

NEWS-PRESS Charlotte

Reports From Staff Writers, Bureaus And Wire Services

SECTION 8 FRIDAY, OCTOBER 12, 1979

Pikuritz murder events to be re-enacted

By KAREN FELDMAN News-Press Bureau

PORT CHARLOTTE — The local news media had been summoned by the sheriff's department to witness a murder. The young girl left her home on Albany Circle, bound for a nearby convenience store to replenish her supply of chewing gum. After making her purchase at the L.V. General Store on Midway boulevard and U.S. 41, she again mounted her bicycle and began her return trip but this time, she was not alone. A large white car followed her slowly along Midway boulevard, turning left onto Eastwood Ranch Drive and, one block later, the dark-haired male driver succeeded in getting the girl into the car and driving her south and blue bicycle in the roadside brush and weeds. Less than three hours later, the 12-year-old girl's body was found amid hanging brush in a wooded area of Port Charlotte, less than four miles from her home. The year ago today, 12-year-old Linda Pikuritz suffered a brutal death in just that way, the case remains unsolved. Hoping to jog the memory of someone who may have caught one of the fleeing glimpses of the events which led to the young girl's death, the Charlotte County Sheriff's Department Thursday re-enacted the events of Oct. 12, 1978 on WBBH-TV Channel 30, which begins today during the noon news at 8 p.m. "Maybe someone will come forward with information we are missing on what we already have," Lt. Jim Jones, chief investigator for the case, said. "It is not surprising that the re-enactment, said in explaining the why the film was made "the hope will be to bring a high tourist area, many people come here on vacation. Maybe there will be someone here who saw her here then who will remember something by watching the film."

He added that he believed one person committed the crime, although it is possible there could have been two persons involved. "Someone killed Linda, Jones said, "probably had a past history of this type of thing, it probably was his first time, or even his second or third time." It was, however, probably the first time he had ever killed someone, Jones said. There are still pieces of the puzzle that have eluded the investigators in their quest to find the killer of the girl. Why would she have willingly gotten into the car of a stranger? She would have fought her attacker because she was a tough little scrapper, according to her friends, neighbors, teachers and parents. "I firmly believe... oh, she was a strong girl for her size and she would have fought. We always mentioned to her, she was into a stranger's car," said Linda's father, Paul. Her mother, Betty, added, "Even if she knew the man, she wouldn't have gotten into the car if she had any sense." What happened between 7:15 p.m., when the girl is believed to have been abducted, and 10:30 p.m. when, according to Jones, she was killed? An autopsy revealed no signs of sexual abuse or other damage besides bruising, with the exception of a bruise area which was not caused by the intense heat of the fire. It is not known what, if any, type of immediate sound was used to gain the interest of the neighborhood. The questions remaining are many, the evidence needed to track down the killer is slim. "The fire destroyed much of it," Jones said. "The scene was sprayed down with water before we got to it."

But one year later, law enforcement officials and a somewhat fearful community continue to hope that the killer of Linda Pikuritz will not remain from much longer. Alexander said, "If somebody doesn't file, it's not my job to call them and order them to file." Development Authority Chairman Jim Murphy said he first became aware of the law during conversations with Alexander on Wednesday. Murphy said that at the time he ran for office, he was not a member of the Development Authority and was sworn in as a member in January. The fifth member of the development authority, Nicholas Polston, is not town and could not be reached for comment. Butler and Shively also said they did not develop authority members should not have to file financial disclosure forms because they are not paid for services on the authority. The potential penalty for failure to file the forms ranges from a reprimand to removal from office, according to Gonzalez. However, he said the Ethics Commission only acts after receiving a complaint from some citizen.



DENISE FERRY PLAYS LINDA PIKURITZ IN A RE-ENACTMENT OF THE 1978 MURDER. Re-enactments have helped solve crimes in other parts of the state.

Authority's unfiled disclosure forms may have violated law

By PETER G. JOHNSON

CHARLOTTE COUNTY — Members of the Charlotte County Development Authority may have inadvertently violated state law by failing to file yearly financial disclosure forms. According to Clerk of the Courts Buddy Alexander, one of the five Development Authority members filed a financial disclosure form this year, although it is required by state law. However, all the members contacted said they had not properly violated any law and had failed to file financial disclosure forms only because no one told them it was a requirement. The members also said they would comply with the disclosure forms now if the development authority's attorney had not been opposed to it. "We're not refusing to do it," said member John Shively. "We just didn't know we were supposed to."

of the state Ethics Commission, all elected officials are required by law to file a yearly form disclosing their primary sources of income. He said members of the Development Authority would fall into this category and must file the forms. Gonzalez said the law prescribes penalties for failure to file the forms but said that development authority members may avoid trouble if they go ahead and file. The best thing for them to do is go ahead and file. "The Ethics Commission has been fairly lenient in cases where failure to file has been brought up," Plymouth or Chairman, according to Jones. Alexander if he thought the subject was still in Charlotte County, Jones said. "There's a good possibility they will still be walking around here, they have to be walking the streets somewhere."

