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The Reinert Mystery: A Special Report

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Clues Surface in Teacher's Murder

By JIM NICHOLSON, JOE O'DOWD
and SCOTT HEIMER



Susan Reinert's Ardmore home: nobody lives here anymore

Photographed by Patricia Cole

Teaching Her Life Theme

Susan J. Gallagher was born in Ridgeway, Elk County, in northwestern Pennsylvania Sept. 1, 1942, into a world of education. Her father, William Gallagher, was a school board president who married a schoolteacher. He eventually became business manager of the local daily newspaper, the Ridgeway Record. Throughout her childhood, Susan was "a happy little girl with pigtails" and "a giving person who helped other people to find themselves and grow," remembered her older brother, W. Patrick Gallagher, 43. Even in Ridgeway High School, she knew her future. She was vice president of the Fa-

ture Teachers of America, class treasurer, the yearbook staff's business manager and drama club president. She also belonged to the National Honor Society, the science club, the girls' chorus and the school paper. She spent her summers working in the Record's circulation department, and liked "sleep" and disliked "homework," according to the yearbook which remembered her for often saying "... and all that jazz." Reinert went on to take an English degree from Grove City College in Grove City, Pa. **Continued on Page 33**

The discovery of English teacher Susan Reinert's nude body near Harrisburg June 25 and the disappearance of her two small children, only five hours before her ex-principal was to be sentenced for robbery a few miles away, have set off a search joined recently by 16 FBI agents.

The investigators are looking into the activities of three friends and colleagues of the 37-year-old Reinert, who taught at Upper Merion High School. Included in that group is the man she said she expected to marry. All three were in Cape May, N.J., on the weekend of her murder.

While State Police and FBI agents have given up hope of ever finding the children alive, the investigators believe they are nearing a solution. There are the following developments:

- Although her body was discovered naked, the autopsy showed that Susan Reinert had not been raped or otherwise sexually attacked — thus leading investigators to discount a published report that she had been sacrificed in a satanic cult ritual.

- Reinert's will — dated May 4, seven weeks before she died — left everything to the man she called "my future husband," fellow English teacher William Bradfield. Her estate included \$200,000 in property in her native Elk County, Pa., and \$30,000 in cash.

- The total exclusion in that will of her two children, Karen, 11, and Michael, 10, who had been sole beneficiaries in the will's two earlier versions.

- Bradfield — not the children — was the sole beneficiary of a \$500,000 life insurance policy written by the United Services Automobile Association of San Antonio, Tex. That policy included a \$200,000 accidental death rider. Bradfield also was sole beneficiary of a \$160,000 New York Life Insurance policy.

- Nine hours after Reinert's body was found, ex-Upper Merion High School Principal Jay C. Smith surrendered to a judge in Harrisburg to begin serving a 2-to-5 year prison sentence for robbery. Investigators have been unable to establish his whereabouts that weekend.

Law enforcement officers are looking into the events that preceded the tragedy in the hopes that it may lead them to the murderer. A Daily News investigation centered on State Police and FBI sources and the victim's friends. No one else — not Bradfield or fellow teachers Vincent Valaitis and Susan Myers — would comment.

SUSAN GALLAGHER REINERT wrote her first will in August 1977, just after being divorced from Kenneth Reinert, manager of employe benefits at Fidelity Bank, Broad and Walnut Sts., and moving into her 2½-story, frame house at 662 Woodcrest Ave in Ardmore. Her children were named beneficiaries.

In the next 18 months, sharp changes in her life led to two revisions in that document. In October, 1978, Susan's mother, Florence, died — leaving her \$30,000 in cash and \$200,000 in property in the area of her native Ridgeway, Elk County. A month later, Reinert revised her will, naming her brother — W. Patrick Gallagher, 43, a Pittsburgh chemist — executor and her children, Karen and Michael, sole beneficiaries.

Then, on May 4, 1979, less than two months before her death, she made her will's final revision. It contained two significant changes. Bradfield was now both executor and sole beneficiary of the cash and land holdings. Her young children were completely excluded.

A short time after her mother's \$30,000 bequest was transferred to her, Susan took it to a King of Prussia bank — instructing the manager that she might have to withdraw it quickly, and explaining to her friends that she wanted it for her children's education.

THE BANK MANAGER reportedly agreed to let her withdraw the money on short notice. But she soon tried to do so, and was told she could only withdraw \$10,000.

She took the \$10,000, a friend said, and Bradfield promised to get a lawyer to help withdraw the remaining \$20,000. It is not known if it was ever withdrawn, although a lawyer was never hired.

About a month after Reinert's murder, Bradfield, 46, an articulate, charming intellectual described as first among equals in Reinert's inner circle, began legal proceedings toward collecting the \$230,000 in cash and land left him in Reinert's will.

However, Bradfield's attempted probate of the will has been challenged by Reinert's brother and ex-husband in papers filed July 20 in Norristown and Media, until the investigation of her murder has been concluded.

In addition, Gallagher has hired Ron Christopher, a Center City private detective, to try to find the children.

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Susan Reinert: not sexually assaulted