

INSIDE DETECTIVE

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*Missing Girls Spark
Zodiac Killer Search*

**THE
COED
AND
THE
LUST-CRAZED
SLASHER**





MISSING GIRLS SPARK ZODIAK KILLER SCARE

THE COED and the LUST-CRAZED SLASHER

Two 20-year-old college students vanished,
miles apart, only to be linked tragically by death



Sharon Wilson (opp. page) and Lynda Kanes (L) were missing and rumors that Zodiac was on the rampage again spread. Searchers found latter's body (↑).



by WIN FRANCIS

EUREKA, CAL., MARCH 26, 1971

■ Winter on California's north coast is a lot like the proverbial little girl with a little curl—when it is nice, it is very, very nice, but when it is bad, it is horrid.

February 25, 1971, was a very, very nice day. White clouds scudded across the sky. A warm sun shone on Eureka, Cal., and the campus of nearby Humboldt State College in Arcata. Students left their coats in cars, on bicycles or on the grass in front of school buildings while they went to class. Thoughts strayed from academic matters to affairs of the heart and all those other things a young man's fancy turns to, while young girls hope they are the object of the fancy.

Sharon Wilson, a 20-year-old coed from Concord, an upper middle-class San Francisco suburb, was having trouble with her thoughts that beautiful morning. She had a speech class at 11

A.M. The temptation was to cut class and go either to the mountains or the nearby beach. But Sharon was strong in her determination to live up to her parents' hopes, so she went to class. Then she drove down to the beach beside the rushing Mad River.

As she drove away, her roommates later were to recall, Sharon was laughing and happy, the epitome of the care-free young coed about to commune with nature. Her communion was interrupted, though, and she never was seen alive again by her friends.

One of Sharon's four roommates became worried when she did not come home that Thursday night. It wasn't like the serious young speech correction major. Sharon did not have any boyfriends, one big crush but nothing else, and she wasn't the type to stay out all night.

Sharon's roommate contacted Arcata

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THE COED AND THE LUST-CRAZED SLASHER

continued

Sheriff Randol used his jacket to mark the spot where Lynda's clothing was discovered. Undersheriff Bollmann pointed way for possemen searching Mad River area for evidence after first coed was found.

police and Humboldt County sheriff's deputies on Friday and said she thought something had happened to Sharon.

In a college community, it isn't unusual for a coed to drop out of sight for a day or so: The bulk of those reported missing are found within 48 hours and, frequently, in a nearby motel. As a result, officers become used to a missing coed report and, normally, don't do much other than write up the report until several days have passed. Sharon's case was destined to be the exception, but only because of her friends.

Four young boys share a house that backs up to the home where Sharon and her friends lived on West Eleventh Street in Arcata. Lack of adequate campus housing necessitates that more than 80 percent of the enrollment live in unchaperoned, unsupervised accommodations. Recently, the Eureka newspaper, *The Eureka Times-Standard*, had one of its star reporters, Jean Neilson, do an expose of the rent gouging that the students face because of the dearth of dormitory space. If Sharon had lived in a dorm, she might be alive today.

Early on Saturday mornings, a man who lives on the Pacific has a habit of spending several hours scanning the ocean in front of his beach home. His binoculars are powerful, and, in focusing them, he normally makes a run up and down the banks of the Mad River



beside his house. On the Saturday of February 27, he spotted a car parked on a rutted, little-used spur road, both doors open. He was curious because he had noticed it there the previous day, too. Since the car was across the river, he called the sheriff's office and two deputies were dispatched by Sheriff Gene Cox to check it out.

The officers weren't overly concerned about the find for there seemed little reason to be. The car was a blue 1965 Ford Falcon. It had a neatly folded coat on the back seat and a pair of glasses on top of the dashboard. The motor was cold and the keys were in the ignition. The officers ordered a tow truck and began the routine of checking the license to see where it was stolen. It looked like an abandoned "hot" car.

California has a quick check service available to law enforcement agencies. All stolen cars are recorded in the California Highway Patrol computer in Sacramento; hence, any police agency can know in a matter of minutes if a car is stolen. The little blue Falcon wasn't, but deputies soon began to believe something had happened to its owner.

As the make of Sharon Wilson's car was coming back from the state's De-

partment of Motor Vehicles, several of her friends were back at the Arcata Police Department, pressing a missing persons report and expressing their concern. One of the boys next door rode his scrambler motorcycle out to the spot where the car had been discovered and quickly told officers he was certain Sharon had not driven it there.

"I got my bike stuck in the sand and I'm careful of it. Sharon babied her car. She thought too much of it to ever drive out there," he explained.

