

Task force contemplates fate of Oakland child killer

By JOE MARTUCCI

Where is the Oakland County child killer? While that questions continues to haunt police and parents, two members of the special task force investigating the murders have devised 10 possible answers.

L. Robert Robertson of the state police, commander of the task force, and Jerry Tobias, director of Southfield Township's youth bureau, are preparing an article on the killer for a professional journal. In the article, they say the following 10 theories "represent the most current thinking" on the killer:

- He has left the area.
- He is in a mental institution.

- He is in jail.
- He is dead.
- He was a house-sitter.
- He operates from another state.
- He was on vacation.
- He is mentally ill.
- He is still in the area.
- He has stopped killing due to fear of apprehension.

"Most of these theories are based on speculation," Robertson and Tobias admit. "Few of them can be substantiated with any factual data. Some are more acceptable than others, but each represents an effort to explain the whereabouts of the Oakland County killer."

The officers caution, however, that the 10 theories "in no way exhausts the possible explanations of his disappearance. (We are sure there must be other ideas that could be added to the list."

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POLICE BELIEVE the same killer was responsible for the murders of four Oakland County children beginning with Mark Stebbins of Ferndale in February 1976 and ending with Timothy King of Birmingham in March of last year.

Despite investigation of thousands of tips by the special task force and a \$100,000 reward, police have no suspects in the case. In their article, Robertson and Tobias give various theories on why the killer hasn't struck again.

• The killer has left the area: Backers of this theory speculate that the killer may have left because of fear of being caught, a job transfer or some other reason.

Although Robertson and Tobias don't dismiss this possibility, they note that there have been no similar killings in the country since the King slaying, casting some doubt on this theory.

• The killer is in a mental institution: The theory is that the killer's family had him committed and

never notified authorities because they believed this would prevent him from killing again.

• The killer is in jail: Proponents of this theory argue that anyone who has killed four times was probably involved before with police. It is possible he has been arrested in another state for a different crime and that authorities there haven't made the connection with the child killings. This, they say, would explain "the sudden abstinence from his child abduction-killing behavior."

• The killer is dead: He may have committed suicide, died of natural causes or been killed by someone who was an accomplice in one or more of the murders.

• The killer was a "house sitter": He took care of a family's house during abduction periods and thus had access to their cars and complete privacy. When the family returned, they found everything in order and had no reason to associate their house sitter with the killings.

• The killer operates from another state: Some believe the killer never lived in this area, but may have been a salesman who knew the territory. He

may have worked here periodically, staying in a cottage or with a friend living in a rural area. The friend may have been an accomplice.

• The killer was on vacation: Since three of the four abductions coincided with college vacation periods, supporters of this theory say he may have been a vacationing teacher or student.

• The killer is mentally ill: Some have suggested the killer has a dual personality and is not aware of his actions. Certain conditions trigger the killings, but otherwise "He lives quietly within the law and draws very little attention to himself."

• The killer is still in the area: "He holds a respectable position in the community and goes about his business in a routine way. He's found ways to control and subvert his sexual needs (some of the victims had been molested)."

It's possible that the task force may have questioned him, but that he had an alibi. "He knows that he must tread lightly and watches himself very care-

fully so as not to create suspicion."

• The task force has inhibited the killer: Pressure applied by the investigators through various programs "has placed the killer in a tenuous position, causing him to fear apprehensions and thereby inhibit his behavior." He has been forced "underground."

Robertson and Tobias conclude that no one theory is more valid than the others, and that the real explanation may have eluded them.

"No one will really know these things until the Oakland County child killer is apprehended. In the meantime, we continue to speculate with the hope that in so doing, it will shed greater insight into the subject's whereabouts and eventual apprehension."

Contributions for the theories were gleaned from police, criminal justice workers, psychologists, sociologists, educators, writers, lawyers and others.

Sawyer derby catch is biggest

By TIM RICHARD

Newburgh Lake has turned into a hot spot for the fighting largemouth bass.

One of the biggest largemouths in years was first prize winner in the 16th annual Tom Sawyer-Bucky Thatcher fishing derby.

Several dozen bass of the new 12-inch legal size were caught by the 249 registered contestants, according to chairman Hank Chrusciel of the sponsoring Western Wayne County Conservation Association.

It wasn't too many years ago that an eight-inch (undersized) bass would be the largest one caught by the age 6-16 youngsters.

RUSS WEILAND, 14, of Garden City, turned in a 16-inch, two poundunker to take first prize in the bass category and grand prize in the contest.

A frequent category winner in past years, Weiland collected his first grand prize—a depth finder—along with a skateboard for the bass category.

The reason for the comeback of bass wasn't known. The Pontiac district office of the state Department of Natural Resources said bass fishing is generally excellent because many bass are still on the spawning beds, close to shore, and are thus more vulnerable.

Another possible reason is that the 12-inch size limit imposed by the state in 1977 is holding down the catch of younger fish or possibly discouraging anglers.

Even more interesting is the fact that no channel catfish, goldfish or northern pike were caught in this year's contest. The absence of goldfish is a good sign, for these bottom-feeding cousins of the carp aren't prized in the creel or on the table.

The absence of northern pike wasn't significant, however, because they rarely hit worms, the live bait used by 99 per cent of young anglers. A non-contestant showed this writer a photo of a 26-inch northern he said he caught at Newburgh earlier in the season.

In the categories where no one entered a fish, prizes will be donated to a muscular dystrophy summer camp near Lexington, Chrusciel said.

U.S. REP. Carl Pursell (R-Plymouth), who helped award prizes, said he persuaded the state senate appropriations committee to come up with \$15,000 to complete a water qual-

ity study of the Middle Rouge chain of lakes. Newburgh is part of that chain.

Pursell said Wayne County and state officials are working on a master recreation plan. When it's completed later this year, Pursell said he will be able to seek funding from the U.S. Bureau of Outdoor Recreation.

Among items which are under consideration, he said, are dredging of organic deposits, shoreline improvements and comfort stations.

OTHER WINNERS in Saturday's contest and their categories were:

Bluegill—Ron Simco of Plymouth. Calico bass (crappie)—Daniel Argonis of Canton Township. Carp—Dawn Dahlberg of Inkster. Sunfish—Kenn Lauroche of Livonia.

Rock bass—Mike Krejcar of Canton. Bullhead—Gary Glass of Redford Township.

Top prize for catching limit of 25 panfish—Pat Dowd of Garden City. Bucky Thatcher look-alike—Sally Treaden of Livonia.

Tom Sawyer look-alike—Bill Gartner of Livonia.

For a change, there were more boys in the Tom contest than girls in the Bucky contest. There were eight boys and five girls.

Lacrosse youth league planned

Lacrosse, the newest American sports craze, is opening its doors in Farmington Hills.

The Farmington Hills Parks and Recreation Division is offering two leagues this summer.

Registration fee for both age brackets is \$8. All equipment will be provided.

The first league is for youngsters in the 5th and 6th grades, both male and female. Registration deadline is June 30. The eight game schedule will begin on July 17 and all games will be played on consecutive Monday and Wednesday evenings at Farmington area school sites.

A coaches clinic will be on July 5 at Farmington High School beginning at 7 p.m.

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