

## Mysterious death of veterinarian probed



By Judith Berne  
staff writer

She was a small, quiet girl, who was catapulted into the limelight when the horse she decreed ran away with two of the three jewels of racing's Triple Crown.

Dr. Janice Runkle, a former West Bloomfield resident whose parents still live in the township, tasted fame recently as the veterinarian to Pleasant Colony — winner of this year's Kentucky Derby and Preakness.

Runkle, 28, was found dead Saturday night on an isolated Lake Michigan beach, preserved by the state of Illinois as a nature area. Her body was partially decomposed, indicating it might have been there several days.

She was reported missing from her New York residence earlier in the week by her sister.

A preliminary autopsy ruled out drowning. There was no evidence of a struggle, according to Frank Winans, chief investigator for the Lake County, Ill., Sheriff's Department.

"There was no trauma to the body. The area immediately around the body didn't indicate any violence," Winans reported.

Results of toxicology studies to test the possible presence of drugs may be available Friday, he added.

Winans would not comment on the possibility of suicide. "The only thing we're saying right now is she was not physically assaulted."

"We do not believe there is any (crime) syndicate tie-in. We have not seen any inclination that Miss Runkle was anything but a veterinarian."

"JUST THINK well of her," her father, Robert Runkle, asked Tuesday.

He and his wife, Shirley, find the notion of suicide inconceivable, since their daughter had appeared in good spirits during a recent visit to their West Bloomfield home.

Letters reportedly written to one of her two sisters and a friend said she was going away for a while and outlined instructions for the care of her two horses, according to Winans.

Funeral services are 2 p.m. today in the Bell Chapel of William R. Hamilton Funeral Home in Birmingham for the graduate of North Farmington High School and Michigan State University. Burial is private.

Her sudden death saddened Harry Klentner, owner of Haverhill Farms riding stables which Runkle frequented as a teenager who loved horses.

She took lessons and later cleaned stalls and did some teaching for Klentner.

"I taught her," Klentner reported Tuesday from the Walled Lake stables. "She was real quiet, very unobtrusive."

"Just before the Derby, she came and visited. She seemed very quiet, off by herself. The race scene is fast and furious. I just don't get it."

RUNKLE LIVED in a cottage on the grounds of the Gold Coast Equine Center in Old Brookville, N.Y. — near the Belmont Park Race Track where she had a veterinary practice.

She was a sweetheart," Gold Coast stable manager Bob Rhodes said, in a telephone interview. "She never hurt

anyone. She really got to herself." In Rhodes' opinion, it's improbable that she committed suicide as a result of a broken love affair as indicated in published reports.

"She might have known something about the race horse business, which is a dirty business, that she couldn't live with," he speculated.

Runkle reportedly travelled to the Chicago-area from New York and registered at an airport hotel under an assumed name.

She paid cash for her plane ticket and hotel room. Police Tuesday did not know how she made the 45-mile trip from the airport to the Illinois state park.

But taxi, limousine and bus transportation was available to Waukegan, the nearest city.

The stretch of beach itself was more than two miles from the closest point reachable by a vehicle, Winans said. It was restricted to those who had state permits to use it.

Boaters, who landed at the beach, discovered the body, he reported.

## A new beginning

# Polish refugees find freedom

By Mary Rodrigue  
staff writer

Eugenia and Janina Kukawska are considered radicals in Poland.

Escaping last March with little more than the clothes on their backs, the mother and daughter arrived in America last week after spending five months in an Austrian refugee camp.

They left behind their fully furnished three-bedroom apartment in Warsaw and a way of life that included working for \$11 a month and standing in line all night for food.

Because of their involvement with the independent Polish union, Solidarity, in such undertakings as taking food meant for export off the docks, the Kukawskas would face a prison term if they returned to their native land.

Sitting in Susanna Suszczyk's living room in Farmington Hills Tuesday, the two women praised their sponsor family and their new country with emotions that gushed despite the language barriers.

"For us it's very good, very nice. I have no words to explain," said Janina, 27, who speaks some English.

She worked as a manicurist in Poland. Her mother, who speaks English and Ukrainian in addition to Polish, was a seamstress.

Susanna Suszczyk speaks some German. Her husband, Nick, can speak Ukrainian. He emigrated from the

U.S. Founded in 1939 by Alexandra Tolstoy, daughter of the famed Russian author, and Tatiana Schaufuss with royalties from Leo Tolstoy's books, its purpose is to aid anyone escaping political, economic or religious oppression.

