A Suffolk prosecutor described Joshua Lopez, 27, of 14 Pine Road in Coram, as the "mastermind" of a plot to kill Garafolo. Police said Lopez thought Garafolo was cheating him out of the proceeds of a shoplifting scheme that Lopez, Garafolo and Hollman had hatched.

Officials said the men choked and stabbed Garafolo, pulled him out of the car, stabbed him some more, and then stomped him before leaving him for dead in a deserted patch of woods in Medford. They also took his cell phone and cash, said Assistant District Attorney Nancy Clifford, who added that Lopez proceeded to use the cell phone to make personal calls for days after the crime.

"He was angry at Garafolo and wanted him dead," Clifford said during the arraignment for Lopez Friday.

"It is important not to rush to judgment on these types of cases and afford Mr. Lopez the presumption of innocence," said Lopez's attorney, Michael Brown, of Central Islip.

Hollman was arrested Wednesday. Both men were charged with second-degree murder and are being held without bail in the Suffolk County jail.

Oswald, commanding officer of the Suffolk County Police Department's Major Crimes Bureau, said the trio targeted Home Depot stores, shoplifting small items and selling them for money to buy drugs.

"As a result of him being stiffed, [Lopez] decided Garafolo should die," Oswald said.

Oswald and Clifford said Garafolo endured a vicious attack.

The two men, Oswald said, asked Garafolo to drive down an isolated road in a wooded area in Medford, supposedly to buy drugs.

Oswald said that Hollman, who was sitting in the backseat during the ride, wrapped a cord around Garafolo's neck. That's when Lopez began stabbing Garafolo, Oswald said.

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