

COMMUNITY NEWS

Man lives with corpse for 72 hrs to conceal crime in Rivers

- How suspect tricked neighbours despite odour from one-room apartment
- Detectives uncover murder, exhume remains

By Eguie Yafugborhi

RUMUEPERIKOM RESIDENTS of Rumueperikom community, Obio/Akpor Local Government Area, Rivers State, are still staggered over how a 30-year-old man, Prince Owabie, alias J-Boy squeezed the life out of his estranged pregnant lover, Bertha Nwabueze, 32, buried and dwelt with the dead body in his one-room apartment for 72 hours when police detectives exposed the crime.

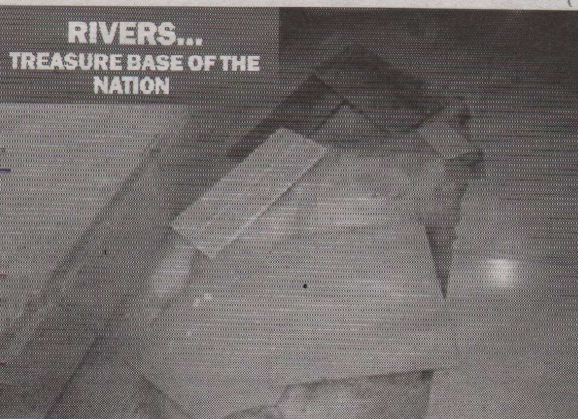
Some neighbours of the suspect, a habitual batterer of love mates, also wondered why they did not intervene the ill-fated day they heard screams behind closed doors from Owabie's room.

A resident told NDV: "He is fond of assaulting his girlfriends behind closed doors and each time somebody waded in to make peace, he would pick offence. So that day, we heard the girl screaming but nobody bothered because he will not stop till he is satisfied with torturing her."

Unfortunately, none of the neighbours had suspected that the sudden quietude that followed the bout of closed door commotion between J-Boy and his pregnant lover was a signal of battery gone awry.

Fatal anger

In feat of uncontrollable anger, J-Boy had pummeled the lover to death. Apparently to conceal the scandal and



• Shallow grave from which Bertha's body was exhumed.

Bertha was said to have moved out of J-Boy's home for sometime because of the constant conflict and beating. A cousin to the deceased said: "It was as if she knew J-boy was going to kill her. She had gone to pick her belongings when argument ensued, leading to the fatal fight."

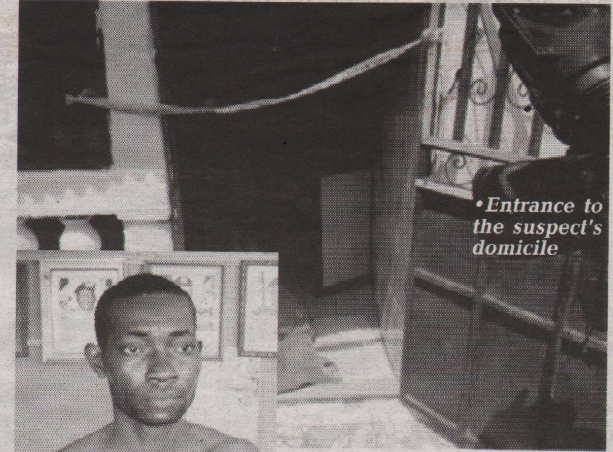
"She alerted her sister of her whereabouts as she visited the suspect's house. At some point into the scuffle, she called her sister from her boyfriend's house with a heavy voice that he was aiming to kill her. The sister could literally hear as she kept screaming," the cousin

added.

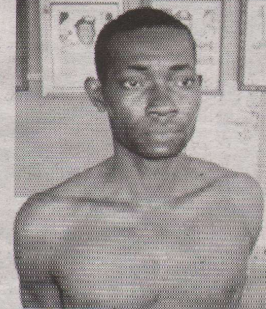
Outrageous discovery

Tuesday, December 5, as relatives alerted nearby Rumueperikom (Kala) Police Division on the development, suspicion among J-Boy's neighbours had also heightened, following the stench from his room.

Divisional Police Officer (DPO), CSP Emmanuel Wagbara, disclosed that a case of missing person was filed by a relative of the victim who reported that her sister had



• Entrance to the suspect's domicile



• J-Boy, the suspect

been missing for days after alleged visit to her boyfriend's.

The DPO said: "The suspect was invited and interrogated on whereabouts of the deceased. He admitted that Bertha was in his house, but later left for her home and that he had not heard from her since she left."

"We were not satisfied with his response so, early yesterday (Tuesday) morning, we decided to conduct a search in and around his house. We discovered a shallow grave in his room. It was then he confessed that the girl was buried in the grave."

Corpse exhumed

Police Public Relations Officer, PPRO, DSP Nnamdi Omoni, said: "We have exhumed the remains of the girl for autopsy. The boyfriend who killed her has confessed to the crime. The State Criminal Investigations Department has commenced investigation. We will ensure

justice in this matter. We have approached the family of the girl to cushion negative reactions and sanity is restored."

Omoni's reference to cushioning negative reactions was apparently police's proactive cordoning of the scene of crime to halt attempts by relatives of the deceased, joined by sympathetic public to unleash mayhem and threaten peace of the neighbourhood for the painful loss of Bertha.

Rumueperikom Youth Leader, Nyemanu Onuoha, described the incident as unfortunate and promised that the youths would ensure that justice takes its course.

Poser

Following further disclosure by DSP Omoni that the suspect, in preliminary confessions, said he acted in anger because the deceased allegedly cheated on him, the resonating question among residents in the unfolding tragedy is: "How does cheating on a boyfriend justify murder?"

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