Financed primarily today by the U.S. Department of State refugee affairs division, it helps 6,000 refugees a year relocate, according to spokesman Harrison Hodge.

"I found out they were coming last Monday and they were here Thursday," Mrs. Suszczyk said. "It's been a lot of fun."

The Kukawskas love the Suszczyk's daughter, Sarah, 15, yet. He's attending hockey school in Toronto through the end of the month.

Sunday the women attended a Polish Mass at Orchard Lake St. Mary's. They've been to an ethnic festival at Hart Plaza, Twelve Oaks Mall in Novi, and grocery shopping at a Chatham store.

"Their eyes were hugging out looking at all the food," Mrs. Suszczyk said. The Polish hams at Chatham are something they could never buy in Poland. Like strawberries and other prime foods, hams are all exported by the Communist government.

The women recall food was hard to buy when they left Poland five months ago.

"EVERY BIT OF their income was spent on food or clothing," Mrs. Suszczyk said. "They never had money for parties or dances or to eat in restaurants."

The situation in Poland is getting

"It's very good, very nice."

— Janina Kukawska

Ukraine with his family at age 3. Neither speaks Polish.

"WE GET BY with bits of other languages and sign language. We do OK," Mrs. Suszczyk said.

She learned of the plight of the Polish refugees from a newspaper article and phoned the Tolstoy Foundation in Lapeer, a non-profit organization which helps refugees relocate in the U.S.

Founded in 1939 by Alexandra Tolstoy, daughter of the famed Russian author, and Tatiana Schaufuss with royalties from Leo Tolstoy's books, its purpose is to aid anyone escaping political, economic or religious oppression.

Financed primarily today by the U.S. Department of State refugee affairs division, it helps 6,000 refugees a year relocate, according to spokesman Harrison Hodge.

"I found out they were coming last Monday and they were here Thursday," Mrs. Suszczyk said. "It's been a lot of fun."

The Kukawskas love the Suszczyk's daughter, Sarah, 15, yet. He's attending hockey school in Toronto through the end of the month.

Sunday the women attended a Polish Mass at Orchard Lake St. Mary's. They've been to an ethnic festival at Hart Plaza, Twelve Oaks Mall in Novi, and grocery shopping at a Chatham store.

"Their eyes were hugging out looking at all the food," Mrs. Suszczyk said.

The Polish hams at Chatham are something they could never buy in Poland. Like strawberries and other prime foods, hams are all exported by the Communist government.

The women recall food was hard to buy when they left Poland five months ago.

"EVERY BIT OF their income was spent on food or clothing," Mrs. Suszczyk said. "They never had money for parties or dances or to eat in restaurants."

The situation in Poland is getting

worse, according to wire reports. Solidarity members staged a three-day protest over food shortages in Warsaw this week, including a blockade in a major intersection near Communist Party headquarters.

The women believe the Polish/Russian conflict is going to escalate into a war.

"They left the country by obtaining visas from the Italian Embassy in Warsaw. From Poland, they traveled to Czechoslovakia and finally to the international refugee camp with 10,000 others in Austria.

Mrs. Kukawska's son, Andre, who lives in southern Poland with his wife and children, doesn't know they're gone. Mrs. Kukawska has written him a letter recently.

Mrs. Suszczyk expects the two women to live with her family until next spring.

"Mainly, they need jobs right now," she said.

She found a job prospect for the mother at an exclusive dress shop owned by a Russian woman and hopes to find the daughter a janitorial job at the Rehabilitation Institute where she is employed as a dental hygienist.

THE KUKAWSKAS are enrolled in an English class at Ten Mile Community School which begins in September.

Neither can drive so Mrs. Suszczyk plans to enroll them in a drivers training course in the future.

"I really think they'll need a car once they're settled into their own apartment," she said.

But she has all the confidence in the world in them.

"They're very hard working, frugal people," she said. "This is really a thrilling experience."

## Hikers log 700 miles along Great Divide

Four hikers who left Alberta, Canada in mid-June have completed 700 miles of their 3,000 mile journey down the Continental Divide to raise funds for treatment of blindness.

The Sight Trek has already raised more than \$25,000 to be used by the SEVA Foundation (Society for Epidemiology and Voluntary Assistance) and the World Health Organization (WHO) to treat nearly 300,000 blind people in Nepal.

