

Candell County Republican,
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Sheriff 's department under fire

By Janet Park

CANDELL REPUBLICAN

Sheriff Ray Kates admitted yesterday that there has been little progress in the murder investigation of Stephanie Dempsey. This came amid accusations that his department has bungled the investigation.

"I don't understand why it took almost two weeks to identify this young lady," said Tafton attorney Martin Blowers, Chair of the Candell County Republican Party. He added that Hartman College is less than sixty miles away and should have been one of the first places Kates checked.

"Hindsight is always twenty-twenty," responded Kates, a Democrat who is not up for election this year. He dismissed Blowers' complaints as "pure politics."

In a year where the GOP has struggled both nationally and across Ohio, the issue of law and order in Candell County may loom large in the County Prosecutor's race, where long-time Democratic incumbent Denny Price is facing an unexpectedly stiff challenge from political novice Sam Watts.

"It's just embarrassing," Watts said yesterday of the Dempsey case and Kates' performance.

"The investigation has been poorly managed. And Kates should have had deputies out at that place every night to stop those kids from trespassing and drinking. There's no since in such carelessness. It should have never come to this.

"Ray Kates owes the people of Candell County an apology and his resignation."

Price admitted that he was "disappointed and frustrated" that the investigation has thus far turned up little evidence. However, expressed his confidence in Kates and his ability to get the job done.

"I've known Ray Kates for a long time, and you'll have a hard time finding a finer law enforcement officer in the state.

"In all the years I've worked with him I've never had a reason to complain. Given time, I'm sure he's going to crack this case."

Price said he thought it was "sad and disgusting" that his political opponents would try to turn Dempsey's death into a political issue.

The sheriff indicated yesterday that a new search of the crime scene yielded few new details. As yet, he said, nothing has been uncovered about Dempsey's movements on the night of her death.

"Right now, we're not making much progress," he said, "but we are working with Hartman College Police to find out what happened to his young woman."

The Columbus Star, Monday, Oct. 23rd, 2006, p. B3

Ex-boyfriend cleared in Dempsey slaying

Tom Frazier
THE STAR

Mike Huber, the ex-boyfriend of murdered Hartman College coed Stephanie Dempsey has been cleared of any involvement in her murder.

“Huber’s alibi checks out. Rock solid. He was nowhere near Stephanie on the night she was killed. There are witnesses, video, and receipts that confirm his whereabouts.” said Candell County Sheriff Kates.

Candell County Coroner Paul Montgomery determined that Dempsey was killed between midnight and 2 am Monday morning and that she was killed where the body was found.

“Huber was at work at the Columbus Olive Garden restaurant where he works until midnight. His manager, co-workers, time card, etc. all confirm it.”

“After work, he and two co-workers went to get a beer. On the way he stopped to get gasoline. We have a credit card receipt for a purchase at the Speedway near his place of employment at 12:21 am. Witnesses put him at the Bison Bar until closing time.

“At about 2:30 am, he dropped off his co-workers and was seen by one of the co-worker’s girlfriend.

“At 2:44 am, he drove through a White Castle drive-through and purchased food.

“At 3:12 am, he punched the access code into his parents’ home security system to get inside. At 3:14 am, he re-entered the code to secure the house for the night. No one left the house until 7:32 am.

Neighbors confirm his car was in his parents driveway when they rose at 5 am.

“At 9 am, he was present for his Business

Law class at Capital.”

“Huber was nowhere near Stephanie, Hartman College, or eastern Candell County that night,” said the sheriff.

“We checked phone records and e-mail accounts, both Stephanie’s and Mike’s. There was no communication between them on the weekend she disappeared. They didn’t even talk to each other.”

Police had expressed interest in Huber as a subject when they learned he and Dempsey had bitter break-up about a month before her disappearance. Hartman College police had removed Huber from campus when he became disorderly during an argument. Police were also investigating Huber as the author of a campaign of harassment against Dempsey.

The removal of Huber as a suspect leaves police with few leads.

“This is as baffling as anything I’ve ever seen,” reported Sheriff Kates. “We’ve got a girl who vanishes from her dorm room and turns up dead in a boarded-up house 50 miles away.”

“We don’t know how she got there. We don’t know who she left with or why.”

Investigators are focusing on Dempsey’s Hartman College residence hall. Dunn Hall residents are being interviewed about who was in the building that night and their comings and goings.

