

# NEWS-PRESS Charlotte

SECTION B THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 16, 1978

Reports From Staff Writers,  
Bureaus And Wire Services

## Murder probe is pressed out of state

By KAREN FELDMAN  
News-Press Bureau

**PUNTA GORDA** — An out-of-state trip taken by two investigators "pressed" their full in relation to the search for the killer of Linda Pittman, a Charlotte County housewife.

William Clement, chief investigator for the Charlotte County Sheriff's Office, confirmed Wednesday that two of the department's investigators traveled out of state last week in connection with the Oct. 12 murder of the 13-year-old Port Charlotte girl. Linda was found in a Port Charlotte field after being burned alive.

The trip, Clement said, proved "fruitful enough." He would not comment on what the investigators found or where they went. At least one more person probably will take a lie detector test this week in the case, Clement said. "We need to do a little more talking" before the person will take the test, Clement said.

So far, five persons have taken the lie detector test with results in their favor, according to Clement.

While the five no longer are directly involved in the investigation, 30 one will be cleared until an arrest is made, Clement said.

Clement said last week he has "no doubt" the killer will be found.

Detective Tom Burns, of the sheriff's office, arrested Phillip Lee Drake Tuesday on the charge of perjury in connection with the murder case.

Drake, 20, of 1181 Orlando Blvd., Port Charlotte, is being held under \$10,000 bond on the perjury charge.

## Lengthy ban seen on shellfishing

By KEVIN BLOOM  
News-Press Bureau

**PORT CHARLOTTE** — Monday's red tide sampling taken by state officials indicate a ban on shellfishing harvesting in Southeast Florida bay waters will remain in effect for some time.

The sampling, taken from 10 locations stretching from the Collier County shore to Collier County, shows high concentrations of the organisms still are present.

Bill Lundford, sanitation consultant with the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), said, "It doesn't appear that there is any relief in sight for the extremely southern coast."

Lundford said an analysis of Monday's samples showed concentrations of up to a million organisms per liter of water from Charlotte Harbor to Collier County.

Samples of several hundred to 1,000 per liter are considered normal.

Concentrations of red tide organisms appear to be increasing as the tide moves south, Lundford said.

"Our samples tend to indicate a southwest shift," if there is any kind of a pattern to this at all," Lundford said. "Unfortunately, things are not looking promising for the Southwest coast."

A ban on harvesting was imposed in Charlotte and Lee County waters shortly after Labor Day. The ban was lifted for the waters off Collier County Oct. 31.

A similar ban was lifted in the waters off Hillsborough and Pinellas counties late last week.

Shellfish which include oysters, clams and mussels — are their food sources and bring out organisms in their meat.

However, eating the contaminated shellfish can experience nausea and diarrhea.

Persons with respiratory ailments can experience problems in their lungs from ocean spray which can irritate the respiratory system.

While Lundford predicts a bleak picture for Charlotte, Collier and Lee County waters, he said "next week there could be good news for Manatee and Sarasota."

The recent outbreak of red tide has been the source of complaints from commercial fishermen in Charlotte County.

In sufficient concentrations, red tide organisms can paralyze the breathing gills of fish.

The fish are either washed ashore or sink to the ocean floor.

## Motel owners start referral service

By PETER G. JOHNSON  
Charlotte Bureau Chief

**PUNTA GORDA** — Tourists passing through Charlotte County this year may find it easier to get overnight lodging thanks to a new program started by local innkeepers.

In cooperation with the Chamber of Commerce, the operators of 17 local motels are starting a referral service that will keep them up-to-date on the availability of rooms in the county.

According to Ted Rabb, executive vice president of the chamber, the local innkeepers have formed an "accommodations group" to better deal with the yearly influx of tourists.

Once the tourist season is in full swing, plans call for members to refer tourists to the accommodations group to refer tourists to the accommodations group to refer tourists to the accommodations group.

Tourists who don't find lodging at their first stop in the county then will be referred to the chamber which will serve as a clearinghouse and try to refer them to other places in the county with vacancies, he said.

"I've never seen it here on the radio and read in the newspaper that there are no vacant rooms, we feel certain there are some miles from the time," Rabb said.

"I had the last year when I heard of people being sent to Sarasota and Fort Myers not knowing if they would get rooms when we were 'no vacancies here,'" he added.

"We want to keep that business in Charlotte County as much as possible."

The first crunch of tourists unwelcomes annual Christmas and New Year's, Rabb said. This is the month of February and March the busiest season is in full swing, he said.

To better serve the public during those times, Rabb said the chamber will extend its working hours and stay open later into the referral center.

Rabb said the chamber and the motels in the county will refer tourists only to public lodgings and not to private homes that are willing to rent out rooms overnight.

Rabb said it is illegal for private homes to rent out rooms and he said it poses a potential insurance problem for the chamber or motel owners to refer people to the private homes.

"Not forbid if anything happened and we had referred someone to a home we'd be opening the door for legal action," Rabb said.

He also said one of the area innkeepers had talked with his insurance company and had been told there was no insurance available at any price to cover hotels referring people to private homes.