SEVA volunteers Steven and Stewart Merritt, North Farmington High School and University of Michigan graduates, first talked to the Farmington Observer about Sight Trek last May.

The brothers explained Sight Trek's goal: to raise \$250,000 during the six month hike-a-thon. Steven is expedition coordinator, in charge of raising funds from SEVA's Chelsea, Mich. headquarters.

Stewart, 23, is one of the four hikers. The others are Clarke Ball, Patricia Ball and David Kahn.

Despite swollen feet, blisters, tendonitis and strained ligaments, the hikers are covering 20 to 30 miles a day — and still haven't lost their sense of humor.

"I'm so glad to be doing this with SEVA," Merritt said. "I feel incredibly fortunate to be part of this."

"Proudest thoughts come to me when hiking alone near the summit of a mountain: how do they make Peanut M&M's? How do they chocolate coat each one?"

PAT BALL, the only female hiker on Sight Trek, worked as a secretary prior

to backpacking across the Great Divide. This is her maiden trek.

"I've gone through a lot these past few days," she wrote in a letter to SEVA headquarters.

"So many times I have wanted to quit. If the trek was for me, I would've stopped a long time ago. But actually, it's a refreshing lifestyle. I'm learning about myself — where to stop and where to shut down."

"We walk and climb all day. Every mountain we approach, I think: I can't do it, not another one. And by the end of the day, I would have done 10 or more if I had to — all with the same thought."

Clarke Ball was the only wilderness expert when the crew started the hike. He traveled the southern half of the Continental Divide in 1972 alone.

"July 4 was another of the great days," he wrote. "We covered 23 miles and 5,650 feet of elevation. Came storming down."

"THROUGH THE PAIN I have discovered an untapped reservoir of energy," wrote hiker David Kahn, 21.

"There is so much in me that I had not yet experienced."

The trekkers are hiking the Idaho Bitterroot Range en route to an arrival today at Yellowstone National Park, where they will rest for a few days and visit with family and friends.

The expedition will continue through Wyoming through the end of August. The final portion of the trek will take the hikers through Colorado, New Mexico and into Mexico.



Susanna Suszczyk



RANDY BORSTATA/photographer

Freedom is something to smile about for Eugenia (left) and Janina Kukawska, mother and daughter refugees from Poland.

## Neighbors lobby for traffic safety

By Gary M. Cates  
staff writer

Last August Martin's group, along with four other subdivision associations, requested that safety improvements be made for the students walking on 14 Mile Road.

Part of the requested improvements included trimming all brush adjacent to the sidewalk on the north side of 14 Mile Road, the updating of signs, addition of crosswalk stripes, and painting of a new crosswalk in front of Warner Middle School and the construction of sidewalks to serve the new crosswalk, along with bringing a crossing guard to work there.

All of these measures were recommended by the Farmington Hills City Council, and have been carried out.

The Farmington Public Schools have also changed the starting time for the schools, to save money by reducing the number of buses, having students travel at the same time.

"We will be attending council and school board meetings until the work is completed," says Ruby Martin, president of the Kimberly North Improvement Association.

"The fact that high school students

will be walking to bus stops at the same time as middle school students has no bearing on the safety issue. High school students do not walk with middle school students and vice versa," says Martin.

Because of the darkness at early hours the danger does not decrease, she says. Also, the increased number of students walking does not help the situation.

"We feel that the money being saved

## Driver dies in accident

A Birmingham man died, and another man was injured when their car hit a bridge abutment on I-696 near Haggerty Road, early July 31.

Jeffrey Blank, 18, of Birmingham, was pronounced dead at the scene, and Robert Mayer, 18, of Birmingham was treated for minor injuries and released

from Botsford General Hospital. "Their car was heading eastbound on I-696 when it hit a guard rail and then struck a bridge abutment," says State Trooper Greg Abo.

State Police believe that Blank fell asleep while driving, and then hit the guard rail.

Please turn to Page 8A

## what's inside

Classified Ads Sections C-D  
Editorials . . . . . 18A  
Inside Angles . . . . . 2A  
Obituaries . . . . . 4A  
Recreation News . . . . . 14A  
Sports . . . . . Section C  
Suburban Life . . . . . Section B

## "TREMENDOUS RESULTS..."

Kelly Services placed their Observer & Eccentric help wanted ad and received "tremendous results." They one time Monday ad drew 30 to 40 calls!

Remember, one call does it all!  
644-1070  
Use your MasterCard or Visa