

Separate trials under way for 2 charged with murder

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DAVENPORT, IA. — Testimony began here Wednesday in the trial of a 17-year-old girl who is charged with first-degree murder in the stabbing death of a retired Davenport bus driver known as "Grandpa Brown."

The teen-ager, Christine Lockheart, and her boyfriend, Rick D. Nebinger, 24, are charged with first-degree murder and first-degree robbery in the Feb. 17 stabbing death of Floyd Brown, 79, at his Davenport home. Authorities have said money and other items were taken from the home after Brown was stabbed a dozen or more times in the neck and chest.

Lockheart and Nebinger are being tried in separate but simultaneous trials in the Scott County Courthouse. Court papers indicate that Lockheart and Nebinger plan to accuse each other of actually committing the stabbing.

In his opening statement Wednesday in Lockheart's trial, Scott County

Attorney William Davis told jurors evidence will show that Lockheart had done housecleaning for Brown, and the elderly man had befriended her.

Davis told jurors they would see "how his generosity was repaid" after Lockheart and Nebinger entered the Brown home on the night of Feb. 17. Davis did not specifically allege that Lockheart stabbed Brown, but she could be found guilty of first-degree murder if evidence showed that she helped in the commission of the crime, even though she did not actually cause the man's death.

In another courtroom, Assistant County Attorney James Hoffman told another jury that evidence in Nebinger's case will show that Nebinger confessed to his brother and sister that he stabbed Brown.

Nebinger's lawyer, Eugene Dwyer, told jurors Nebinger made up that story because he wanted to protect Lockheart at that time.