



The Nation's Top Prize-Winning Suburban Weekly

Troy Man Accused In Ax Murder Of 7

Remains With Bodies Of Wife, Kids 1 1/2 Days

By DAVE PHILPO Township Editor

The bizarre, almost unbelievable story of how a 30-year-old former mental patient allegedly axed to death his pregnant wife and six children and then lived with their bodies for a day and a half unfolded early Tuesday morning in Troy.

William G. Gravlin, who spent almost two years in Pontiac State Hospital after stabbing his cousin's wife in 1961, stood mute to charges of first-degree murder Tuesday afternoon in his arraignment before Troy Municipal Judge Charles H. Losey.

The suspect was returned to Oakland County Jail where he will await examination before Judge Losey at 1:30 p.m. Monday.

The bodies of Mrs. Bette Gravlin, 40, her child by Gravlin, Bette Sue, 5; and five children by a previous marriage; Benson John Bentley, 17; Judith Ann Bentley, 16; Dorris Oral Bentley, 15; Paula Albene Bentley, 12; and Walter Johnson Bentley, 10; were discovered by police at 7:44 a.m. Tuesday.

SENIOR ASSISTANT prosecutor William E. Lang said the slayings apparently stemmed from marital difficulties. Following an argument with his wife during the week end of Sept. 19-20, Gravlin left the one-story, white frame home at 2121 Garson to stay with his mother, Mrs. Margaret Gravlin of Clawson.

He returned home last Sunday, Sept. 27, and was discovered by police at 7:30 a.m. Tuesday and said that he had been stopped near 14 Mile Road and John R. by a man who said he had "killed his family," according to Troy Police Chief Forrest O. Fisher.

ALL TROY patrol cars were busy on accident calls and Madison Heights police were asked to handle the call.

As Patrolman Ronald Pearce drove north on John R. he spotted Gravlin walking along a narrow, dirt road that winds its way 150 yards from John R. east to Gravlin's home, hidden from the main road by weeping willow trees.

Pearce arrested Gravlin and took him to the Madison Heights jail where he later made a formal statement for the prosecutor's office.

Two other Madison Heights patrolmen, Richard Brachel and Norman Stolzenfeld, were dispatched to the home.

ACCORDING TO police, the patrolmen wore gas masks into the house, which they said was filled with "the odor of death."

The bodies, covered with blankets, clothes and rags, were all dressed in night clothes.

Pinned to each body was a note saying, "I'm sorry, I love you, it couldn't be helped."

The bodies of Judith, Walter and Mrs. Gravlin were found in the front room, police said. Paula was in the northwest bedroom; Dorrie in the north center bedroom; Bette Sue was in the bathroom and Benson was in an east addition of the house.

A .22-caliber rifle, a double-bladed

ax and a hammer were discovered in the house. The ax and hammer, both blood-stained, are believed to be the murder weapons.

ALL OF THE bodies were badly mutilated, Chief Fisher said.

Gravlin may have tried to commit suicide by drinking cleaning fluid, according to Fisher, but he had stayed in the home after the Sunday night or early Monday morning slayings.

The suspect was treated in Madison Heights Jail for burns to his chest and right side and for shock.

When Gravlin was led from the police station at 1 p.m. Tuesday, he showed no emotion and walked quietly to a police car that was to transfer him to Oakland County Jail.

Assistant prosecutor Lang, who took the statement from Gravlin, said (See REMAINS, 1-A)

Gravlin Wasn't Neighborly Type

By DAVE PHILPO

A neighbor who wasn't neighborly.

This is the general description of William Gravlin, held in the slaying of seven persons, as given by Arthur Oswald, Jr., 40, of 10630 John R. Troy.

Although their homes were only 100 yards apart, the two men had not exchanged a word in the eight months that they had lived near each other.

"I used to hear him out in the yard shooting all the time," said Oswald. "I think he liked to hunt pheasant."

OSWALD DESCRIBED Gravlin as a man who "kept to himself" and "very odd."

Instances of family trouble at the Gravlin home were frequent, according to Oswald, and he said Mrs. Bette Gravlin was "very nervous and high-strung"—a woman who was afraid of her husband.

"She had him locked up two or three times," Oswald said. "He wasn't right."

An initial check of records in the Oakland County Department of Mental Health showed that Gravlin had been "checked up" only once on Oct. 17, 1961, after he stabbed his cousin's wife with a five-inch knife.

TWO PONTIAC psychiatrists who examined Gravlin before he was committed gave this diagnosis: "Confusion, delusion of thought content, inappropriate and homicidal behavior, potentially self-destructive."

