

End may be in sight for 7-year-old Charlotte murder, investigator says

By KEVIN BLOOM
Charlotte Times-Opinion

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The sheriff's department announced it had reopened the Pikaritz case a month ago.

Sheriff John J. McDougall said he agreed to assign a detective to the case full time after the murdered girl's parents, Paul and Betty Pikaritz, asked him to place a greater emphasis on finding the killer.

Barton was selected because of his reputation as a methodical investigator.

Since accepting the assignment, Barton said he has traveled 16,000 miles, interviewed more than 100 witnesses and received help from the FBI, the Florida Department of Law Enforcement, the state attorney's office, the county medical examiner's office and the state fire marshal.

In September, the department must publicize its "most concerted effort" to solve the case and the announcement triggered a several calls from Charlotte County residents with information about the case.

Barton said despite his optimism about an arrest, he still wants more information about the murder to contact the sheriff's department (OK-111).

Sheriff's officials said the identities of those giving information will be kept confidential.

The murder is considered by lawmen to be among the most heinous in Southwest Florida's history.

Paula Gerda Police Chief Donald R. Bennett, who was born in Fort Myers and served as its police force, said "in terms of heinous, I can't think of anything quite like this."

The narrative of the girl's murder is familiar to Charlotte County residents.

On Oct. 12, 1978, the blonde 13-year-old rode her bicycle from her parents' home on Abbeville Circle in Fort Charlotte to a convenience store at Midway Boulevard and U.S. 41, a distance of two miles.

Linda left home between 6:15 and 6:30 p.m. She never returned.

Don Dexter, chief of the Fort Charlotte-Charlotte Fire Department, was helping a crew of firefighters with a small brush fire at Tangle Bluffs Boulevard shortly before midnight.

When firefighters learned what caused the fire, "there was a lot of shock," Dexter said.

Sometime had drowned the girl with a flammable substance and set her on fire.

Linda Pikaritz died of burns and smoke inhalation, according to an autopsy. There was no evidence of sexual assault.

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DATeline: SOUTHWEST FLORIDA

Armed robber sought

A gunman with a deep voice got away with an undisclosed amount of money in the early Friday robbery of a local convenience store, Fort Myers police said.

Armed with an unknown caliber automatic handgun, the bandit walked into the 7-Eleven at 1802 Victoria Ave. about 3:20 a.m. and demanded money from the cashier, police said. He fled the store on foot in an unknown direction.

The gunman is described as black, 20 to 21 years old, 6 feet tall and clean shaven with a medium-length afro haircut.

He was last seen wearing a maroon sweat jacket with gray sleeves, blue jeans and black sneakers.

Arson suspected in blaze

The fire at 1948 Verona St. broke out at 11:57 p.m. Thursday at a mobile home park. The fire department investigation is being conducted by the Fort Myers Fire Department, said Fire Marshal Robert Weid. The fire destroyed a mobile home and caused an estimated \$13,000 damage to an east Fort Myers home.

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MANUFACTURED HOMES



Sun 'n' Fun offers homey atmosphere, convenient location and new addition

The latest word of Sun 'n' Fun is the brand new pool in the park's rapidly developing recreation area. If you haven't visited Sun 'n' Fun yet, don't delay any longer — you can still get into the new section if you hurry. Sun 'n' Fun currently has 250 mobile home lots, and the additional section has plans for 40 new double-wide homes.

Located at 5558 Palm Beach Boulevard off I-75 Exit 25, the islands and beaches surrounding Fort Myers are lovely, even in February. And the downtown Fort Myers area. Nearby is at least one large shopping center containing supermarkets and drugstores, banks, department stores and much more.

Many of those who live at Sun 'n' Fun are either directly on the Orange River or one of the several canals contained in the park. And across the street is one of the largest marinas in the area, where residents can dock or rent boats — and the fishing on the river is great.

Sun 'n' Fun has everything active people want, and a few relaxed activities too: A recreation hall with kitchen facilities, a game, and a place for bridge, chess, exercise classes, parties and outdoor shuffleboard courts. A community phone parlor, an organ pipe and park with a monthly calendar of events such as band practice, hobby clubs, oil painting classes, computer workshops, art shows and much, much more.

Sun 'n' Fun has a travel trailer court where friends, relatives and long-time visitors can hook up their RV's. However, the community is a permanent home for most of the residents.

Call the Biltmore resident managers for over fifteen years) any time of the day or 074-5356. See the new opening in the community, and visit the new models. Go out Palm Beach Boulevard east of the 75 overpass and turn right. Or, take I-75 to Exit 25, staying in the extreme right hand lane and turn right immediately into Sun 'n' Fun. Be sure to take a look at one of the area's most neighborly parks before you decide to buy.

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Christmas Art Awards Contest

STUDENTS!
YOUR CHRISTMAS DESIGN
COULD WIN \$10,000
SCHOLARSHIP!

- To enter, complete the entry form here. You may also enter by printing your name, address, city, state, zip code, age, school and phone number on a 2" x 3" size of paper.
- With the entry form, mail your artwork on lightweight illustration board. Size must be 11" x 11", and the illustration may fill any portion of that space. Any of the following illustration media may be used: crayon, pen and ink, paint, magic markers or collage. All designs must be original work done by the entrant alone. Entrant's name and address must be clearly written on the back of the artwork. Entries which do not conform to these specifications will automatically be disqualified. One entry per student. No telephone inquiries accepted.
- Send entry form and artwork to Gibson/Gannett Christmas Art Awards, News-Press, Promotion Dept., 2442 Anderson Ave., Fort Myers, FL 33901. Entries must be received no later than November 9, 1985. Local selection of winners will be announced by December 15. All entries become the property of Gibson/Gannett and Gibson/Gannett, Gannett and Gibson reserve the right to reject the name and address of an entrant. Gibson/Gannett and Gibson cannot be responsible for entries received just the deadline date.
- Winners will be selected on the basis of technical superiority and appropriateness of holiday subject matter by professional artists and art directors employed by Gannett, and by the art directors of Gibson/Gannett, Inc. The decision of the judges will be final. One first prize and one consolation prize will be awarded locally in each of nine categories (ages 8 through 13 and ages 14 through 18). Local first prize is a \$200 U.S. Government bond. First local winners across the U.S.A. national winners will be chosen. One first prize and one consolation certificate will be awarded nationwide in each of these two age groups. National first-prize winner in each age group will receive a \$10,000 interest-bearing grant to be used for college education or the advanced education of a child. Winner will be notified by mail and will be required to accept the grant. All stipulations and restrictions which will provide Gannett and Gibson will arrange presentation of prizes. Taxes are the responsibility of the winners.
- Gibson/Gannett Christmas Art Awards competition is open to all residents of the U.S. its territories and possessions, who are at date of entry at least 8 years of age and younger than 18, and who are enrolled in an kindergarten or high school, except those under parental guardianship of the employees of Gibson/Gannett Cards, Inc., Gannett Co., Inc., their affiliates, subsidiaries, contractors, and their advertising and promotion agencies. Void wherever prohibited or restricted by law.
- For the national winners' names, send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to Gibson/Gannett Christmas Art Awards Contest, P.O. Box 17888, Cincinnati, Ohio 45222 after October 15, 1985.

GIBSON/GANNETT GREETING CARD CONTEST ENTRY

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