

Police acting on 'very good tip' in cold case

Castiglione found raped, strangled in March 1983

By Lisa Roose-Church
STAFF WRITER

Livingston County sheriff's investigators are hoping that a recent tip on a serial killer's stop in the area 21 years ago may lead to an arrest in the decades old murder of Christina Castiglione.

Investigators are also hoping that improvements in DNA technology will help them solve Castiglione's murder.

"We had information on a possible serial killer that was in the area during the time frame we are looking at," said Livingston County Undersheriff Bob Bezotte, who was an original investigator on the case. "It gives us something to go on. We'll either eliminate him or find out he's involved."

Bezotte declined to identify the suspect, citing the ongoing investigation.

Castiglione was 19-years-old on March 19, 1983, when she was taken from her hometown of Redford, raped, strangled and left for dead on state hunting land in Howell Township in Livingston County. Her body was discovered March 29, 1983.

"We got a good tip, a very good tip," said Detective Rob Michels, who took over the case in April 2001.

Investigators are following up on that information, Bezotte said.

In the meantime, Michels said he hopes that as inmates' DNA is being taken and processed through the criminal justice system, a hit will match a suspect to the Castiglione murder.

"I think odds are even once we go through DNA," Michels said. "At the least, we hope to eliminate suspects."

Michels is beginning with a suspect -- the man who found Castiglione's body -- that the original investigator, Bezotte, believes is still the prime suspect.

"He said he didn't get within 40 or 50 feet of the body, and he saw her in the distance and immediately called police," Bezotte said about the original suspect. "We had his footprints within a foot of the body. We think he was leaving the scene and then found that he could have been sighted in the area."

Bezotte said he's further con-

vinced police have the right man because the suspect's story "doesn't make sense." The suspect, whose name is not being released, originally told police that he was in the area fishing and "got bored" so he decided to go hunting and then he came across Castiglione's body, the undersheriff said.

"His original story didn't make sense," Bezotte said. "He has relatives in the area where (Castiglione) was picked up. He's familiar with Livingston County and he deer hunts in the area."

"But, he had neither a fishing pole nor hunting (equipment) with him," the undersheriff said. "The story would fit if he had a gun or fishing pole with him."

Bezotte said he believes the suspect, whom the undersheriff believes was a stranger to the victim, returned to the body because he was curious.

"There were no news reports of her being found," Bezotte said. "I think he went back to the scene to see what happened. There was a utility truck in the area that may have seen him and he came up with a story for why he was there."

Bezotte further believes his original suspect is the murderer because the suspect neglected to show up for a polygraph test. Although a polygraph is not admissible in court, Bezotte said it is a tool law enforcement officials use to eliminate suspects.

"We cleared 10 people with the polygraph," he noted. "But (the original suspect) didn't show up for the polygraph. ... It keeps going back to the original suspect."

"Until we clear him, he's our guy," Bezotte said.

Michels said that evidence was collected from the original suspect at the time of the murder, but it is now 21 years old, and with technological advancements, he hopes fresh DNA from the suspect will either be matched to evidence at the scene, or clear the man.

"All we're doing is re-establishing fresh DNA," Michels said.

Michels said investigators are "in the processing of gathering DNA" from the 1983 suspect and are pouring over evidence in the hopes something will spark a new lead that leads to closing the case.

In addition to DNA, Michels hopes that any witness' memories will be jogged. Someone, he said, may be holding a clue to finding Castiglione's murderer.

In addition, police continue to check DNA of convicted serial killers who may have been in the area at the time of Castiglione's



Christina Castiglione was murdered in 1983.

murder. The Castiglione case is similar to the murder of 16-year-old Kimberly Louiselle, of Green Oak Township. She was hitchhiking home from Redford a year earlier when she disappeared.

Louiselle was found dead and sexually assaulted at the Island Lake Recreation Area, which is also state land, in Green Oak Township just east of Brighton.

Police said Castiglione and her boyfriend fought the night she was abducted, and that she told him she was going to walk home. Her boyfriend, who had been riding with two other friends, reached her home and then he began to walk back to Castiglione to meet her.

"He never found her," Bezotte said. "In those 10 to 15 minutes, she was gone. We believe she was hitchhiking, which she was known to do. We believe she went voluntarily."