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... And petition to remove 12 county employees denied

By KEVIN BLOOM News-Press Bureau

PUNTA GORDA — A state hearing committee has denied a county petition to have 12 employees declared ineligible for union membership. The county had asked that 12 employees be declared ineligible but Lee Cohen, hearing officer for the Public Employees Relations Commission (PERC), in an opinion released Thursday, says that only one of the 12 employees should be excluded from the bargaining unit. That position is safety coordinator, a job held by George Pollock. The county had sought to have the employees removed to contractors and equipment purchases or several Tallahassee snack bars operating in the county. The positions the county wanted excluded range from secretary to assistant building director. Weeks ago, Cohen held a hearing in the county to hear arguments from the administration and from union representatives. Each county must start its caucus at noon. Then each delegate candidate will be given one minute to give a speech. After all the candidates have spoken, the bidding will begin. "Ballots will have been prepared by the county chairman with the delegate candidates appearing in alphabetical order," according to the rules. There will be no indication on the ballot which presidential candidate the potential delegates would support.

progress by the county chairman with the delegate candidates appearing in alphabetical order," according to the rules. There will be no indication on the ballot which presidential candidate the potential delegates would support. In Charlotte County the caucus will be held at the Memorial Auditorium and Civic Center, downtown Punta Gorda. The Carter slate includes: Marie Byrd, Dana Carr, Joyce Hudman and Lois Peoples. The Kennedy slate includes: Daryl Brown, Gary Robinson, May France, and Bruce Stodeman.

PERC turns down request to remove 19 city workers...

By KAREN FELDMAN News-Press Bureau

PUNTA GORDA — A petition filed by the city to have 19 workers removed from the employees union has been denied by the Public Employees Relations Commission but the city has not yet given up the fight. Punta Gorda city officials are attempting to have the employees declared ineligible for membership in the union on the basis that they hold either managerial or confidential positions. A confidential employee is considered one who is not in a supervisory position but has access to managerial information. PERC issued an order last month giving the city 10 days to show cause for the removal. According to Bernard Sankel, the city responded on the sixth day and, three days later, PERC issued the petition. He said PERC never received the city's reply, apparently because of a postal error. The city's chief negotiator, Nick Pellegrino, is expected to file another petition with PERC on that basis, Sankel said. In its reply to show cause, city officials reduced to 10 the number of employees they wanted dismissed from the union. Four positions were stricken from the original list of 19.

same ones the city has been trying to pull out of the union ever since the city employees used it to announce in October 1978. Following the election, the city filed an application with PERC, claiming that 19 employees who were voted should not have been eligible to cast votes. At that time, the city said three confidential employees and 12 supervisors should have been ineligible. PERC and the First District Court of Appeal ruled the election because city officials had agreed beforehand upon who would vote. City Manager Robert Hollander and Ed Pina, the union representative, had agreed on which employees could vote in the 1978 election. According to Sankel, in order for employees to be now removed from the union, the city must prove that the jobs have been radically altered or that the positions are new. On that basis, the city withdrew the following petition from its request: sewage maintenance chief, sewage inspection chief, utility station maintenance chief and mobile home tract supervisor. The remaining positions the city wants removed from the bargaining unit because they are managerial posts are: deputy city engineer, assistant finance director, sewage treatment superintendent, building and grounds superintendent, water treatment superintendent.

Inside Today's B-Section

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STATE AUDITORS turn over to prosecutors evidence of improper construction and equipment purchases at several Tallahassee snack bars operating in the county. 128
TECHNICALLY, the only prize at stake is delegate votes at a state convention next month, but Saturday's county caucuses of Florida Democrats have turned into a premature outbreak of presidential politics. 128

Upcoming caucuses called 'foolhardy'

By BRIAN H. CROWLEY News-Press Staff Writer

Nearly 2,500 Southwest Florida Democrats are expected to participate in Saturday's county party caucuses which is being dubbed by at least one local official as "an exercise in foolhardiness." Voters in Charlotte, Lee, Collier, Glades and Hendry counties will be selecting a total of 17 delegates to attend the November state Democratic convention. At the convention, the delegates will participate in a non-binding, presidential preference vote.

During the past several weeks, a class of criticism has been voiced at the state caucuses which will select 879 of 1,117 delegates who will comprise party and elected officials. "A lot of Democrats feel I do that this caucus is an exercise in political foolhardiness," says George Williams, Lee County Democratic Party chairman. "The only people I see enjoying this is the Republican Party." Representatives from both the draft-Kennedy movement and the Carter campaign have been writing vigorously in Southwest Florida

trying to line up slates of delegates supporting their man. Both sides have lined up slates in Charlotte, Lee and Collier counties, to Hendry and Glades, each with only one delegate to be named Saturday, there has been less pressure from campaign workers. Here's how the caucuses must operate according to state Democratic Party rules: Each county must start its caucus at noon. Then each delegate candidate will be given one minute to give a speech. After all the candidates have spoken, the bidding will begin. "Ballots will have been prepared by the county chairman with the delegate candidates appearing in alphabetical order," according to the rules. There will be no indication on the ballot which presidential candidate the potential delegates would support.

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