

Farmington Observer

Volume 92 Number 49

Thursday, April 2, 1981

Farmington, Michigan

64 Pages

Twenty-five cents

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Autopsy probe backs up police on murder hunch

By Mary Rodrigue
staff writer

Farmington police have resumed a full-scale probe into the murder of a 18-year-old Detroit woman following a second autopsy of the victim.

The body of Debra Ann Rentschler was exhumed from a Washtenaw County cemetery on Feb. 26 after police convinced authorities that the first autopsy was in error.

Rentschler's nude body was found in a parking-lot snowbank at Drake and Grand River on Dec. 24.

Police treated the case as a homici-

de, although Oakland County Medical Examiner Dr. Robert J. Silvery, who performed the first autopsy on Dec. 26, determined the woman died of natural causes stemming from hepatitis and chronic drug use.

The second autopsy, performed by a team of pathologists at University Hospital in Ann Arbor, listed the cause of death as strangulation.

"The results of the second autopsy have confirmed what we have believed all along," said Robert Seifert, Farmington public safety director.

"We were never able to accept the logic of the first finding, wherein an ap-

parently healthy 18-year-old woman is found naked and dead 40 miles and four hours after last having been seen, due to 'natural causes.'

"OUR INVESTIGATION has been frustrated by the amount of time and resources devoted to resolving questions other than who killed Debbie Rentschler."

The Oakland County Prosecutor's Office, which issued the second autopsy, confirmed that there are other complaints pending against Silvery, including a non-criminal complaint before the state Attorney General over a 1979 autopsy.

Silvery's job performance is currently under review by the county executive's office. A decision on his employment status is expected by early next week, a county spokesman said.

Silvery has been employed by the county since 1975.

"Silvery has been, at best, controversial in the past," Seifert said.

Police used snapshots of the victim's body showing fresh wounds and a report from the state police crime lab verifying the amount of morphine in the body wasn't fatal in its effort to initiate the second autopsy.

"We went to three different patholo-

gists with Dr. Silvery's report," Seifert said.

They were Dr. Werner Spitz, Wayne County medical examiner, Larry Simon, medical examiner for Ingham County, and Robert Hendrix, chief of pathology at the University of Michigan medical school and medical examiner for Washtenaw County. Each concluded that the woman was strangled.

HENDRIX LED the team which conducted the second autopsy. Silvery and his supervisor, Leroy A. Volberding, director of human services for the county, were present.

Silvery amended the death certificate after the second autopsy.

Seifert said he believes the woman's death may be related to 18 other murders of Detroit-area women, many with prostitution arrest records like Rentschler, which have occurred in the past year.

Rentschler was last seen by her boyfriend at the corner of Woodward and East Grand Boulevard at 2:30 a.m. on Dec. 24. Her body was discovered in Farmington by an employee arriving for work at 8 a.m.

Sgt. Peter Amato is in charge of the investigation.

25-year affair

Circa bar sticks with campus

By Craig Piechura
staff writer

George Blond has been a B.M.O.C. at Wayne State University for the past 25 years. That's Big Man On Campus.

The Farmington Hills resident isn't a professional student and he's not an absent-minded professor. Still, he's an essential part of any college scene. He runs a campus bar, the Circa 1890.

Blond bought the bar five years ago but for 20 years before buying the bar he ran the Campus Restaurant, serving shish-kebab and gyros to countless numbers with limited funds.

To celebrate the bar's 25th year in business today, Blond is discounting food 25 percent and donating \$2,500 to the WSU Men's Glee Club.

The donation will enable the glee club to tour Europe this fall where they plan to sing in a Fourth of July celebration in Denmark and participate in international singing competition in Wales. The singing group will serenade dancers at the bar all day today.

Business has been good lately and Blond figures that not only the glee club has something to sing about.

"I came here when Wayne was two blocks south of here," Blond says. "Now this is the center of the campus."