Police early on cleared her boyfriend and the two friends in the vehicle of any wrongdoing.

For Bezotte, the Castiglione murder continues to haunt him.

"I have worked on a few homicides," Bezotte said. "This is the only one that is unsolved. This is the one that haunts you. ... My gut feeling tells me (our suspect) is the guy, but I've been wrong before."

"I promised her parents we would not forget Christine," the undersheriff said. "As time goes on, it gets tougher and tougher."

Anyone with information is asked to call Michels at the Livingston County Sheriff's Department at 517-546-2440.

Woman facing drunk driving charges resigns

By James Mitchell
STAFF WRITER

The woman who was arrested last week at South Lyon Community School's offices was formally charged Monday at 52-1 District Court. The 49-year-old woman will next appear for a pre-trial hearing on misdemeanor charges of operating while impaired and leaving the scene of a property damage accident.

The woman had served in a supervisory role with the school district. Superintendent William Pearson said she resigned following last week's arrest.

"She chose to resign," Pearson said. "She put in 28 good years with the school district, and she'll be missed."

The woman's arrest last week was something of a public affair.

Police were alerted last Tuesday at about 8:30 a.m. of a driver traveling west on Ten Mile Road. At the intersection of Warren and Lake Street, the woman reportedly drove into a stop sign at the curb. The driver proceeded to the school district offices, where the vehicle grazed another car in the parking lot, police said.

The driver then left her car, and went into the building to work. Police arrived shortly after, and arrested the 49-year-old woman.

According to the police report, the woman was transported to Novi for processing, and a test revealed a blood alcohol content of .09, more than the legal limit for drunk driving in Michigan.

Police said damage to the other vehicle in the parking lot

"She put in 28 good years with the school district, and she'll be missed."

William Pearson
Superintendent,
South Lyon Community Schools

was minor, and the driver suffered no injuries during the incident.

James Mitchell is a reporter for the South Lyon Herald. Reach him at 248-437-2011 or at jmitchell@ht.homecomm.net.

Alert Lyon Twp. neighbor may have saved lives

By James Mitchell
STAFF WRITER

An alert resident may have helped save lives by responding to the warning signs of a house fire in Lyon Township.

Township firefighters were called to the scene of a house fire in New Hudson on May 2. According to the sheriff's department report, when firefighters arrived in the early morning hours, flames were seen coming through a side wall of the house.

The upstairs tenant, Christopher Johnson, was watching television when he smelled smoke. Johnson became concerned when he opened a window and saw smoke coming from a downstairs bedroom window.

"I went in to check it out, and saw smoke start coming out of the closet," Johnson said.

Johnson ran downstairs to wake up the homeowner, Marty Day, who was asleep as were his children, ages 7 and 8. Day said that about that time the smoke alarm began sounding, and everyone was evacuated before the flames began taking over the upstairs of the home.

Day said it was fortunate that the 26-year-old Johnson was home.

"Normally, Chris is out on Saturday night, but this particular night he stayed in and watched movies," Day said. "We're awful thankful he was home."

Day said that the upstairs of his home was completely destroyed by the fire, and smoke and water damage appeared in first floor areas as well. Day received a report from both the county fire inspectors and his insurance company, which indicated that cedar

"I went in to check it out, and saw smoke start coming out of the closet,"

Christopher Johnson
Alerted neighbors to fire

shake in the siding bordering the chimney built up enough heat to become combustible.

James Mitchell is a reporter for the South Lyon Herald. Reach him at 248-437-2011 or at jmitchell@ht.homecomm.net.

South Lyon woman faces charges

A 26-year-old South Lyon woman faces multiple charges following a traffic stop May 5 on S. Milford Road near Buno Road in Milford Township. Just before 10 p.m., Milford police pulled over the woman, who was driving a Jeep with expired tabs. On approaching the vehicle, police smelled marijuana smoke. As the woman was pulling her driver's license from her coat pocket, a cigarette pack fell out that con-

tained a small baggie of marijuana. The woman admitted to smoking one joint and was administered sobriety tests, which she failed.

A vehicle search by police turned up a pipe in her purse. The woman was arrested and consented to a blood draw. She was released pending warrants for operation under the influence of narcotics, possession of marijuana and possession of paraphernalia.

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