

Arrests Made in 2 Sexual Assault Cases. Rapes are Unrelated to Rash of Attacks in Irvine, Authorities Say.

By Nancy Wride

Los Angeles Times, 17 September 1983, p. OC A1

Arrests were made Friday morning in the unrelated kidnapping-rapes of a 14 year old Huntington Beach girl and a Costa Mesa woman, authorities said.

Neither of the two men arrested was considered a suspect in any of the five sexual assaults that occurred in Irvine in a 48-hour period earlier this week, police said. There have been no arrests in those attacks, which authorities believe are unrelated, and investigators Friday said they had no suspects and no new leads.

"To be honest with you, we're not getting anywhere," said Irvine police Lt. Robert Lennert. "In some respects —although people become more paranoid and terrorized— it's easier to have one suspect because you can put things together for a bigger picture of things. But we are dealing with at least four different (suspects) and probably five."

'Hard to Figure'

In attempting to explain the rash of sexual attacks, Lennert and an academic expert in rape suggested Friday that publicity surrounding the first "two or three" incidents and the escape Monday of a rape suspect from the Orange County Jail might have triggered the later assaults.

"When there's more than one person involved, it's pretty hard to figure, said Dr. Kaushal Sharma, former assistant director of the USC Institute of Psychiatry and the Law.

"The more publicity there is, (the more that) people who have fantasies about doing this to a woman but have been able to control them somehow allow themselves to let go," said Sharma, who often testifies as an expert witness in rape cases for Los Angeles County.

Patrols Strengthened

"They've been on the borderline, hiding in the woodwork," he added, "but with the publicity, the fear (of arrest) is outweighed by the excitement of the attention and knowing that other people are out there (getting away) with it."

Four investigators and a sergeant were to work all weekend on solving the Irvine assaults, which occurred between 11 a.m. Monday and 11 a.m. Wednesday. Lennert said he and five other detectives will be on standby if there is a break in the investigation.

Patrols remain at extra strength in neighborhoods where the attacks occurred, Lennert said, and Explorer Scouts were to circulate warning bulletins to residents of Culverdale, site of the most recent Irvine assault. "We've got just about everyone out there," Lennert said.

In the first rape arrest early Friday morning, sheriff's deputies captured a 27-year-old salesman, who allegedly raped a woman he met at a South Laguna restaurant, officials said.

Sheriff's Lt. Wyatt Hart said the suspect entered the Crown House on Thursday afternoon and threatened to kill a 25-year-old Costa Mesa woman if she did not leave with him.

Hart said the man was armed. The woman was not identified. There were other patrons in the restaurant at the time, but Hart said the stranger ordered the woman to leave quietly with him.

The woman was driven around South Laguna sometime after 8:30 p.m. before her assailant took her to his home, tied her up and raped her, Hart said. He drove the woman home later and she called authorities. She was examined at a nearby hospital and later released.

South Laguna Man Arrested

Officials said the woman and her assailant did not know each other before the encounter in the restaurant.

About nine hours later, deputies arrested John Greenwood Macleod near his south Laguna home, Hart said. He was booked into the Orange County Jail on suspicion of kidnap and rape. Bail was set at \$25,000.

In the second case, a machine shop owner was taken into custody about 5:45 a.m. in connection with the Thursday afternoon rape of a 14-year-old Huntington Beach girl who accepted a ride from a man who posed as an off-duty police officer, authorities said.

Ronald Dean Cantrell, 29, was arrested when he walked out of the Cypress home he shares with his wife and three children. He was booked into Huntington Beach City Jail on suspicion of kidnap and rape, said police Sgt. Ed McErlain. Bail was set at \$25,000.

Displayed Badge

McErlain said the attacker told the girl, who was walking home from school, that a woman had been robbed by two gunmen still in the area. As he offered her a ride home, the man displayed a badge and had a C.B. radio inside his red van that apparently convinced the girl that he was to be trusted.

The man pulled a knife on the girl and ordered her to the back of the van, where the attack took place, McErlain said. Later, he drove off, and when the van turned a corner, the girl pushed open the cargo doors and jumped onto the busy street, police said.

There were several witnesses, including a woman who followed the van in her car long enough to get part of the license plate, which led special enforcement team detectives to Cantrell, McErlain said.

There doesn't appear to be any connection with the Irvine cases," McErlain said Friday. "The descriptions just don't match at all."

Causes Speculated

Authorities Friday said they could only guess as to what might have touched off the outburst of sexual violence. It could be “just a quirk,” Lennert said, or some sort of copycat spree fueled by media attention.

“We’re just brainstorming on this one, but the only thing we can really come up with this that it may be because of the coverage it’s getting and the excitement it generates,” Lennert said.

Sharma, who has psychiatric practices in Newport Beach and Los Angeles, said: “My feeling is that the first, second and third (attacks) were maybe coincidence, but more toward four, five and up, it’s no longer coincidence. (Beyond that), not uncommonly, will be the type to say, ‘A lot of other people are doing it.’”

“But once there is an arrest,” he added, “the fear becomes more than the excitement and (the incidents) will go down.”