

Goleta murders

Sheriff's department seeks link

Goleta Valley News

By LORI SCHWEITZER 8-6-1981

In the wake of the double slaying of a Goleta couple last week by a man county sheriff's are calling "not altogether sane" Goleta residents are urged to take extra precautions against a possible recurrence of the crime.

"We stress the value of locks" said sheriff's department Public Information Officer Russ Birchim.

"We would also be glad to come to your house and do a security check," he added. As a service to the community the department will send an officer to inspect a home and insure that it is as safe as possible from intruders.

Residents of the neighborhood around 449 Toltec Way, the scene of last week's brutal bludgeoning murder, are enthusiastically heeding the sheriff's warnings. Birchim said at least seven have responded to the department's offer to run security checks and sheriff's deputy Brent Morris reportedly has been contacted to help set up two neighborhood watch groups in the area.

These residents have cause to be especially cautious. The victims of last week's murder were the third in a series of Goleta crimes sheriff's deputies believe are connected. The sheriff's department also believes the victims

of these crimes were chosen at random.

The attacker first drew the attention of the sheriff's department on October 1, 1979, when an unnamed Goleta couple were reportedly terrorized in their home on Queen Anne Lane, less than a mile north of Toltec Way, by a man brandishing a kitchen knife.

The attacker found the couple in their bedroom. He forced the woman to tie up the other victim and then took her into another room where he tied her up. Both victims reported the attacker threatened to kill them.

The first victim, however, managed to escape from the house screaming for help and scared the intruder away. The incident occurred at approximately 2 a.m.

Two months later, on December 30, 1979, a Goleta couple was found shot to death in the bedroom of their Avenida Pequena condominium, a few blocks from the Queen Anne Lane incident. It was estimated at the time that the victims, Dr. Robert Offerman, a 44-year-old orthopedist, and his girlfriend Debra Manning, a 35-year-old psychologist, were murdered at 3 a.m. in the morning.

As a result of the investigation of the Offerman-Manning murder sheriff's deputies made the connection to the Queen

Anne Lane incident and federal investigators were called in to prepare a psychological profile. Later the department released a description of a possible suspect based on the information given by the Queen Anne couple and the FBI profile.

The killer was described as a white male in his early 20's with light brown hair. Furthermore, on the basis of the psychological profile sheriff's believed the killer was a psychopath and that he might strike again. On July 27, 1981, the brutal murder of another unmarried Goleta couple possibly fulfilled that prophecy.

The almost unrecognizable bodies of Cheri Domingo, aged 35, and her 28-year-old boyfriend Greg Sanchez were also found in the bedroom. A real estate agent discovered the victims who were housesitting while the Toltec Way home was for sale. The agent had gone by to check the place before showing it.

Police have described the scene of the Domingo-Sanchez murder as "gruesome." In fact, it took several days for the coroner's report which revealed both victims died from head beatings. Sanchez, however, was also shot. The bullet which went through Sanchez' body was recovered from the scene but no ballistics report has been released. Birchim

reports that no actual weapons were recovered.

Several aspects of the Domingo-Sanchez murder led the police to connect it to the other two incidents. Although there is a tight lid on information about the investigation now underway, Birchim listed some of the similarities among the three incidents.

— All three incidents involved unmarried couples.

— All three occurred in the early morning hours, thus the name "Night Stalker" which some investigators are calling the attacker.

— The incidents occurred within a mile radius of each other in similar type homes, priced in the \$200,000 range.

— There was no sign of struggle in the two murder incidents. None of the incidents involved sexual assaults or burglary.

— The crime scenes in the two murders were in bedrooms and the foiled attack was initiated in the bedroom.

— All three incidents involved forced entry. But there are also dissimilarities. None of the crimes involved the same weapons or combination of weapons, for instance. Investigators are not releasing information

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Murder...

Continued from page one regarding the bullets or fingerprints recovered from both murder scenes.

Following the Offerman-Manning murder, the sheriff's department contacted other counties in an attempt to connect the attacks to other similar crimes. Two homicides, one in Orange County and one in Ventura County, fit the pattern.

The Orange County incident involved the bludgeoning death on August 19, 1980, of Keith Harrington, a 24-year-old medical student, and his wife of four months, Patty Harrington, a 27-year-old nurse. As in the Goleta attacks the victims were found in the bedroom, nothing was taken from the home, ruling out burglary as a motive, and there were no signs of resistance. The home was an exclusive one in a posh area south of Laguna Beach.

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Similarities were discussed among the three jurisdictions after the Offerman-Manning murders. Following the Domingo-Sanchez incident, sheriffs released information that they believed the "Night Stalker" was responsible and reportedly sighted the Orange and Ventura murders as possible acts of the same man.

According to a recent article in the *Los Angeles Times*, however, both Orange and Ventura County officials thought Santa Barbara sheriffs "jumped the gun" in connecting the latest murders with the cases in their jurisdictions.

In defense of the department, Birchim points out that those connections were made a year ago and added that regardless of any connections, Santa Barbara sheriffs were concentrating only on the Goleta crimes.

That concentration, according to Birchim in-

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Earlier that year, on March 16, 1980, the bodies of Lyman Smith and his wife were found bludgeoned to death in the bedroom of their Ventura home. Smith was a prominent attorney awaiting appoint-

ment to a judgeship.

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That concentration, according to Birchim involves "a lot of leg work." Department investigators are canvassing the vicinity of the Toltec-Way incident and a bloodhound from San Luis Obispo County was brought in but turned up no clues.

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