Wayne State University has been in the news lately as another in a series of local institutions hurt by Michigan's declining economy. However, state aid cutbacks to higher education haven't hurt bar business. Because Wayne State has been good to Blond, he said it

was time he did something good for Wayne State.

"NO ONE ASKED me to do it," Blond said. "Nobody forced me to do it. It's just a gesture on my part to tell the school I appreciate what they've done for us. Me and my brother, Steve. Because 55 percent of our business directly or indirectly comes from the university. It's a nice bunch of people to serve. And we appreciate that."

While everyone thinks Wayne State is in dire straits now, Blond says the low point for the college was just after the 1967 riot when many persons were afraid to cross Eight Mile Road.

"Times were tough, things were bad, and we stuck it out," Blond said, describing lean years at his Cass Avenue restaurant.

Despite the reputation for crime on Cass, Blond says break-ins and robberies haven't been a problem in the 25 years he's been in business on the street.

"I do want to say something to those people," Blond says, referring to talk of high crime in the Wayne State area. "Cass Avenue is not Cass Corridor. It seems to me many people have a tendency to label everything happening two, three miles from campus saying it is in the area of the Wayne State campus."

"It was coming down from home the other day and I hear a guy who broadcasts a fire set on Trumbull as a fire in the Wayne State area. The place is two

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RANDY BORST/staff photographer

Brothers George and Steve Blond are celebrating the 25th anniversary of an institution at Wayne State University — the Circa 1890 bar.

Death penalty debate sparked

By Mike Scanlon
staff writer

Should society eliminate guns or gunmen?

Howard Simon and L. Brooks Patterson crossed ideological swords on the question Tuesday, less than 24 hours after President Ronald Reagan and three other men were wounded in Washington by a man armed with a .22 caliber pistol.

Simon is executive director of the Michigan branch of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), an organization long among those most outspoken in opposition to the death penalty. Patterson is Oakland County's prosecutor and the leader of a statewide petition drive to seek voter approval for capital punishment.

Now one of 11 states barring the death penalty, Michigan has prohibited it for more than 150 years.

ual apparently with a considerable amount of mental instability, and even those who call for the death penalty call for it only for willful, deliberate homicide.

"Not even the most hardened, bloodthirsty advocate of the death penalty would impose it on a person who was deranged or mentally unstable," said Simon.

Replied Patterson:

"It's nice to know Howard Simon and the ACLU are ready with an insanity defense for (suspect John W.) Hinckley. I prefer to wait for the jury's decision."

"I don't think any other civilized country would tolerate an attempt on its executive's life and respond with a prison sentence."

The death penalty, Patterson said, is "an appropriate response from a society that's outraged at the nature of the offense. It is grounded in a moral ethic."

would have prevented the attempted assassination of Reagan. There's any number of ways that a public official, in a public post, could be murdered. A bomb; acid could be thrown in his face. The ways to kill or maim are numerous," said Patterson, citing the alleged use of a rifle in the assassination of John F. Kennedy.

"I DO SEE the relevance of renewed talk of handgun control," said Simon, "because (the assassination attempt) raises substantial questions."

"It again reminds us how unprotected we are without effective federal handgun legislation if a person — even with a record of mental instability and a previous record for arrests for guns — can go into a pawn shop, plunk down \$47 and come out with a .22."

"I do think that a serious and conscientious politician who works in the field of law enforcement and who doesn't exploit our entirely reasonable concerns about the high level of criminal violence in this society would take a good, hard look at FBI statistics that show that through this decade, virtually half of all murders were committed with handguns."

"We would be walking a much more

effective road toward reducing the level of criminal homicide to do something to reduce the widespread distribution of cheap handguns than by engaging in a few random and symbolic executions.

"(Capital punishment) has nothing to do with effective law enforcement."

PATTERSON, however, questioned the effectiveness of handgun legislation.

"Those who wanted a gun to commit a heinous crime like the attempted assassination of our president could buy a gun on the black market" even if pistols were outlawed, the prosecutor said.

