

Mother describes horrific scene after baby is accidentally shot in the head

By CNYCentral

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****WARNING: The following article contains graphic information from court documents****

ROME, N.Y. -- A 7-month-old died of a gunshot wound to the head after his mother's boyfriend accidentally fired the gun inside of their Rome apartment Saturday afternoon.

In court documents released to CNYCentral, the infant's mother, Selena Hitt, described hearing the gun go off and looking down to see that her baby boy was dead.

It was almost 4 p.m. Saturday when police were dispatched to the apartment of 18-year-old Henry Bartle and 19-year-old Selena Hitt on the 500 block of West Dominick Street for reports of an injured child, according to the Rome Police Department.

Police say officers found the dead body of 7-month-old Nathaniel Hitt at the scene.

Investigators say a friend and Bartle were sitting on the couch cleaning his Mossberg 500 12 gauge pump shotgun and preparing to install a grip he ordered for the gun online.

Hitt said he was sitting with the gun on his lap, pointed toward she and the child who was in a walker across the room.

The mother recalled laughing and giggling with the baby when the gun went off. She says her ears began ringing as she looked down to check on her son.

A friend at the home said he saw Bartle "rock forward" to put the gun on a stool when he heard a bang and saw a "big puff of smoke."

Bartle said he leaned forward with his left hand on the stock and his right hand on the pistol grip when he heard the gun go off.

That is when all three looked down, saw the baby had been struck and ran downstairs to tell a neighbor to call for help, according to court documents.

Later that night, police announced Bartle, the mother's boyfriend, had been arrested and charged with criminally negligent homicide in connection to the child's death.

While Rome Police say the death of Nathaniel Hitt appears to be a tragic accident, new statements just revealed are raising troubling questions about what was going on inside the apartment on West Dominick Street.

In court documents, both the child's mother and Bartle described smoking marijuana before working on the gun. (<http://www.scribd.com/doc/291712091/Bartle-Henry-Felony-Complaint-61669>)

Bartle described smoking marijuana before the accident happened and even after the child was shot.

In a statement Bartle said:

We smoked some marijuana that [friend] had brought along. We took a couple of hits off my pipe, but we stopped because we planned to continue smoking after Nathaniel went to bed. He also told police he took steps to hide the marijuana he had been smoking before they arrived on scene.

He explained:

After the neighbors called the cops, I ran back upstairs to the apartment to grab our marijuana. I wanted to move the marijuana from the apartment because I thought we would get in trouble if the cops found it inside there. When I went back into the apartment, I saw Nathaniel. He was sitting in his bounce chair ... I then took a red grinder that had my marijuana and picked up a bowl or two. I then placed them in a homemade pine box and put them under a bunch of clothes that we had wrapped in garbage bags in the hallway.

He told police he did not feel high when he was cleaning his shotgun, but says the whole thing is his fault because the safety was not on.

Court documents show he said:

I didn't feel like I was high at all when I was cleaning my gun. I have taken that gun apart six times without any problems and I've shot it after I've cleaned it without any problems.

He goes on to say:

Now that I think about it, I can't believe that I was even thinking about the marijuana. What the [expletive] was I thinking after I just killed my son.