

A4 Daily Press, Thursday, Feb. 4, 1988

Missing

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Local detectives are investigating the death as a homicide. Pettinger's ankles, wrists and neck were bound with cord or rope, police said. The body was found wearing only socks and a dress shirt.

Detective Sgt. S. C. Hicks said investigators are assuming the murder happened in Suffolk, but said Pettinger may have been dumped into the river on the Peninsula side.

A city medical examiner said the body had been in the water from two weeks to two months.

An autopsy completed Tuesday night concluded Pettinger drowned, but also noted a gash on the back of his head. Detectives do not know if Pettinger was hit with a weapon before he was dumped into the river or if the wound occurred during the fall or under water.

Two watermen found the body floating in the river near B.W. Mercury Blvd., just east of the mouth of Chuckatank Creek off Riverbore Road in Eclipse about 11:30 a.m. Monday.

Friends of Pettinger's described him as a sensitive, polite and conscientious person who loved the outdoors and his family.



Brian Craig Pettinger
... missing since Dec. 4

On the night of Dec. 4, Pettinger was at the Ballroom Dance Club of Hampton at 4906-B W. Mercury Blvd., just east of Newmarket North Mall. He had been taking lessons there to become a dance instructor.

Pettinger and his wife would have celebrated their third wedding anniversary last month, said Carol Pettinger, his mother.

The family learned about Pettinger's death in a call from Newport News on Tuesday afternoon, his mother said Wednesday.

Pettinger was the third oldest of five children who grew up in Canadaville, a small town in New York's rural Finger Lakes region near Rochester. Surrounded by scenic forests and lakes, he loved the outdoors.

Carol Pettinger said he hunted, fished and camped with his father and brothers.

"The possibility of what happened was in the back of our mind, but we just thought that he, for his own reasons, wanted to leave, to get lost. And eventually he would contact me and let me know what he was doing. That's the hope I was going on," she said.

Pettinger enlisted in the Army after high school and spent his entire four years at Fort Benning.

Though he occasionally talked about his dance lessons in phone conversations with his mother, she thought the lessons were to be "just some passing fancy."

She said her son had been searching for a career he liked. "He really didn't know what he wanted to do. He was still young," she said.

At one time, Pettinger had been a security officer for a private company, but he rejected that career after an altercation with an alleged shoplifter at Rose's Department Store in Gloucester a year ago. His wife told police he had received death threats from shoplifters he arrested.

At the time of his disappearance, Pettinger had been working as a groundskeeper at River News Apartments, across the street from his home. River News is near Fort Benning.

Frank Samsy, maintenance supervisor at River News, who hired Pettinger, called him "a valued employee who took his work seriously, even though it was a grounds job."

Pettinger was so valued, Samsy said, that he left the position open for two weeks "in hopes that he would return."

Two female dance instructors who worked with Pettinger said, "He really wanted to learn. He really wanted to make a profession out of dancing."

Jerry Vincent, who manages the Ballroom Dance Club, said that the night Brian was last seen alive, he did not stay for a dance club party. "He was here for about a half hour, then left."

Baby

Continued from A1
The nation's first ruling on surrogacy by a state's highest court, it is also expected to offer guidance to legislators and lower-court judges grappling with the issue in other states.

The Sterna, through their lawyer, expressed surprise at the decision.

At a news conference in Livingston, N.J., the attorney, Gary N. Skoloff, said, "We certainly believe this decision was not a decision in the best interests of the child."

Skoloff said, "We were pleased that the Supreme Court affirmed the trial judge's decision on custody. We were not pleased that the Supreme Court reversed the trial court's decision on parental rights."

Whitehead-Gould, who appeared at a news conference in Red Bank, N.J., said she had not expected to win custody of the child.

But she said she was grateful that the court had reinstated her parental rights, "and that I'll be able to continue to see my daughter."

In its 95-page opinion, written by Chief Justice Robert N. Wi-

lents, the court basically found that the contract between the Sterna and Whitehead-Gould violated the state's adoption laws because it involved a payment for the child.

A \$10,000 fee was specified in Whitehead-Gould's February 1985 contract with the Sterna.

"This is the sale of a child, or at the very least, the sale of a mother's right to her child, the only mitigating factor being that one of the purchasers is the father," the court said.

The surrogacy contract creates, it is based upon, principles that are directly contrary to the objectives of our laws," Wi-

lents wrote.

"It guarantees the separation of a child from its mother; it looks to adoption regardless of suitability; it totally ignores the child; it takes the child from the mother regardless of her wishes and her maternal fitness; and it does all of this, it accomplishes all of its goals, through use of money."

The court did not prohibit women from freely becoming surrogates as volunteers, as long as no money is paid directly to the surrogate mother and as long as she is allowed to revoke her decision to surrender the baby.

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