

NEWS-PRESS Charlotte

SECTION B SUNDAY, OCTOBER 15, 1978

Reports From Staff Writers,
Bureaus And Wire Services

Crime area is scoured for murder clues

By KAREN FELDMAN
News-Press Bureau

PUNTA GORDA — The sheriff's office intensified its efforts Saturday to track down the killer of Linda Pizarri, a 12-year-old Fort Charlotte girl who was kidnaped and burned to death Thursday night.

Law enforcement teams are conducting a house-to-house canvass along the route the girl is believed to have taken from her home at 90 Albany Circle to the L'I General store at Midway Boulevard and U.S. 41, Charlotte County Sheriff Alan Leibus said.

The area includes West Midway Boulevard, Broad Beach Drive south of Midway,

where the girl's bicycle was found, and Lakeside Boulevard.

Leibus emphasized that anyone who might have seen anything, no matter how trivial, should contact the sheriff's office immediately.

The department has received reports from the parents of three other children who had been abducted by a man Thursday prior to Linda's abduction and murder.

All three incidents occurred on the west side of U.S. 41 in the vicinity of Meadow Park Elementary School. Officials issued no description of the man.

According to Byron Sawden, public information officer, the sheriff's office has

received several calls and is in the process of following up on them.

In the meantime, Leibus urged that parents take all necessary precautions to ensure the safety of their children.

"Don't hesitate to call us if anybody offers a ride to your child," Leibus said. "If at all possible, have someone pick up smaller children at school bus stops if they have any great distance to walk."

He added that parents should impress upon their children the importance of staying out of fields and woods, and that parents should know where their youngsters are at all times.

Leibus said Linda left her home at 6:30 p.m. in boy chewing gum at the corner

since store, where she went almost every night.

When she did not return by 10:30 p.m. her older sister, Deborah Bianchi, notified the sheriff's office.

At 11:42 p.m., Joe Wray, a dispatcher at the sheriff's Englewood sub-station, passed Tiger Street, saw a fire and reported it to the sheriff's office, which contacted Fort Charlotte firefighters.

While putting out the brush fire on the deserted streets of road off of Toledo Blade Boulevard, one of the firemen found Linda's charred body.

Officials believe a flammable substance, possibly turpentine, was poured on her body and ignited.

According to Dr. Peter Tan, medical examiner, the girl died from burning and smoke inhalation. She had no internal injuries, an autopsy showed. Tan said she had a bruise area which could have been caused by the fire.

There were no signs of sexual molestation, he said. A zipper and button found on her body indicate that she was fully clothed at the time of her death.

Funeral services will be held Monday at 11 a.m. at the Lakeside Church in Fort Myers, North Fort. Visitation will be held at the Robinson-Schuberg Funeral Home, Fort Charlotte, today from 2 to 4 p.m. and 6 to 8 p.m.

Girl is reported missing

By KAREN FELDMAN
News-Press Bureau

PUNTA GORDA — A 17-year-old Punta Gorda girl who went for her usual evening walk Friday night has been reported missing.

Christine Gudebla, of First Avenue, South Punta Gorda Heights, left her home at about 7:30 p.m. Friday and, when she still had not returned Saturday, her parents notified Punta Gorda police.

According to police reports, she often took walks in the evening. Her parents do not believe she ran away since she did not take her husband and appeared to be happy.

Her parents could not be reached for comment.

This is the second missing person reported in Charlotte in three days. The first person, 12-year-old Linda Pizarri, was found burned to death around midnight Thursday.

Police would not speculate Saturday if the two incidents were related. Sgt. Louise Rainey of the Charlotte sheriff's office said a routine search is being conducted for Miss Gudebla.

Police radio reports said Miss Gudebla's parents informed authorities that Miss Gudebla had very few friends in the area because they had just moved to Punta Gorda from Wisconsin about 10 days ago.

Miss Gudebla had been working at Medical Center Hospital in the surgical ward for two days. She did not go to work Saturday and did not call in sick, police said. Since she did not live within the city limits, Punta Gorda police turned the case over to the Charlotte County Sheriff's Department.

Miss Gudebla has shoulder-length blonde hair and was last seen wearing blue jean shorts, a white T-shirt and blue flip-flops.



The city's new recreation center, planned over nine years ago, will be dedicated on Veterans Day, Saturday, Nov. 11

A part of city's 1985 plan nears completion

By KAREN FELDMAN
News-Press Bureau

PUNTA GORDA — In 1969, the Punta Gorda City Council had a vision.

The vision was that of a dream city complete with a recreation complex, botanical gardens, a waterfront shopping center and new industries and businesses in the center of town.

They put that vision into a 14-year improvement program called the "Comprehensive Development Plan for Punta Gorda 1969."

Now, nine years later, parts of the plan

have become a reality. Others have remained dreams.

The recreation complex, a \$43,000 project, is almost complete and is expected to be dedicated on Veterans Day, Nov. 11, according to Bill Senkel, assistant to the city manager.

Located on North Street near the Municipal Trailer Park, the complex includes a two-story aquatic, boat slips, a harborview, parking, landscaping and sidewalks.

Fisherman's Village, referred to as Fisherman's Wharf in the plan, is on its way to becoming a reality as builders prepare the

ground around the city docks for the proposed \$6 million shopping center.