"Defective reasoning to such a degree as it makes him dangerous by his own admission."

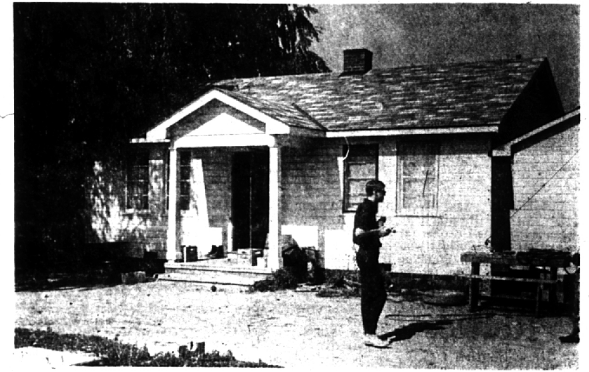
Dr. Robert Brown, MD, clinical director at Pontiac State Hospital, said Gravlin was discharged in July, 1963, after a year of convalescent status which included the privilege of going home for visits.

DR. BROWN said Gravlin had taken an "unauthorized leave" in April, 1963, but returned of his own volition "in about a week."

Gravlin, when discharged from the hospital, showed "no indication of any potential danger to anybody," Dr. Brown said.

Larry Stack, in charge of factory personnel at Temprite Products Corp., 2345 E. Maple, Troy, where Gravlin worked, said the suspect had been regularly employed there since July 29, 1963.

(See GRAVLIN, 1-A)



SEVEN BODIES FOUND IN THIS HOUSE Two baby kittens, parakeet stood lonely vigil.

Mute Dwelling Reveals Life, Death of Occupants

By ETHEL SIMMONS Staff Writer

A TELEVISION set stood in the corner of the living room, and underneath the front windows was a cabinet of the type that would house a phonograph.

On the kitchen stove was a casserole dish that had apparently been taken from the oven. A pile

of cooked corn-on-the-cob withered on a corner table. Above the stove a rack was arranged neatly with kitchen utensils, grouped symmetrically. Every floor in the house was strewn with clothing. Police said (See DWELLING, 8-A)

FOR LUCI JOHNSON

Security Guards Play Role in Local Party

The Robert G. Wild family is preparing for a guest list of 50 to 100 teenagers on Sunday morning.

Understandably, things are in a flurry at the Wild household.

"We're just devoting the whole week to getting ready," said Mrs. Wild, an adept party hostess who recently entertained 300 at Willowbrook, their newly-refurbished home at 931 Vaughan.

One thing Mrs. Wild won't have to worry about will be the food, since the barbecue will be prepared by President Johnson's personal chef, Walter Jetton, who will come to Bloomfield Hills from the LBJ ranch for the event.

ALTHOUGH THE party inspires a "folksy" atmosphere, the event is politically-oriented.

The barbecue is sponsored by the Young Citizens for Johnson Committee, a subgroup of the newly-organized Citizens for Johnson-Humphrey organization which recently opened its headquarters on Washington Blvd. in Detroit.

Mr. and Mrs. Herbert Fisher headed the barbecue executive committee at their Bloomfield Hills home Tuesday evening to make sure the day went along smoothly.

MRS. C. E. LETTIS was appointed chairman of the hostess committee, Mrs. William Kahn, chairman of the LBJ Barbecue Girls; John Bower and Cumerford McLaughlin, publicity; Mrs. Dorothy Roosevelt, announcements; chairman; Mrs. Avraham Cohen, decorations.

Dr. and Mrs. John Meyer and Mr. and Mrs. William Davampont head up the committee to sell the \$10 tickets needed to attend the barbecue.

In addition to Luci Baines, The Brothers Four and Theodore Bikel will also entertain.

THE 17-YEAR-OLD girl will have plenty of company in the Wild family with Becky, 18, Susan, 15, Cathy, 14, Bobby, 12, and Heather, 5, as companions. She will stay in the Wilds' gold-hued guest room.

Herrington Out On \$25,000 Bond In Foster Killing

Wells S. Herrington, 45-year-old brewer and executive of Farmington, has been bound over for Circuit Court arraignment on a charge of first-degree murder in the Sept. 16 slaying of a Birmingham dentist.

Herrington, accused of fatally shooting Dr. John R. Foster, 41, of 3130 W. Long Lake, West Bloomfield Township, posted a \$25,000 bond in an examination Friday before Farmington Municipal Judge Sylvester Pheny.