“Dunn Hall is secured after 10 pm. You have to have a keycard to get in but students will sometimes let other people in, thinking they are fellow students or students’ guests.

“Somebody saw something that night. Somebody heard something. There’s somebody out there with the information we need to break this case,” said Rick Meyers of the Hartman College Police.

Former Satanist addresses congregation

Human infant among cults victims, man claims

By Steven O'Conner
CANDELL REPUBLICAN

A local minister concerned about cult activity in the area handed his pulpit over to a special guest yesterday.

When it came time to deliver his weekly sermon at the Blood of the Savior Worship Center, Rob Sage instead stepped to the microphone and introduced his congregation to a self-described former cultist named "Andrew." No last name was given.

Andrew addressed the hushed worshippers from behind a backlit screen that concealed his identity. For almost forty minutes, he told a tale of black masses, orgies, and blood sacrifices that held the congregation spellbound.

Andrew said he became involved in a Satanic group in high school. A life-long resident of Tafton, he broke off his involvement with the cult over a year ago when he converted to Christianity at a revival led by Reverend Sage.

"It seemed innocent enough at first, just playing a few games of Dungeons and Dragons with friends," he said, referring to the role-playing game popular among area teens. "One thing led to another and I ended up dedicating my life to Satan when I was nineteen years old.

"I spent the next five years of my life living in a shadow realm of deception and evil," Andrew said. None of his family or friends knew of his activities at the time, he said.

Andrew spoke quietly as he told tales of blood rituals that, he said, included the sacrifice of an infant on Halloween in 2002. Congregation members wept and Sage was visibly moved as Andrew recounted the story of a baby boy's ritual

slaughter in the Crainey Woods in the northern Candell County.

"The high priest held the offering up in the moonlight. Everyone was chanting. He brought the baby's head down on the rock hard, four or five times. The child screamed the first time. Then he stopped."

Andrew said was notified of meeting times and locations in e-mail messages from someone known only as "Blackspot666." A number of those meetings, he said, took place inside old Walnut Fork Inn, where the body of a Hartman College student was discovered on October 3rd.

Andrew said that he never knew the identities of the cult's leaders or most of the other members, who were always masked at meetings.

Told of Andrew's story, Candell County Sheriff Ray Kates said it was "very interesting" and that he would be contacting Sage to arrange an interview with the young man. "If he knows something about any crimes that have been committed, he needs to come forward and share that information with authorities."

Sage said it might be difficult to get Andrew to speak to the sheriff. "This young man has been traumatized by his experiences. It's only been recently that he's begun sharing his story with me, and I've known him for over a year."

Worshippers at the center said Andrew's story confirmed the fears they've had about cults working in the area. "If this doesn't wake people up, I don't know it's going to take," said congregation member Viola Hughes.

"I hope the sheriff is listening" said Hughes' niece, Kathy Denton.

Another area minister, however, indicated that maybe he shouldn't listen. David Adams, Senior minister at Bridgewater United Methodist Church, reacted with skepticism to Andrew's story.

"Sounds an awful lot like most of that Satanic Panic stuff people like Sage were hyping back in the late eighties," Adams said. "People were alleging that Satanic Cults were murdering thousands of people a year. It all turned out to be a bunch of hogwash.

"I've been serving the church here in Tafton for years, and I've never heard or seen anything like this guy is talking about."

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Oct. 23rd, 2006, p. B1

Infant may be hard to trace

By Janet Park
CANDELL REPUBLICAN

Amidst an atmosphere of growing fear, Sheriff Ray Kates yesterday assured a crowd gathered outside his home that his department is looking into claims made Sunday morning by Andrew, a man claiming to be a member of a Satanic group.

The identity of an infant sacrificed by a devil-worshipping cult on Halloween in 2002 may never be known, the sheriff's department said yesterday.

"Four years is a long time. Unless we can find a crime scene, we don't have much to go on, and even then it will be tough" Sheriff Ray Kates admitted to the crowd of about sixty people on his front lawn at about 3 pm. The group had started to form about noon, shortly after services ended at the Blood of the Savior Worship Center.

Kates said he has already contacted pastor Rob Sage to set up a meeting with Andrew.

He also said he already has deputies combing through the state's missing-persons files from 2002. "So far nothing has come up. But if it happened like Andrew says, we probably won't find anything."

Andrew said the child was "harvested" by a cult member from out of state who posed as an adoption agent.

