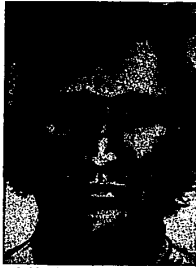


# Was child killer spotted?

By MARY CONNELLY-SZCZESNY



"We feel this might be the break we've been looking for," said Michigan State Police Lt. Robert Robertson, head of the police task force investigating the Oakland County child murders.

The cause of Robertson's guarded optimism Monday was the appearance of a witness who said that twice on the day Timothy King was abducted she saw a man in the murdered youngster's Birmingham neighborhood who looked like the murder suspect. She also said the man had a blue Gremlin—the same make and color car seem near the unidentified suspect who was seen with Timothy shortly before he disappeared.

It was the first public acknowledgment by police in months of a new development in the King murder and those of three other Oakland County youngsters during the past two years.

As a result of the witness's statements, police were able to release a new—and they believe more accurate—composite drawing of the man they are seeking.

The woman, who police will only identify as a Birmingham area resident, told investigators she saw the man, near noon on March 16, parked on a side street near Adams School, where Timothy was a six-grader. She said she also saw the man at roughly 4 p.m. in the parking lot of a shopping center at Maple and Hunter, Birmingham, about four blocks from Timothy's home. It was from the parking lot, police theorize, that the boy was abducted at 8:30 p.m. The 11-year-old youngster was found murdered March 22 in Livonia.

"We feel comfortable with the (new) composite," Robertson said when the drawing was released.

INFORMATION FROM the latest witness has spurred police to intensify efforts to trace owners of blue Gremlins.

The new witness said the man she saw was parked in a blue Gremlin near Adams School and was seen later leaning on a blue Gremlin in the shopping center parking lot.

The information on the blue Gremlin coincides with that of an earlier police witness who told investigators that a man near a blue Gremlin was seen

to a youth about 8:30 p.m. March 16 reported the man was wearing a shirt and tie.

Robertson said because of the time difference between the sightings "it would be likely he could put a tie on in the evening at not at noon."

POLICE SAID they located and interviewed the latest witness Nov. 11. The new composite sketch was drawn last week and shown to area police chiefs.

The latest witness had contacted police after release of the first composite drawing of the suspect last spring, Robertson said.

"She came forward only to verify the fact that the composite was an accurate likeness," he said. "She did not identify herself."

He added that the woman felt police had all the information she knew.

Robertson said police located the woman Nov. 11 "through an undisclosed investigative technique."

Police refused comment on whether hypnosis was used to aid the witness in recalling information for the new composite.

"THE BASIC descriptions do not vary from the first witness to the latest," Robertson said. "The other witnesses felt comfortable with the composite."

"We may very well be able to identify the person with this one," he added. "It looks more like a person. It's something you can relate to."

Police continue to look for a white male, 25 to 30 years old, with dark piercing eyes. He is believed to be 5'8" to 5'10" and weigh 150 to 170 pounds.

So far, 13,200 tips have been received by the homicide task force which includes police from the state police, Oakland County Sheriff's Department and several Oakland suburban departments.

Seventy-five hundred tips have been cleared, Robertson said.

FEDERAL AND state funding of the task force is expiring this month but local monies have been pledged to continue the investigation.

The task force telephone number is 644-0400.

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