

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Man Allegedly Brutally Attacks 71-Year-Old Mother, Ordered to Undergo Psych Evaluation

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The V.I.P.D. has not provided the mugshot of Vernel Williams. By. GETTY IMAGES

ST. THOMAS — A man must undergo a psychological evaluation after allegedly brutally attacking his mother.

On the afternoon of Saturday April 29, a V.I. Police Department detective was dispatched to the Schneider Regional Medical Center to meet with the victim of an alleged assault. There, they met an elderly woman with a black eye and several scrapes and bruises all over her body. The 71-year old told police that she was at home that morning around 8:30, sleeping in her bed, when she was awakened by a hand around her throat.

As her eyelids fluttered open, the woman told police that a fist smashed into her face. She tried to get away, but Vernel Williams, her eldest son, was still holding her by the throat. He punched her several more times, the woman recounted, tightening his grip on her neck and concentrating his blows in the upper chest and stomach.

The injured woman said she kept trying to get up, and at one point Williams tried to bend her hand backward, but could not. This unsuccessful attempt prompted him to intensify his attacks, the woman said, and told police that her son began punching her in the face, stomach, and knees as she lay on the bed. Her fingers were her son's next target, said the woman. He was again unsuccessful at bending those backward because she was able to tense them in time. She said he then concentrated on trying to strangle her, and she began to lose her breath.

The elderly woman says she tried to conserve oxygen by slowing down her breathing as much as she good, and after some seconds Williams released his literal stranglehold and went into his room. Once he had gone, the woman recounted, she called his father – who advised her to go to the police. She did not know why her eldest son attacked her, the woman told police.

Her grandson, she said, came into her room and immediately summoned his father, the woman's younger son. When he came into the home, a fight erupted between the two siblings, following which the elder of the pair left the building. He further evaded police when they tracked him down in the Nisky area.

Once Vernel Williams was in police custody, he was taken to the hospital where he was treated for his injuries. He was then arrested and charged with aggravated assault and battery, second-degree assault, simple assault, and disturbance of the peace — all as crimes of domestic violence. He declined to cooperate with police, and was remanded into custody under the territory's domestic violence laws until his advice of rights hearing on Monday, May 1.

Ahead of the hearing, authorities discovered that Williams had refused to speak to his defense attorney, or to anyone. The presiding judge ordered a psychological evaluation be performed and rescheduled the matter to Wednesday, May 3rd, noting that if Williams continued to remain silent, proceedings would be halted until that evaluation is complete.