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Defendant in Santa Cruz harbor rape case to face trial

By Stephen Baxter

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SANTA CRUZ - The 21-year-old Santa Cruz man accused of robbing and raping a barista at Kind Grind coffee shop near the Santa Cruz Harbor in 2008 was held to answer on all charges in a preliminary hearing Monday.

Elvis Lorenzo Garcia faces life in prison if convicted in a trial, said prosecutor Jeff Rosell.

In the hearing Monday, witnesses included a DNA expert from the state Department of Justice who testified that bodily fluids found at the cafe matched Garcia's DNA. Judge Paul Burdick ruled that there was enough evidence to hold Garcia for a jury trial and ordered him back in court Sept. 22 for a second arraignment.

On March 19, 2008 at the Kind Grind Coffee Shop at 2222 E. Cliff Drive, a 23-year-old female employee was preparing to open the shop about 6 a.m. when she unlocked the front door, Santa Cruz police spokesman Zach Friend said earlier this year.

A man came in, held a knife to the woman's throat and trapped her in a kitchen where he sexually assaulted her, police said. He then forced her in a large refrigerator and barricaded its door, swiping all the cash from the register on his way out, Friend said.

Residents and Harbor regulars reeled from the crime and held community meetings about safety in its wake.

Garcia, who worked on the Westside as a machinist, was arrested on March 11 after an

extensive investigation that involved one of California's first "hits" using familial DNA.

In November 2010, DNA from Garcia's father matched DNA taken from the coffee shop, police said.

Police continued to investigate and ruled out Garcia's father as a suspect.

In the first few months of 2011, Santa Cruz police recovered a hairnet and a Gatorade bottle from Garcia's trash at his home in the Seabright area. DNA retrieved from those items matched DNA in the 2008 assault, police said. Authorities searched Garcia's home and arrested him.

Garcia is charged with sodomy, digital penetration, kidnapping, burglary, robbery, sexual battery and special allegations that include the use of a knife, according to records.

He is being held in lieu of \$1 million bail, according to jail records.

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