Patterson said there are between "65 and 100 million handguns" in America, and outlawing their possession would "turn a lot of law-abiding citizens into criminals."

"Those who obeyed the law would be at the mercy of those who didn't," said Patterson.

He compared handgun control to the Volstead Act outlawing alcohol.

"We were going to kill all the ills in America with prohibition, and what we did was create an organized crime problem that still exists."

Reagan shooting spurs gun protest

By Judith Berns
staff writer

A cry for national gun control laws was the overwhelming local reaction to Monday's attempted assassination of President Ronald Reagan by a sampling of shoppers interviewed Tuesday morning at the West Bloomfield Plaza Shopping Center.

"I really feel if they had that hand gun this man (Reagan's accused assassin) would have still been in jail," Kathy Elise of Bloomfield Township said.

"I was sick. I just wish something could be done about it," she added.

"I really think it's terrible. It really makes me afraid. With all the security (around the president), if it could happen to him, it could happen to anybody," said Ruth Aaronson, of West Bloomfield, out shopping with her 9-month-old son, Randy.

"Anybody could come up with a gun and shoot. A friend of mine saw a 10- or 11-year-old walking around our subdivision with a gun," she related.

Despite the assassination attempt, Mrs. Aaronson doesn't see Reagan reversing his stand against national gun controls. "No, I don't think it's in his political interest," she said.

of the assassination attempt. "It shouldn't happen."

"It's happened so often, we're shocked but we're not shocked," said one West Bloomfield woman, who asked to remain anonymous.

"I wish there were gun control. President Reagan himself is against gun control. I wonder if he will change."

"I think it's a darn shame," declared Charles Savino, a WSU resident. "I thought about everyone who has been assassinated back to Abraham Lincoln."

"I think they should ban the pistols. I don't think they should even sell them." Savino said he also favors capital punishment.

West Bloomfield High School teacher Sherry Fisher viewed the assassination attempt as "a sign of the times."

"People are very dissatisfied with society and with themselves in general. People don't have the same sense of pride in themselves and in what they do."

She wasn't sure whether gun control or tighter security could deter a would-be assassin. "There are always people who go to extremes," she said.

"I THINK he just wanted to be famous," Lisa Pollack, 16, said, of the assassin's motives. Lisa attends West Bloomfield High School.

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Feline lovers find new breed

By Mary Rodrigue
staff writer

There's a new breed of cat in town and it's causing quite a stir among local feline lovers.

Called an Oci for its spotted coat resembling an ocelot, the animal is the result of cross breeding a Siamese with an Abyssinian cat.

Abyssinians characteristically have a reddish brown coat with small black markings while Siamese have a gray coat with darker face, ears, tail and feet. The resulting Oci has a silvery gray coat with black spots.

Dr. Herbert Viergutz, who operates the Farmington Dog and Cat Hospital at 30470 Grand River, breeds, shows and sells Ocis for between \$225 and \$500.

The price varies depending on the spots, shape of head and color of eyes. For instance, a cat with blue eyes (inherited from the Siamese) would sell for less than one with green eyes. A cat with prominent spots would sell for more than one with faded markings. A

cat with a round head would sell for more than one with a flat crown.

Viergutz, a semi-retired veterinarian who has been raising animals for half a century, started breeding Ocis four years ago.

"I was through raising cats," recalled Viergutz, who has a keyboard full of dog and cat photos in an office filled with veterinary plaques.

"I HAD AN old Siamese kicking round here when someone told me about Oci cats. I started to get interested."

Comparing the unusual spotted fur to some of the thriving green plants in his office, Viergutz called it "an accident of chromosomes and genes."

Every cross breeding of Abyssinian and Siamese cats doesn't result in a sureshot litter of spotted cats. In the latest birth, just two of five kittens were spotted.

Some of the kittens change colors when they grow older. One born mahogany

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