Slaying probe hurt by fragmentation

By JOE MARTUCCI

Oakland County Sheriff Johannes Spreen has long been an advocate of unified police efforts. And he has said before that small local departments with limited resources are hard pressed to solve major crimes.

pressed to solve major crimes. But the speech he delivered last week touched a sensitive nerve among law enforcement officials, causing some to retaliate with comments about Spreen they had previously kept private. The Speech, entitled "The Child Killer Investigation (A Case of Fragmentation at its Worst), was delivered Friday in Atlanta, Ga., at a police conference.

ference.

Spreen charges in the address that the investigation into the kidnap-murders of Timothy King. Kristine Mihelich, Jill Robinson and Mark Stebbins has been hindered by "the folly of

ich. Jill Robinson and Mark Stebnish as been hindered by "the folly of fragmentation.

The also citie examples of what he also site examples of what he also site examples of the state of

for their personnel. Chiefs were committing rookie detectives and patrol officers to investigate the homicides and were rotating their personnel periodically to allow everyone to participate in the investigation.

"SOME OF THE officers never had a chance to become familiar with all the cases, yet they were burdened with the responsibility of catching the

a chance to become familiar with the cases, yet they were burdened with the responsibility of catching the "The mere fact that some of the investigators were inexperienced resulted in the improper elimination of some suspects. Recently, the task force was forced to review all of the tips that were submitted during the five-day period that Timothy King the task force was forced to review all of the tips that were submitted during the five-day period that timothy King the task force with "a commendable job." And be conceded it was "formed hurriedly... and is battling against all the individual and departmental quirks that are symptoms of the chronic fragmentation of law enforcement." The work of the task force was ampered from the start by many problems. It was discovered that one jurisdiction charged with the investigation had virtually no reports and in another jurisdiction, evidence lead been misplaced and mishandled. The properties of the subjust of the control of

THE SHERIFF criticizes the South

vestigation. The media appeared to also award the prosecutor this role by quoting him widely in print and on the radio and TV.

"He received extensive publicity when he summoned from Onlario. Canada, a crime lab expert in order to attempt to lift fingerprints from the bodies of murder victims. This ... was questionable, since the sheriff's department had an equally qualifed expert."

Jill Robinson were agcovered.

"Although the state police maintain two relatively close crime labs and the Oakland County Sheriff's Department also has an excellent crime lab, none was called to process the scene (where Stebbins was found).

"By the time the investigator from the Oakland County Medical Examiner's Office final arrived, the body had been moved from its original position.

iner's Unitee had rived, the Objection had been moved from its original position. The body was them transported to the Southield Police Department rather than directly to the Oakland County Morgue. The clothes were taken off the body at the Southfield Police Department. When the body finally arrived at the morgue, it was devid of all clothes.

"No one really knows what might have been found at the scene had proper crime scene procedures been followed and a crime lab was not called in when the control of the control of the country of the control of the country of the cou

tecting the crime scene arose at the outset.
"Traffic onlookers, responses of many local departments, media, etc., created confusion. The chief of the five-man department, having no personal experience in homicide investigation, turned the investigation over to the state police, who then requested assistance from area departments."

ments."
Spreen reserved his harshest criticism for Oakland County Prosecutor L. Brook Patterson, who acted as a task force spokesman for a period after the Mithelich slaying, Spreen is a Democrat; Patterson is a Republican. "The nolitically-ambitious prosecutor seized this opportunity and assumed the role of coordinating the in-

countywide police departments.
But he dismisses this as impractic-

al.

"MAYORS, CITY managers, township supervisors and police chiefs are reluctant to relinquish their power." Instead, he advocates formation of major crime units" on the county level to assist local departments.

"I urge every progressive sheriff and police chief to consider a coordinated effort, yet keeping accountability at the local level of government.

"The sheriff can provide this coordi-"The sherilf can provide this coordination in the form of a major crimes-unity with countywide jurisdichion."
manned by the best investigators in; the county to be deputized and mobilized upon the occurrence of any infamous crime within the county to assist and support local jurisdicitons.

"As sheriff, I have consistently pointed out the evils and problems of fragmented law enforcement. Here we see how our county citizens are paying the price of the folly of fragmentation."



Operation drain

Farmington Hills Fire Capt. Ben Brogren, Fire-fighters Bob Baers (left to right) Lt. Hil Howard, Firefighter John Richards and Charlie Richardson

Building or Remodeling?

connect a four and a half inch line to Engine Four to draft water from the pond at Oakland Community College. (Photo by Jim Achtenberg)



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Helmet repeal law causes caustic comment

Margaret G. Schaeffer, judge of the 47th district court, shares an ill-wind kind of story she found in a trade publication having to do with the threat of the repeal of Michigan's motorcycle helmet law.

The story comes from the Dallas Morning News.
A staff member of that city's Southwestern Medical Center, on hearing of

the repeal is quoted as saying "People in need of kiney transplants will definitely benefit from the helmet law repeal because many young, healthy kidney transplants come from accident victims.

"This change should substantially increase the number of vital organs available."



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