Sheriff seeking interview with Andrew

By Janet Park

CANDELL REPUBLICAN

Sheriff Ray Kates said this morning that he has contacted Reverend Rob Sage, pastor at the Blood of the Savior Worship Center, in order to arrange an interview with "Andrew," the young man who spoke anonymously to the congregation last Sunday about his involvement in an area cult.

In the meantime, Kates asked that area residents remain calm. The community has been jittery since the discovery of a dead body on October 3rd, Kates said. False reports of strange activities and fights among teenagers had died down after the identification of Stephanie Dempsey's body. "Now the rumor mill is running full throttle again."

Thus far, he said, no meeting has been scheduled. Sage, the sheriff said, seems reluctant to let Andrew talk to law enforcement.

"I understand that the reverend is concerned about the guy's emotional balance and all, but I really need to talk to him."

"I've said it before and I'll say it again, if this guy or anyone else knows about a crime, I want to hear about it. Opening up to your pastor or priest is great, but it shouldn't stop there."

Sage indicated that he is encouraging Andrew to come forward, but the young man is afraid. "He did some pretty dreadful things in the Devil's name, and he doesn't want to go to jail for them now that he's a new man."

"The big picture is, the Christians here don't have a lot of confidence in Sheriff Kates. He's never been real responsive to the church."

"I don't think that's true, and I hope the people of Candell County don't feel that way," responded Kates, who has been a member of Tafton Presbyterian Church for over twenty years.

Tafton schools cancel activities

By Aaron Larson

CANDELL REPUBLICAN

Citing parental concerns and security issues, Tafton Public Schools cancelled all after-school extra curricular activities for the duration of this week and next, a spokesman for the district announced this morning.

"We may have high school football games Friday," said assistant Superintendent Deborah Sours. "if we can schedule them in the early afternoon before dinner time."

"Other games and events missed will be rescheduled, if possible, at a better time."

Sours stressed that the decision was made to help curb parental fears and student rumors, not because of worries about abductions. "The biggest risk is that we have kids fighting with one another," she said. "There has never been a case of a kidnapping at one of our schools. This is mainly at the parents' request."

"I'm very relieved," said Sally Carter, mother of two Tafton Middle School students. Her son, Barry, runs of the cross country team and her daughter, Annabelle, is in the chess club. "Now I can pick them both up at the same time right after classes and I don't have to worry about where they are."

Not all parents are as pleased about the decision. Amber Williams, whose son is the starting guard on the Tafton High football team, isn't pleased.

"I paid over three hundred dollars this fall so Drew could play football," said Williams, referring to Tafton's pay-to-play policy. "Part of how I can afford this is that when he's a practice I work overtime. But I don't get a refund if practice is cancelled. I either have to come home from work to keep an eye on him, or wonder where he's at all afternoon."

"This is a bunch of nonsense," she added. "I don't know why the rest of us have to pay just because the fundies want to have another witch hunt. I certainly don't know why the school system is catering to these blockheads."

Sage: Andrew to meet with sheriff soon

By Janet Park

CANDELL REPUBLICAN

Rob Sage, pastor at the Blood of the Savior Worship Center, said today that he is trying to arrange a meeting between the county sheriff and a young man who disclosed his affiliation with a local Satanist group to his congregation last Sunday.

The young man was introduced simply as Andrew. Sage refused to identify him further.

"It takes a lot of courage to stand up in this way. This young man is clearly concerned about his well-being, and that of his family.

"It is important that everyone, including the sheriff, protect his identity."

Sheriff Kates agreed, saying that right now the important thing is that Andrew comes in to speak to him. "I certainly don't want any harm to come to the guy, but I have to admit I'm a bit frustrated. I need to talk to him.

"He's mentioned some pretty serious crimes, and what he has to say may impact some important investigations. "

Kates urged area citizens to remain calm. Elementary school attendance has been off almost fifty percent in Tafton and Pikeville this week, and even older kids are being kept home by their parents.

"I don't think I would let this panic me," Kates said. "Parents should always be alert, of course, but there's not need to go overboard."

The sheriff stopped short of speculating on whether Andrew's story would have an impact on the investigation of the murder of Stephanie Dempsey, who was found dead in an abandoned building October 3rd.

Andrew has said that some of the cult's meetings occurred in that building.

The Columbus Star, Monday, Oct. 23rd,
2006, p. B1

Ex-boyfriend has theory about Dempsey homicide

Tom Frazier
THE STAR

"I miss her every day. I can't believe this happened." said a tearful Mike Huber in an exclusive interview with *The Star*.