According to the plan, the village was to have a restaurant, fish companies, fishing boats and docks for pleasure boats.

When the village opens, however, Gulf Seaside Inc., the city fish company still located at the city docks, will have moved, as will the shrimpers and other commercial fishermen.

Although the plan stated that the various interests could all work together to provide "a picturesque, unique setting on the water-

front that should prove popular," Ed Hendrickson, owner of the seafood company, said he has been forced to move. The shrimpers have said the same thing.

The botanical gardens envisioned by the planners has also been wended out, according to City Manager Robert Hollander, with two city courts being constructed instead.

As for attracting new industry and business, Hollander said "that just hasn't happened."

But the city still has seven years to make its dream come true.

Jailer fired for escape

By KEVIN BLOOM
News-Press Bureau

PUNTA GORDA — The Charlotte County Sheriff's Department Saturday fired a jailer in connection with the Tuesday escape of a man charged with a double murder.

Jailer Robert J. Brown was "terminated" Saturday following an in-house investigation by William Marks, an investigator with internal affairs.

Brown was accused of looting on the job. He could not be reached for comment Saturday.

Brown was shift supervisor at the jail when Raquel Porter, charged with two counts of first degree murder, was reported missing about 2 a.m. Tuesday.

Sheriff's department officials said the firing was a direct result of the investigation.

Commander Saturday, Marks said that as shift supervisor Brown was "responsible for all activities that took place at the jail."

"He spent considerable time out of his area," Marks said. "He was greatly negligent by spending considerable time up front loading."

Marks said the investigation has been completed and will be handed over to Assistant State Attorney Gene Berry. Berry could not be reached for comment Saturday.

The sheriff's department has not filed charges against Brown in connection with the escape.

The investigation was requested by Chief Jailer Phil Bennett.

Sheriff's department officials announced Brown's firing in a newly worded communique.

Inside Today's B-Section

• CLIFFORD MCKARY says he came home to clear his name, but his trial in this sensational report city this week could result in double life sentences for both McKary and his wife Patricia. 1B

• DONT COMPLAIN about the change back to standard time near the last weekend of this month, says one of the world's leading sleep researchers. 7B

• STATE OFFICIALS expect Florida to reap a nearly \$90 million profit from the recent International Chamber of Commerce convention at Disney World. And that may just be the beginning. 7B

• WHEN AUTHORITIES cracked down on telephone fraud in this Central Florida city, they didn't have far to look for the culprit. They were already in jail. 1B

• THERE'S A STATISTIC tucked away in Florida election annals that must make Bob Graham sleep easier at night and give Jack Eckhard a case of insomnia that even all the pharmaceuticals in his huge drugstore chain can't cure. 1B

Grand jury investigation of drug smuggling to begin

News-Press Bureau

PUNTA GORDA — A grand jury will begin an investigation of drug smuggling in Charlotte County Monday.

Forty-two people have been subpoenaed to testify. Assistant State Attorney Gene Berry, who called the 12-member grand jury into session, said the investigation will center on the "local contacts" in smuggling operations.

Berry said his office and the Charlotte County Sheriff's Department have been conducting an "intensive investigation into drug smuggling" in the county over the last six months. He said that investigation has produced enough results so that he is now ready to take the information before the grand jury.

The investigation, he said, has centered on smuggling activity in the Englewood, Bonoma and Gulf Cove areas of western Charlotte County.

"We've got the wayways to bring in boats and numerous streets to land airplanes," Berry said. "There's one (four-lane) street out there that, in my opinion, would be as safe or safer to land at than the Punta Gorda airport."

He pointed to four large drug buses within the past 10 months as evidence that smugglers are operating in western Charlotte County.

"It's obvious that in order for smuggling to go on, there must be local contacts and that's what we've been getting in on," Berry said. "A group of outsiders could not come in and pick up a load of marijuana without local help."

He said he could not comment on the investigation of local contacts for smugglers. He also said he

could not go into detail on what the investigation has uncovered so far.

Most of those subpoenaed to testify are part or present lawmen in Charlotte County, according to state attorneys' office.

Two of the persons subpoenaed are David Johnson and James R. Gause, investigators for the state attorney's office.

Another investigator, Sgt. Perry Kirkland, of the county sheriff's department, also has been subpoenaed to testify Monday.

Subpoenas were also issued for James Curtis, 1211 Cudler Terrace, Fort Charlotte, and Bobby Jean, no address given, to testify Monday morning.

Six people have been called to testify on Tuesday, including Thomas Huckaba, the former owner of a two-engine Beechcraft airplane seized by lawmen in July when it was found at the Bonoma airport with three boxes of marijuana in its nose cone.

According to court reports, the plane was sold by Huckaba to Stephen L. Mather of Sarasota just days before it was seized. Berry said he believes Mather to be a fictitious name.

Also subpoenaed to testify on Tuesday are Ted Parrott, chief of police in North Fort, Major E.R. "Buck" Nideberg, investigator Fred Krayson and Deputy H. Valenzuela, all with the sheriff's department.

Two people have been subpoenaed to testify on Wednesday but their connection to the investigation is unknown. Tim Wilson and Ben Postulate, both of Sarasota, are the two who will testify Wednesday.

Berry said he expects the investigation to last over a period of several weeks.

"It will not be a short session," he said.