While that was going on, other deputies arrived, and a quick check of the edge of the turbulent river turned up a traveler's check floating in the murky water. It was made out to Sharon, but never had been endorsed. A little farther along the water's edge, three lipsticks that the motorcyclist said belonged to Sharon were washing back and forth in the lapping tidewater. Then Sharon's glasses case was found, also bobbing in an eddy of the Mad River.

Undersheriff Robert Bollmann decided about that time that he had a mystery on his hands and called out the Humboldt County Marine Posse, a group of water enthusiasts who volunteer their boats and four-wheel drive vehicles for

search and rescue duty on the beaches and rivers of the county. He also summoned a helicopter and the search for Sharon Wilson moved into high gear.

One reason for the intensified hunt was that Bollmann had been told of a similar case that had developed the previous day, about 200 miles to the south in Napa County. There were some fears that the two might be related.

Lynda Christine Kanes also was a 20-year-old coed, who, like Sharon Wilson, enjoyed occasional solitude. She went to a small church college in the highlands north and east of San Francisco. She worked at a nearby country club as a waitress. Sharon also worked, as a waitress at the Humboldt State College cafeteria.

On her way to work Friday, shortly before noon, Lynda apparently stopped her car on a desolate hilltop road and left it with her transistor radio playing. Beside her car when it was found was a windbreaker coat and a bra, neatly folded with one cup inside the other.

The hunt for Lynda Kanes had caught the imagination of both her fellow students and the faculty of Pacific Union College, a Seventh-Day Adventist liberal arts school; (Continued on page 49)



Arrests of dairyhand (↑) and woodchopper (R) helped to allay fears that dreaded Zodiac Killer was adding more "slaves" to his afterlife.

the phantom killer who has struck several times in Napa County and who once had attacked two Pacific Union students, slaying one. Sheriff Randol showed his concern when he repeatedly said there were no indications that Lynda Kanes' disappearance was the work of Zodiac.

"What are his [Zodiac's] trademarks?" Paul Avery, the *San Francisco Chronicle* reporter, who has studied the phantom murderer for over three years, asked in his story on the missing girl.

"The only things about the Zodiac you can predict are that he waits a given period of time before striking again, and either calls someone up or writes a letter to brag about his caper," Avery added, indicating he felt there was a "good chance" both cases were the phantom's work.

On the banks of the Mad River, meanwhile, deputies noted they had a new volunteer searching with them for the missing Sharon Wilson. He was the milker on the ranch of an artificial inseminator, who kept a small string of Jersey cows nearby. The boy was both thorough and faithful in his patrolling of the water's side. He appeared to leave only when it was time to milk or feed the cows.

Monday, nothing new was discovered in either area. The searching went on and routine policework led to several blind alleys as officers checked out leads that might point to either the girls or their abductors. Monday night, Sheriff Randol said, his men had found footprints of "an apparently very large man," in the same area with Lynda Kanes' key case and notes.

Tuesday began as a pleasant day for the seashore. By 10 A.M., it was warm enough to take off the heavy coats the searchers for Sharon Wilson had needed during the post-dawn chill. Two and three-man teams were fanning out over the entire river's side when a shrill voice called from the water's edge:

"I think I've found something!"

The shouter was Phillip M. Kohler, 18, the dairyhand, and he had indeed discovered the stabbed and drowned body of Sharon Wilson—wearing a bra, bell-bottom blue jeans and high leather boots—in a small eddy made by the retreating tidal water that influences the level of the Mad River.

Both Humboldt County Coroner Edward Neilson and his pathologist, Dr. Robert Norris, said the corpse readily revealed repeated stabbings had rained on the dead girl's neck and chest. The coroner added, "She died at the hands of another."

As Tuesday morning faded away, officers continued to search the area around the spot where Kohler had found the body. From time to time, members of a hippie commune in an old fishing village, near the deserted area where

Sharon Wilson met her death, drifted in to talk for brief moments with the investigating officers.

Suddenly, Undersheriff Bollmann, after conferring with a detective, got in his car and drove to the ranch not far away. After a few minutes of conversation, the undersheriff asked Phillip Kohler to ride back to the scene of the crime with him and run over his finding of the body once more. By the time they were ready to leave the crime scene, Kohler was arrested on suspicion of murder and about to be taken to the county jail 12 miles away, in Eureka.

Word spread like wildfire through the college community. A coed, after hearing the story of the car being found and then the body, decided it was time to speak up. The girl, also 20, went to authorities and told them she had been assaulted with a knife and a rape had been attempted, on Tuesday, two days before Sharon disappeared. The assault on her had occurred at the same spot where Sharon's car was found.

After talking to officers, the coed reportedly viewed Phillip Kohler in a lineup and positively identified him as her assailant. Then she broke down and sobbed as she walked away:

"If only I'd reported this at once, that other girl would be alive today."