While the most visible aspect of the accommodations group likely will be its referral service, Rabb said that is "not the group's sole purpose for existence."

He said the motel operators have agreed to meet monthly "to share their ideas and business for the betterment of the community."

Members of the group plan to cooperate in purchasing motel supplies in quantity in the hopes that they can realize a better price by buying in bulk, Rabb said.

The group also plans to solicit conventions in the off-season and share the business among members of the group, Rabb said.

The special evening planned by the chamber will kick off at 8 p.m. at the Memorial Auditorium with a cocktail party and open bar, followed by dinner and dancing.

A gourmet dinner catered by the Captin Club is planned and music will be provided by the Bob Alexander Orchestra.

Between the dining and dancing, a nine-minute film highlighting the history of Punta Gorda Isles, Inc. and its contributions to Charlotte County will be shown.

The film will be followed with the presentation of a plaque to Dr. John Douglas, president of PGI.

Also at this time, outgoing chamber President Daniel Denison will turn over the gavel to new President O.E. Phillips, Jr.

Denison is expected to review the accomplishments of the chamber in the past year and Phillips will outline the chamber's goals for the upcoming year, Rabb said.

## Runway extension considered

By KAREN FELDMAN  
News-Press Bureau

**PUNTA GORDA** — A proposed 1,500-foot runway extension at the Charlotte County Airport was debated by city council members and Charlotte County Development Authority officials Wednesday but produced no tangible results.

Jim Murphy, a Development Authority spokesman, and county Airport Manager Frank Tolan attended the council's meeting Wednesday with the hope of gaining an endorsement of the extension by the councilmen.

Instead, Councilman B.C. Fitzgerald, a member of the South Florida Regional Planning Council which rejected the plan last month, suggested that certain discrepancies in a report on the plan be cleared up and that it be resubmitted to the planning council.

The report, which outlined the first stage of the airport development plan, indicated that county residents would pay about \$200,000 in taxes for the first stage. Fitzgerald said that figure is about 10 percent of the total cost for that stage, according to the report.

Murphy said that federal and state funds will pay for 80 percent of the project but disagreed with Fitzgerald that taxpayers would have to shoulder the burden of the remaining 20 percent.

One-third, or about \$40,000, would come out of county taxes, he said, between now and 1985.

He added that the airport has raised hangar rental and tie-down fees in an effort to generate more money for the project.

Councilman C.E. "Tiny" Johnson asked whether the authority had considered changing a landing fee as well. Murphy said that such a fee is rarely charged and the authority has no plans to institute it right now.

The runway extension alone will cost about \$400,000. Murphy said of which \$24,000 will be paid by the development authority. One-third of \$44,000 would come from tax revenues, he said.

Murphy told the council the airport would not become a major part of the extension in bulk because the runway can only support planes up to 170,000 pounds.

A public hearing on the runway extension will be held by the county commission Nov. 20.

She also said this fact was pointed out in a letter to the city from the federal government advising that the city would not be awarded the grant.

As for neglecting her duties, Mrs. Morgan said, "I never missed a city meeting or engaged in any legislative responsibilities. Results alone would count. 26 new programs, \$6,000 in donated materials, community programs, food drives, Big Brothers, pop tests, and March of Dimes."

Mrs. Morgan also said her husband did not threaten Bergman but "simply asked why he (Bergman) threatened to sack me."

She also said the mayor and chief of police know of witnesses to Bergman's threat against her.

The committee's rebuttal says they have a sworn statement "which contains ultimate facts" about a violation of the Sunshine Law by Mrs. Morgan. However, the committee leaders would not say who gave the sworn statement nor would they say what the ultimate facts are.



PUNTA GORDA CITY COUNCILMAN C.E. "TINY" JOHNSON asks if a landing fee could be charged at airport.

## Commissioner recall effort renewed

By PETER G. JOHNSON  
Charlotte Bureau Chief

**NORTH PORT** — Efforts to have city Commissioner Joan Morgan recalled from office are being renewed by a group of North Port citizens.

The citizens' committee seeking Mrs. Morgan's removal from office that week began circulating the second of two required recall petitions.

The first petition, which was signed by the required 10 percent of the city's registered voters, contained charges of inefficiency, malfeasance and neglect of duty by Mrs. Morgan.

The second petition contains the same charges but also is accompanied by Mrs. Morgan's response to the accusations.

At least 15 percent of the city's registered voters must sign the second petition to force a recall election, according to officials.

Mrs. Morgan has steadfastly maintained the accusations against her have no validity.

## Chamber's 53rd annual banquet readied for Saturday

**PUNTA GORDA** — Final preparations are being made for the 53rd annual banquet of the Charlotte County Chamber of Commerce to be held this Saturday.

A large crowd already has signed up for this year's banquet, which will honor Punta Gorda Isles, Inc., but there still are some seats left, according to Ted Rabb, executive vice president of the chamber.

The special evening planned by the chamber will kick off at 8 p.m. at the Memorial Auditorium with a cocktail party and open bar, followed by dinner and dancing.

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Inside Today's  
B-Section

FIRE DESTROYS six business and damages two others in a 56-year-old building in the downtown area of St. Petersburg. 1B