

Police Seeking To Link Rapist, Snelling Slayer

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By Miles Shuper

Two Visalia police detectives are in Sacramento today probing the possibility that a man being sought as a suspect in the raping of 23 women could be the Visalia ransacker and possibly the killer of Claude Snelling.

A number of similarities in physical description and actions of the Sacramento rapist and the Visalia ransacker have swung the Visalia investigation, the most intensive in the city's history, to the state's capital city.

Although it has never been proved, investigators have been working on the premise that the ransacker is the same person who killed the College of Sequoias journalism instructor Sept. 11, 1975.

Lt. Roy Springmeyer said today, "Because of the degree of the similarity in the physical descriptions and the methods used, we just can't afford to overlook the possibility that the same person could be responsible for the rapes and the Visalia crimes."

Detectives Bill McGowen and Duane Shipley left Visalia early today to meet in Sacramento with investigators probing the rapes in which the attacker now has threatened to kill two persons.

The increasing violent behavior of the Sacramento attacker matches the psychological profile compiled during investigation of the Visalia ransacker case and the murder of Snelling, investigators said.

In the Sacramento case, psychologists believe the rapist is trying to prove himself sexually because he "has difficulty establishing a normal sexual relationship."

When psychologist compiled a profile of the man responsible for the Visalia crimes, they said he probably would become more violent and dangerous.

Officers also are convinced that the man who shot Snelling is the man who shot a detective McGowen during a Dec. 10 stakeout of a neighborhood in which a prowler, believed to be the ransacker, had been working.

McGowen was not hurt, but a bullet pierced the veteran officer's flashlight.

It was between the time of the Snelling murder and the shot fired at the officer that the string of Sacramento rapes began, generally in October, 1975.

Visalia investigators said the first Sacramento rapes during late 1975 could have been committed by the man sought in the Visalia cases.

In Sacramento the frequency of the rapes has been increasing along with the degree of violence. In recent weeks the rapists has become increasing bold and on six occasions the sexual attacks were committed after the victims' husbands were tied up by the attacker.

In most of the earlier attacks, however, the victim was alone in the home. The rapist typically wears a mask, ties up people and ransacks the house.

The Sacramento attacks have occurred in middle-income and upper-income residential areas and a local group calling itself the east Area Rapist Surveillance Patrol is offering a \$10,000 reward for the arrest and conviction of the rapist.

In Visalia \$4,000 is being offered for the arrest and conviction of Snelling's killer.

Visalia police Sgt. John Vaughan who has been heading the Snelling murder investigation said today he has copies of many of the Sacramento rape investigation reports and the profiles of the crime patterns.

They are being closely studied and compared to the information gathered by Visalia officers during the 20-month investigation of the Visalia slaying and the nearly four-year probe of the ransacking burglaries, Vaughan said.

There also are similarities of the composite pictures of the Snelling-ransacker suspect and the Sacramento rapist.

The Visalia subject is described as between 25 and 30 years of age, 5-foot, 10 inches in height and 180 to 200 pounds in weight. He was described as having short, straight blond hair, a pale smooth round face and stubby feet and hands. The subject is believed to be left handed, and often wore a dark ski mask.

The subject in the Sacramento cases is described as between 19 and 30 years of age with blue or hazel eyes, five-foot eight to 10 inches in height, with a "good build" and dirty blond or medium brown hair.

The Sacramento rapist also wears a ski mask.

In Sacramento during a news conference, Fred Reese, chief deputy sheriff said "This individual is probably in a homosexual panic caused by his inadequate endowment."

Reese said the rapist, who typically carries a gun or and a knife but has never disfigured or wounded any victim, probably had a "domineering" mother and an "absent" father or a weak father. Reese based his comments of reports of psychologists and psychiatrist who have studied all known facts about the rapist.