Arraignment was scheduled for Monday.

Normally, anyone charged with first-degree murder is held without bond. Judge Pheny said he allowed bond in Herrington's case because "he is well known in the community."

HERRINGTON is charged with shooting Dr. Foster as the dentist entered Herrington's apartment. The shooting was apparently the

result of a quarrel. (See HERRINGTON, 6-A)



ARTHUR OSWALD, JR. Neighbor, not friend

Asst. Chief Retires; To Be a Volunteer

By MARY BAHN Staff Writer

Yesterday was Stan Peppereil's last day as first assistant chief with the Birmingham Fire Department, as he retired after 37 years on the force.

Monday, Peppereil will begin his "freeman's holiday"—by joining the Bloomfield Village Fire Department as a volunteer.

When Peppereil retires, some of Birmingham's early history could add a footnote, since he was one of the original four firemen on the force created July 1, 1927, from a group of volunteers.

"Our station was on Woodward and Maple, right where Cunningham Drug Store stands today," recalled Peppereil.

"WE WERE PAID \$100 a month, but the pay dropped during the depression."

Peppereil began his volunteer fire duties when he was 19, turning professional at 21.

"I was working as a delivery boy and when the fire bell would blow I

would take off to the scene of the fire. When I was old enough, I decided I would join the force.

"I had no idea at that time that I'd be working here this long."

Out of the 450 fires that occur in Birmingham each year, Peppereil estimates that he covers 300 of them.

"ONE OF THE WORST I remember was the gas explosion that occurred where the Reid Building stands today on Woodward, in December, 1949, in which Fire Inspector Lee Carroll was killed," he said.

Peppereil's main concern throughout the years, however, has been in training the men and in improving the firefighting equipment.

"Years ago, instead of carrying a tank of water we used chemical tanks. Birmingham was one of the first fire departments to develop a pump in order to carry tanks of water."

"Now, we're going into modern firefighting apparatus, such as aerial ladders. Back in the old days

(See RETIRES, 2-A)



FIRST ASST. FIRE CHIEF STAN PEPPERELL Ready to take one of his last rides in the fire truck before retiring



ACCUSED OF SLAYING WIFE, CHILDREN William Gravlin stood mute at arraignment.

B'field Undertakes A Safety Crusade

Angered by the refusal of the Supervisor Honor Case children other governmental bodies to cooperate in reducing the speed limit in front of schools, Bloomfield Township has decided to take the initiative and bear the entire cost of the safety program alone.

In a statement to The Eccentric, Township Supervisor Honor Case said other "governmental agencies" who have failed to join the township's effort "in an apparent disregard for the safety of our children."

Case also accused some bodies of "hiding behind the shams of a statute that says it is illegal for them to participate financially."

A letter has been sent to the Oakland County Road Commission (See SAFETY, 2-A)

Set Halloween Parade, Party For Oct. 31

Birmingham's 28th annual Halloween parade and party will be held on Saturday, Oct. 31.

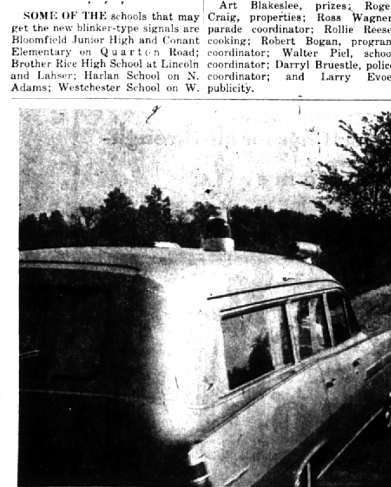
Nearly 8,000 youngsters are expected to take part in the festivities sponsored by the Birmingham Chamber of Commerce.

Henry M. Hogan, Jr., associate publisher of The Eccentric, is serving as general chairman of the program.

The purpose of the party and parade, according to Hogan, is to keep the children constructively occupied and out of trouble on Halloween. The chamber has sponsored the event since 1959.

HOGAN ANNOUNCED today a list of committee members to work on the program: Donald Martin, parade marshal; William Beck, tickets; Richard Erwin, PTA coordinator; Clarence Craft, purchasing.

Art Blakeslee, prizes; Roger Craig, properties; Ross Wagner, parade coordinator; Rollie Reese, cooking; Robert Bogon, program coordinator; Walter Piel, school coordinator; Darryl Brunette, police coordinator; and Larry Eves, publicity.



A GRIM MISSION FOR AMBULANCE Dirt road leads 150 yards to murder scene.

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