Intensifying their interrogation, Sheriff Gene Cox, Undersheriff Bollmann and District Attorney William Ferroggiaro finally elicited what has been described as a "confession" from the youth.

SEVERAL points of background about Phillip Kohler came to light. He had been released just over a year ago from the Mendocino State Hospital, where he'd been confined for molesting girls he went to school with. Basically, he had been accused of trying to raise their skirts and blouses. Son of a nearby Ferndale family, Phillip Mitchell Kohler had been committed for only a brief period. Because of recent Supreme Court rulings, his records are sealed pending his trial for Miss Wilson's murder.

The morning after both his purported "confession" and alleged identification in a lineup, the youth was taken before Eureka Municipal Court Judge Robert Conners for arraignment. Asked if he had money for an attorney, Kohler answered, "Not much." A deputy public defender immediately was appointed to protect his rights.

In an interview, the public defender said he was "quite limited" in what he could say about the case because he is an attorney paid by the people, hence his comments could prejudice Kohler's case. He did concede, however, that while his client undoubtedly will be held to answer either to a preliminary hearing decision or a grand jury indictment, he does not feel Kohler ever will face trial in Superior Court.

"This young man [Kohler] isn't capable of participating in his own defense. He should never have been released from the state hospital in the first place," the public defender explained.

Meanwhile, both Sheriff Cox and DA Ferroggiaro have warned all potential witnesses they "could face prosecution" if they discuss the case with anyone other than themselves.

At the home where Kohler worked as a cow milker, however, the 12-year-old son of the owner did talk briefly to a reporter one afternoon. He reportedly described the accused man as "gentle" and "a good guy, but kinda nuts."

Others told newsmen that since Kohler's employer reportedly shot a dog from the nearby hippie community, the accused youth had taken to carrying a club around, purportedly because he was afraid of the neighbor's vengeance.

Very little was disclosed of the activities in Napa County while the Wilson case was being wrapped up, but Sheriff Randol's men were far from idle. While teams of detectives were talking with the missing girl's friends and classmates, others still were combing the ravines, draws, canyons and hillsides near the spot where her car was found.

"I can't believe she just stopped there like that. She had to have been forced off the road," her father said at the scene.

Deputies pointed out, however, that there were no skid marks or other indications that she had stopped suddenly.

Then, eight days after Lynda Kanes' car was found, a team of searchers under Sheriff's Sergeant James Munk found her body in a ravine only 300 feet from where her car, radio blaring, had been found. It was in the heart of the area where the Zodiac killer has claimed four lives.

Officers said they almost missed Lynda's body on that final search. It was buried under branches and natural debris in a slight depression. An officer noticed a foot, barely discernible, and then found the body. It showed signs of having been battered on the head and a small, twisted wire loop was tight around the girl's throat. Later, however, pathologists discounted the wire as having any responsibility for her death. It did lend more credence to the Zodiac speculation, though.

In one of his last letters to newsman Avery, the elusive phantom, who has claimed five confirmed victims in two years, said:

"By knife, by gun, by rope, by fire I will strike again."

As leads continued to develop, the possibility of the pretty girl having become the second from her school to fall prey to the Zodiac killer seemed to grow. During the week after Lynda Kanes' corpse was discovered, deputies found a bizarre collection of items in

the immediate vicinity of the body and, while remaining mum on their significance, they do admit there is a connection with the macabre crime.

While saying he knows the meaning of the weird assortment, Sheriff Randol would identify them only as an American flag—with 48 stars, manufactured by the Paramount Flag Company and having a two-by-six-inch piece missing from the upper right stripe—a two-gallon, galvanized fuel can, with a residue of gasoline and oil mixture; a military barracks bag, cut in half, with a notation reading "CAMCIA USS 772-999," and a 33-foot-long white nylon rope.

A few days later, Sheriff Randol and investigators from both his staff and the district attorney's office obtained a search warrant and went through an Angwin-area home with a fine-tooth comb. The occupant of the house was questioned, but not held. However, several items in the house were taken in for laboratory analysis.

Finally, the laboratory reports filtered back to Sheriff Randol and a major suspect began to take shape. Not the Zodiac Killer, but a man who was well known and liked throughout the college community. However, the lab reports were so strong that Randol felt he could wait no longer and, during the late afternoon of Tuesday, March 16, he moved in with a team of detectives on the small house where his men had conducted an earlier search.

Walter Boyd Williams, a 57-year-old woodcutter, had lived in St. Helena for

22 years. Better known among the townspeople as "Willie the Woodcutter," he supported a wife and four children by selling firewood throughout Napa County. On the other hand, he was a strong man and he knew the area around the Howard Mountain Road. Reportedly, however, for some reason Lynda Kanes disliked him. That was one reason purportedly given by her friends for the pretty young girl to drive over the mountain to get to work. That way, she didn't have to pass Williams' house.

