The Philadelphia Story

Was a serial syringe stabber on the loose?

May 1, 1997 By Walter Armstrong and Ronnilyn Pustil

A 32-year-old woman with 11 arrests to her name was nabbed again earlier this year after a citywide dragnet. But this time she was charged with a string of felonies, including attempted murder and terroristic threats. After being accused of shoplifting at a CVS Pharmacy, Philadelphian Deborah Beckwold told employees she left a child unattended in a car; once outside, she pulled a syringe out of her purse, jabbed the female worker escorting her with a hypodermic needle and shouted, “I have AIDS!” She then fled in a cab. This was Beckwold’s second syringe stabbing. In May 1995, when accused of stealing $59 worth of goods at a Rite Aid Pharmacy, she stuck a needle in a clerk’s arm and yelled, “You’re going to die!” Police don’t know whether she has HIV, and they’re considering seeking a court order to test her for the virus.

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