Huber dated murdered Hartman College co-ed Stephanie Dempsey for about a year before they broke up last summer.

When Dempsey disappeared, police looked to Huber as a prime suspect. Hartman College police reported removing him from campus after a loud argument with Dempsey on August xx. Police also found several harsh e-mails from Huber on Dempsey's computer. Huber was also suspected in a campaign of harassment against the 21 year old.

"I thought we were going to get married but I found out she had different ideas. I took it hard.

"I lost it a little bit when she broke up with me. I said and did things I shouldn't. I regret it and wish I could take it all back." Said Huber.

Police interrogated Huber and searched his room at the Sigma Rho Pi fraternity house. Huber was cleared shortly after Stephanie's body was found. His whereabouts the night she was killed were extensively documented with numerous witnesses.

"It was hard being the prime suspect. I was scared for Stephanie and working through all that but I was also scared for myself and mad that they were wasting time on me instead of going after the real criminals.

"I knew I hadn't done anything to her but the police came on like they were ready to hang me from the tree out front."

Huber said he lost many friends during the investigation.

"People turned against me. People who've known me since high school suddenly acted like I was Charlie Manson or Jack the Ripper or something.

"I got death threats on my phone. People read the papers and watched the news and looked at me like they were going to beat me up."

Huber has his own theory of who lured Stephanie from her dorm that night and what happened to her.

"She was seeing someone new. That was one of the things we fought about.

"I was worried for her. I didn't know who this guy was and neither did any of her friends. He seemed like kind of a shady character.

"If she didn't want to be with me, fine, but I still cared about her. I didn't want her to get hooked up with some thug just because she was on the rebound from me."

"My theory is I think Stephanie left her dorm to go for a ride with this guy. He took her out there and something happened.

"Maybe they were goofing around, exploring that abandoned house, and she fell down the stairs and broke her neck.

"I think he might have been in some other kind of trouble with the law and was afraid to call an ambulance.

"He cut her hand off to make it look like a murder and left her there alone.

"He did this to her. The police need to find this guy."

Stephanie's friends and family doubted Huber's theory.

"Stephanie was not seeing anyone." said her friend Annabeth Kohart. "She was through with guys for a while. After her troubles with Mike, she just wanted to concentrate on school for a while."

Candell County Sheriff Ray Kates also discounted Huber's theory. "We've already checked it out. She didn't have another boyfriend. There is no dark stranger.

"We've been all through her letters, e-mail, and phone records. If such a person existed, we'd know about him by now."

Kates says meeting with Andrew just a beginning

By Janet Park

CANDELL REPUBLICAN

After several days of waiting, Sheriff Ray Kates finally got to meet late yesterday afternoon with Andrew, the former Satanist whose confession set a local congregation last buzzing last Sunday.

Citing privacy and security concerns, Kates refused to reveal Andrew's full name. He said the meeting occurred in the office of Rob Sage, the pastor who introduced Andrew to his congregation at the Blood of the Savior Worship Center earlier this week.

"It was a very interesting conversation," Sage said of the meeting. "Andrew has given us a lot of information to work with, but obviously things are inconclusive at this stage. Our investigation is just beginning."

Kates said he expects to meet with Andrew again today, and probably several times more, in order to gather details about his experiences. "We need specific dates, and times, and places, in order to really dig into what he's telling us."

Sage said he was pleased with the way the sheriff handled the meeting. "He was very attentive, very detailed. He made it clear that Andrew is not a suspect."

Kates said that Andrew is not himself the subject of a criminal investigation at this time. "He's a cooperating witness, not a suspect," the sheriff said.

Kates again refused to speculate on rumors that Andrew's story may lead to a break in the Stephanie Dempsey murder investigation. The sheriff's search for clues in the Dempsey case has thus far been largely unsuccessful.

"It's too early to tell," he said. He refused to discuss any details of his talks with Andrew.

Candell County Republican,
Saturday, Oct. 28th, 2006, p. A1

"I'm glad to know he's in my corner on this one," Kates said of Sage, who has been critical of the sheriff in the past. "I'm sure that together we can get to the bottom of this."

Sheriff needs to see computer

By Janet Park

CANDELL REPUBLICAN

Saying that he needs more specifics about the places and times of meetings, Sheriff Ray Kates has asked the former cult member known as Andrew to hand his computer over to police technicians for analysis.