Officers were reluctant to discuss why they had finally arrested the older man, but he had earlier told reporters that investigators had taken some blood-stained clothes from his home during the search. He also stressed that he had an alibi for the time the girl turned up missing.

St. Patrick's Day also was to prove an important day in the lives of both Williams and Kohler.

In Napa, Williams was arraigned before a justice of the peace and softly told the court he was "Not Guilty" of the murder charge he heard a clerk read.

Meanwhile, 250 miles north in Eureka, Phillip M. Kohler began to worry because his preliminary hearing had been continued again. But on Wednesday, late in the morning, Prosecutor Ferroggiaro advised the Humboldt County grand jury that he had a criminal matter to present for its consideration. He then unfolded the sordid tale of Kohler's ramblings. The jury acted promptly. The youth was in-

dicted on charges of both murder and attempted rape. His trial is pending.

After a preliminary hearing on Friday, March 26, Walter Williams was bound over to Sonoma County Superior Court on a murder charge. Although the hearing record was sealed, informed sources indicated that witnesses had testified that the barracks bag, mutilated American flag and length of nylon rope found near the body of the Kanes girl were the property of Williams. It also was revealed that the 57-year-old woodcutter had, in 1956, been charged with assault with intent to commit rape and had been convicted of contributing to the delinquency of a minor.

One man found it hard to accept Williams as the murderer of the pretty coed. Chronicle reporter Paul Avery shook his head in disbelief, not because he felt it couldn't be Williams, but, rather, because it had seemed they were so close to the Zodiac Killer.

"The major thing that tripped most of us in the Zodiac direction is his preoccupation with the bizarre... the mutilated American flag was a classic example. Many of us were waiting with baited breath for that piece of flag to arrive in another of the Zodiac's bragging letters," Avery explained.

While the two cases are closed for all police purposes and all further activity is the prerogative of the courts, one area in San Francisco law enforcement is wide awake—24-hours per day—the homicide team seeking the Zodiac Killer. ■

MR. TUXEDO AND HIS DEADLY DOZEN continued from page 41

commendation by the Police Department for his efforts on that occasion.

It was a similar robbery attempt on the night of January 19, 1971, investigators believed. But there were several important differences. For one thing, there were four stickup men, one remaining at the wheel of the getaway car, according to a witness. And luck had run out on Johnny Killion, who gave Christmas parties for neighborhood kids.

Officers of the Wadsworth Avenue Detective Squad had responded to the call, led by their commander, Lieutenant Pasquale Intieri. His primary assistants were Detective James J. Cahill of his squad and Detective Joseph Murphy of Manhattan North Homicide. And even as emergency measures were being taken to try to save Killion's life, detectives had searched the store.

Three spent shells from a .38 revolver were found on the floor. Ballistics tests later proved that the shells were not fired by Killion's .38, so probes knew they came from the bandit's gun. Later, an autopsy turned up the fatal slugs, which were indeed fired from a .38 other than Johnny's.

But, in the moments immediately after the shootout, detectives fanned out through the building and the neighborhood of Inwood in search of clues and witnesses. With powerful lights, police searched the gutters, under cars all along the street and in catch basins and sewers. They found no trace of the murder weapon or any other shells. In the matter of witnesses, they were luckier.

A woman tenant of the building had seen something. Lieutenant Intieri questioned her.

"I saw that the last man running out of the store had a gun in his hand. There were three of them," she said.

"How old?"

"I'd say in their 20s."

The woman said all three were white. The man with the gun was between 5 feet 5 and 5 feet 8, with a slim build, she said. The second robber was slim, work dark clothing and a knitted beret and an ascot, she related. The third man was shorter than the others, between 5 feet 2 and 5 feet 4, and he wore a black leather coat and dark glasses.

According to the woman, they ran south and jumped into a parked car

which immediately sped off. She was unable to give a description of the vehicle except that it was "dark" in color.

The woman said she first heard several shots, then the dog barking and then more shots. Detectives, going over the store with painstaking scrutiny, determined that nine shots had blazed out in the fateful gun battle, five fired by Killion and four by the stickup man. Only two guns had been used in the shootout, police were to determine later.

Under further questioning, the woman spoke again of the man she had seen with the gun:

"... And something stood out. It looked like he was wearing a tuxedo. I had a good look at him and it looked like he was wearing a tuxedo, with dark pants."

At the mention of the word "tuxedo," Lieutenant Intieri responded with a cry: "The Tuxedo Mob! That's the — we've been looking for for more than a year."

Indeed, it was over a year that police in upper Manhattan and the lower Bronx had been plagued by a rash of liquor store stickups by a gang whose leader wore a tuxedo. And, until two months before, the lieutenant had been commander of the Alexander Avenue Squad