

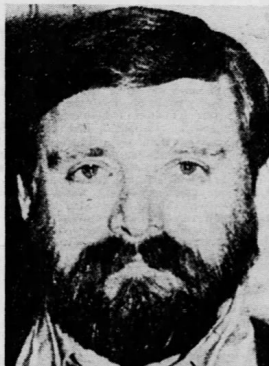
The Reinert Mystery: A Special Report

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Jay C. Smith

Until he was apprehended by police last August after being seen wielding two revolvers in a Devon, Chester County, shopping center parking lot, Jay C. Smith was Upper Merion High School's principal. During his 12-year term at the school, parents often complained of Smith's lax standards and bizarre behavior. Since his initial arrest, Smith has been convicted of robbing a Sears store in Delaware County and of attempting to rob another in Bucks County. He has pleaded no contest to weapons charges arising from the Devon incident and faces trial next month on drug charges.



William Bradfield

William S. Bradfield Jr. joined Upper Merion High School's English department in 1963. School officials, students and parents alike describe the 46-year-old Bradfield as a brilliant, charismatic teacher, in whose classes students would go out of their way to enroll. Bradfield is very active in Upper Merion's teachers' union and is due to become the local's president next spring. He and fellow teacher Susan Myers have lived together for at least four years, friends say.



Susan Myers

Described as "ladylike, demure kind of person," Susan Myers, 36, has taught English at Upper Merion High School since 1962. According to students, it was "common knowledge" that she and a colleague, William Bradfield, lived together in a secluded apartment complex in Chester County. With Bradfield, she is the co-owner of Terra Art, a small arts-and-crafts shop in Montgomeryville Mall, where she works on weekends. School officials say Myers is a competent teacher, but one who "blends in with the rest."



Vincent Valaitis

Vincent Valaitis has taught English at Upper Merion High School since 1974. The 29-year-old teacher is described by friends as "a teddy-bear type who is very eager to please." For the past two years, he has lived one floor below his close friends and fellow English teachers — William Bradfield and Susan Myers — in an old Victorian mansion-cum-apartment complex in rural Chester County. The three teachers often traveled together, and, until earlier this year, Valaitis worked as a sales clerk at a crafts shop jointly owned by his two friends.

Teaching Was Reinert's Life Theme

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where she met an Air Force man, Kenneth Reinert, whom she married a year after graduation in 1965.

HER HUSBAND, now manager of employee benefits at the Fidelity Bank's Broad and Walnut Sts. office and a Narberth resident, at the time had to go where the Air Force ordered him — and his bride went along, teaching at each stop.

These included Sacramento, Calif.; Rome, N.Y.; and Puerto Rico. By the time they settled in the Philadelphia area in 1971, their two chil-

dren, Karen and Michael, had been born.

Reinert began teaching English at Upper Merion High School in the autumn of 1971. Right away she got involved with the yearbook, as a co-adviser, and the drama world by developing and teaching a course on film.

She also got involved with the teachers' association and in a project to reform students' courses in order to make them more responsive to student needs. She loved her students and they loved her, fellow teachers said.

She didn't lecture. Instead, she would ask questions and stimulate discussions among the youngsters in what one teacher called "a con-

trolled but flexible classroom."

"WE WOULD SIT in circles and start talking about topics. She was really interesting and easygoing. Once in a while, her voice used to squeak and all the guys would kid her. But she didn't mind at all," said one of her English students from last year.

Although shy, Reinert was bright and witty when approached and liked to read and see plays and movies, attend concerts and visit museums.

She separated from her husband in 1974 and divorced him March 14, 1976, an uncontested action that resulted in her keeping a quiet, cordial relationship with Ken Reinert (who

Reinert "was intelligent, verbal ... She was very good and had a very good reputation."

has since remarried, and has a 6-month-old son and an 11-year-old stepdaughter.)

Ken was not ordered to pay alimony by Common Pleas Judge Horace A. Davenport in Norristown, but local attorney Allen E. Boroff, who handled the case, would not discuss it further.

The divorce propelled the already active Susan into more activities. She joined the Valley Forge chapter of Parents Without Partners, an organization for single parents and their children. Eventually, she became a director.

"SHE HELPED TRAIN other people in chapters throughout Pennsylvania in how to be good moderators," said Sally Hildebrand, president of the group's regional council.

"She was intelligent, verbal and could express herself well. She was very good and had a very good reputation," Hildebrand said.

Susan also was "somewhat avant-garde, but very reserved. She was a very petite, quiet person," said another chapter member.

She also was devoted to Michael, 10, and Karen, 11, driving them to baseball games and gymnastics lessons and taking them on trips to places like Great Adventure, Hersheypark and Phillies games.

Both children attended Chestnutwold Elementary, a public school in Ardmore, where Karen had completed the sixth grade and Michael the fourth. Michael was slated to be baptized an Episcopalian in early July Susan was a Unitarian.

Reinert Rushed to Buy Insurance

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a letter, notifying him that the FBI had subpoenaed his long-distance telephone records for the last six months.

These records are just the first of many which are expected to be obtained by federal investigators based at the Belmont State Police Barracks. Two weeks ago, the FBI joined with the State Police to form a task force to solve the Reinert murder and the disappearance of her children.

Bradfield, Myers and Valaitis all can account for their time during the 24-hour period during which Reinert was murdered, police say.

ALL THREE ARRIVED at the Heirloom Rooming House, Ocean and Columbia Aves., Cape May, reportedly at about 5 a.m. Saturday, June 23 — the morning after Reinert and her chil-

dren disappeared, but at least 12 hours before the time of her death.

Marian Taylor, the rooming house's owner, confirmed the trio's arrival but could not confirm the exact time, explaining, "I was asleep." She said the three teachers stayed the whole weekend, but could not say whether any of them left Cape May at any time during the weekend.

"I respect their privacy," Taylor said. "They are delightful guests. This is my home, also, and they're delightful people to have in my home. I hope they come back."

Sources told the Daily News that Valaitis reluctantly went to Cape May that weekend, requesting two emergency vacation days from the woman who owned the truck supply outlet where he had a summer job. Neighbors said

Bradfield was overheard ordering Valaitis to go with him and Myers.

"WHAT'S THIS I hear about you not going? The plans have been made, you're going," Bradfield told Valaitis a few days before their departure, a neighbor said.

In addition to being a neighbor, colleague and friend of Bradfield and Myers, Valaitis worked in the Terra Art gallery they owned in the Montgomery Mall, Montgomeryville, Montgomery County.

Contrary to a published report, Reinert did not work in the shop, nor did she have a financial interest in it. In addition, she and Myers were reportedly unfriendly toward each other. According to State Police interviews, Myers allegedly punched and kicked Reinert inside a teachers' lounge at Upper Merion High in late 1977.