"This is pretty standard procedure," Kates said in response to reporter's questions about why he wanted the machine. "The computer was the main means of communication between Andrew and this group."

Andrew has said that he was informed of meeting times and places via e-mails from someone known only as "Blackspot666."

Andrew seems reluctant to hand over his hardware, Kates said.

Andrew's pastor, Rob Sage, says that Andrew is just worried about privacy concerns and is urging the man to cooperate with the sheriff.

"I agree the sheriff should take a look. "It's been over a year since the events Andrew is reporting, and he's understandably a little hazy on exact dates and places," Sage said. "I mean, this guy was going to meetings three to five times a week. They were at a variety of locations. It's tough to keep it all straight."

Some local ministers have expressed doubts about the veracity of Andrew's claims. David Adams, at Bridgewater United Methodist, has been particularly vocal this week. "It's a bunch of hooey," he said yesterday. "I've lived in Tafton all my life. I know these people and this community. Something's wrong here all right, but it's something with Andrew."

Acknowledging that there are detractors, Sage praised Kate's diligence with Andrew. "The sheriff is taking this all very seriously. I'm confident that he will help prove what has been going on here.

"Some people think Satan is a myth or a joke. They need to be reminded otherwise."

Candell County Republican,
Sunday, Oct. 29th, 2006, p. B1

"That's fine, as long as he has the right permits," said Kates.

Pastor calls on sheriff to cancel Halloween activities

By **Steven O'Conner**
CANDELL REPUBLICAN

According to Rob Sage, it's just too dangerous.

According to Sheriff Ray Kates, it's not up to him.

Sage yesterday called on the sheriff to cancel all Halloween related activities throughout the county, starting this weekend.

"He needs to declare a state of emergency and tell all the area municipalities to cancel their beggar's nights," Sage said. Calling trick-or-treat a "Satanic Celebration," Sage warned that going ahead with the annual candyfest may result in "a blood bath."

"There is a very active, deadly Satanic Cult working in the area. They've killed before, they will again. If that's not an emergency, I don't know what is."

Kates responded that the law on what constitutes an emergency is very clear, and that "this ain't it." He added city officials are welcome to change the plans for their communities if they wish. "That might be a good idea, considering how panicked everyone seems to be right now," Kates added.

Sage announced that the Blood of the Savior Worship Center will be having a "Celebration of Saintliness" on Tuesday night. He encouraged "Christians to dress as their favorite bible person" and come for an evening of contemporary Christian music, food, fun, and games for all ages.

"We are going to have a bonfire at 8 PM," he added. "Everyone should bring their rock and roll records and D&D books. Rap music. Trashy movies. We're burning it all."

Candell County Republican,
Monday, Oct. 30th, 2006, p. A1

No evidence of cult involvement in Dempsey murder

By Janet Park

CANDELL REPUBLICAN

There is no evidence that indicates that a Satanic cult was involved in the death Stephanie Dempsey, Sheriff Ray Kates said this morning.

"I've said it before and I'll say it again. We've been over every detail," the sheriff said at a news conference in Tafton.

"Despite a lot of speculation to the contrary, there's not one bit of evidence that suggests that this killing was in any way related to any kind of ritual."

Kates said last week's revelations by a young man known only as Andrew about his involvement with an area cult has not changed his assessment.

"This murder, to be honest, does not look anything like the crimes Andrew's describing," the sheriff said. He cited a lack of ritual objects and symbols at the crime scene.

"The events he's describing occurred two or more years ago."

Kates stressed that parents should not worry too much sending their kids out for beggars' night, scheduled in Tafton for this evening between 6 and 8 PM, pointing out that similar events in Pikeville, Claude, and New Haverton over the weekend came off without incident. At this time, no local communities have cancelled their beggars night plans.

"If your community is having beggar's night, you should feel free to participate, and we'll continue to help keep the kids safe. Folks should take all the normal precautions to protect their kids, but I would not go overboard. Trick or Treating should be no different than it is any other year."

"That sounds like bad advice to me," responded the Reverend Rob Sage when told of the sheriff's statements. "He's flirting with a real disaster. Parents need to keep their kids in out of

the hands of these perverts and devil worshippers."

Sage stressed that Andrew has told of at least one infant sacrifice by the cult, which he says occurred on Halloween in 2002. He urged parents to keep their kids home to avoid a "blood bath."

Kates said investigation of Andrew's confessions are ongoing and that the sheriff's department is still hoping to be able to examine the man's computer for evidence.

Law enforcement officials are still struggling to come up with answers in the death of Stephanie Dempsey, a Hartman College student whose body was found in an abandoned building on October 3rd.

Candell County Republican,
Tuesday, Oct. 31st, 2006, p. A1

Doll proves cult involvement, minister says

By Janet Park

CANDELL REPUBLICAN

Saying he is "alarmed and disappointed" at the Candell County Sheriff's conclusion that Stephanie Dempsey was not victim of a Satanic cult, the Reverend Rob Sage yesterday said if the sheriff is looking for proof that Satanists were involved in the murder, he need look no further than a strange, hand-made doll found in the Hartman College student's dorm room.

"Andrew has reported dolls of this type were frequently used in his cult's rituals," Sage added, referring to a former Satanist whose story he introduced to his congregation last week.

Sheriff Ray Kates said the doll was only one of dozens of objects found in Dempsey's room and that it did not appear to have any direct relationship to her murder.

"It is quite old, and appears to have been among a box of several objects she purchased at a flea market shortly before she was killed," he said.

"Andrew has not mentioned any such dolls in any of the conversations I've had with him," Kates added.

The doll has become the focal point in an ongoing disagreement between the sheriff and Sage, who have also sparred in recent days over the question of whether local officials ought to cancel beggar's night this year.

Trick-or-Treating went off without incident in several towns around Candell County this past weekend, although crowds were clearly much smaller than in recent years.

"Parents are smarter than the sheriff, it seems," Sage said. "I hope and pray that parents will keep their kids home tonight, or take them to a good, bible-centered celebration at a safe church."

Sage has insisted from the beginning that Dempsey was killed as part of a Satanic Ritual, but Kates has been careful to distance himself from the idea.

"The truth is, I just don't have any evidence to support the theory," Kates said Tuesday. "I know a lot of people are sold on the notion, but I have to base my investigation on the facts."

Sage said the doll is itself a convincing fact. "It is clearly designed for use in black masses and other rituals," he said. Although he admits he's unfamiliar with its exact use, he has "no doubt the poor girl made this thing, probably instructed to do so by some recruiter or Satanic priest" and that her completion of it "led to her being trapped in a web of Evil."

Sage denounced as "hogwash" claims that the doll, roughly four inches tall and constructed of wood, cloth, chicken bone, and ink, is more than a hundred years old. "It's clearly based on a old pattern, but the girl had to construct it herself in order for it to work."

"The sheriff's office is in denial" he said, adding that if they "do not understand the nature of the Evil they are confronting, this community will suffer for their failures.

Sage said he is praying for law enforcement personnel, and that he has invited Dr. Dale Drake, a nationally recognized on cults who visited the area last year, to return to Candell County "to help bring the cultists to justice."

Candell County Republican,
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B3

Halloween uneventful

By Steven O'Conner
CANDELL REPUBLICAN

Beggar's Night in Tafton has come and gone, and Tafton Police Chief Manny Jenkins says it was pretty uneventful.

"We had about the same calls as we usually do. Kids soaping windows. Egging houses. Normal stuff.

"We probably had even less of that than usual," he added. "Worried parents tend to keep a closer eye on their kids."

Jenkins said the only arrest involved a twenty-four year old man who was taken in for attacking a group of beggars who came up on his porch.

"He didn't want to be bothered, which is his right, but he went too far. He fired off a gun and beat one kid up pretty bad."

For County Sheriff Ray Kates, the busiest spot of the night was the Blood of the Savior Worship Center, where Pastor Rob Sage was holding a "Celebration of Saintliness" as an alternative to traditional Halloween festivities.

The sheriff and several deputies were called to the center at about 9 PM to respond to complaints that people were being poisoned. When they arrived, they found about 30 or 40 people complaining of dizziness and nausea. Two squads of paramedics were also called to the scene.

"At first I thought maybe there was some bad potato salad or something involved," said Kates. "But investigation showed that the problem was caused by the fumes from a bonfire."

"Reverend Sage started the fire and encouraged the crowd of about 300 to toss in evil books, (Dungeons and Dragons) stuff, rap music, all that stuff," said 19-year-old Craig Johnson of New Haverton. "When they did, the smoke turned real black."

Kates says the problem was that the air was pretty stagnant in the area between the center's two buildings, which caused the smoke to linger.

"You have to be careful about burning plastics like jewel cases and computer discs," Kates said. "Sometimes it can release some pretty nasty stuff into the air. Fortunately, this doesn't appear to be anything serious.

Paramedics treated a few people at the scene for nausea, but no one had to be transported for further care, the sheriff said.

"If this is as close as we come to a blood bath tonight, I'll be satisfied," Kates said, referring to Sage's dire predictions of an All Hallow's Eve disaster if beggar's night was not cancelled.

Psychic to visit Dempsey murder scene

Star of TV's "Ghost Files" to visit Candell County

Tom Frazier
THE STAR

Nationally-known psychic Margaret Whalley, who appears on "Ghost Files" program on the Mystery Channel, will be traveling to the Candell County to tape an episode of her program. Whalley will be investigating the still unsolved murder of Hartman College coed Stephanie Dempsey.



Whalley contacted Dempsey's parents after seeing Stephanie in a dream.

"Stephanie appeared to me in a dream and asked me to help her. She wants

the person who did this to her brought to justice. She wants to stop him before he hurts somebody else.

"I saw some of the things she saw that last night. I felt some of the things she felt."

About the murderer, Whalley says it was someone that she trusted.

"There was a great feeling of shock, surprise, and betrayal. She couldn't believe this was happening. He was a friend. He was somebody she trusted. That's why she went with him. Suddenly, he turned on her."

Whalley says the murder arose from a frustrated sexual assault.

"He wanted to have relations with her. She refused. He tried to force her. There was a struggle. He pushed her down the stairs."

Whalley denied the suggestion that the murder was some sort of cult crime. "It wasn't. I'm not sensing anything like that."

Whalley adds that the murderer is still a danger: "He's done this before. He has assaulted women and he has killed at least one other. Unless we identify him and stop him, I believe he will do this again."

Whalley wants to travel to the scene of the crime in hopes of sharpening her visions.

"I'm seeing and feeling things Stephanie felt in her final moments but right now they're confused, fragmentary, hazy. An event like a murder leaves powerful psychic traces. I feel that being at the place where Stephanie left this state of being, I might be able to tap into stronger, clearer images that will lead us to her killer."

Sheriff Kates says his department has received a letter from Mrs. Whalley detailing her claims. "We don't take it too seriously. Since this story hit the papers we've had some crank or another calling in every couple of days with their pet theory of the crime. She's just the latest."

Whalley rose to national reknown in 1986 when she tipped off Miami, Florida police to the whereabouts of kidnapped businessman Oswaldo Dias Orozco. Orozco was rescued two days later from the locked shipping container where his captors were holding him.

Whalley had told police to look for a metal door near the sea and the colors orange or blue. Orozco was found in an orange shipping container with a blue stripe. The container was parked at a cargo depot near the Port of Miami.

Since that time, Whalley claims to have consulted with over 70 police departments to help solve murders or missing persons cases.

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Sheriff seeks court order for cultist's computer

By Janet Park

CANDELL REPUBLICAN

Citing delays and a lack of cooperation, Candell County Sheriff Ray Kates filed yesterday afternoon for a court order giving him access to the computer of Andrew, a former cult member whose confessions of ritual sacrifice and murder have left Candell County in a state of alarm.

"He hasn't been able to come up with specific dates, names, or places so that we can really investigate his story," Kates said. "We think his computer will help, but he has not allowed us access to it."

Rob Sage, Andrew's pastor and advisor, said the sheriff has been harsh and uncooperative in recent days, going so far as to suggest that Andrew is making things up. "This young man is a victim. He has come forward to help. The sheriff is treating him like a suspect, a criminal."

Kates insisted that he's just doing his job, which, he said, involves asking questions. "It's not my fault if the young man has trouble answering him," he said. "We think the computer will help with that."

Andrew has said that most of his communication with the rest of the cult was conducted via e-mail. The sheriff hopes traces of that communication left on the machine's hard drive will help nail down some dates and locations.

"We might even recover records on who sent the messages, which would be very helpful."

It is unclear, Kates said, why Andrew has become less cooperative in recent days. "I thought we had a pretty good relationship going, but he got awfully quiet all of a sudden. He was going to bring the PC in voluntarily on Tuesday, but he never showed up, and he hasn't been answering my calls lately."

Sage says Andrew has become concerned that the sheriff is not taking his story seriously, a charge the sheriff denies.

"I want to get to the bottom of this as much as anyone," Kates said.

Judge Brison Kellough is expected to rule on the sheriff's request sometime late today.