

Sheriff questions teens

By Janet Park

CANDELL REPUBLICAN

Deputies from the Candell County Sheriff's Department questioned students at Tafton and Candell County Consolidated High Schools this morning. Law enforcement officers set up in conference rooms and questioned about fifty students from the two schools.

The sheriff confirmed that the interviews were related to the discovery of a murdered woman in the former Walnut Fork Inn last week.

"We don't suspect anybody. This is strictly for background.

"We are trying to identify who was out there on the Friday and Saturday nights before the body was discovered," said Sheriff Kates.

"We want to know what people saw, what they heard said, if they remembered anybody unfamiliar hanging around."

Monday saw few other developments in the investigation.

Detectives from the OBCI&I joined deputies to explore a squatter's shack on the banks of Walnut Creek about a quarter mile from the murder scene.

Other deputies joined volunteers to walk the sides of Walnut Fork Road and State Rt. 40 looking for evidence the killer might have thrown from his vehicle as he left the scene.

Coroner Dr. Paul Montgomery released the results of a toxicology test showing that the murder victim had not been intoxicated or under the influence of any illegal narcotics.

Columbus police confirmed that the murder victim is not Betty Tannery, a 15 year old runaway who disappeared in late August.

"We still don't know who she was, what she was doing, or how she got there," said Sheriff Kates.

"Until we get those basic facts, we don't have much to go on."

“Prayer Warriors” wage spiritual warfare

By James Byerley
CANDELL REPUBLICAN

Sunday afternoon, a delegation of 65 “Prayer Warriors” from Blood of the Savior Worship Center held a service along the road in front of Walnut Fork Inn.

Led by Reverend Rob Sage, the church members sang hymns, prayed, and rebuked Satan outside the 163 year old building where the body of a murdered girl was discovered last week.

With her arms raised over her head, 53 year old Violet Hughes prayed, “In the name of Jesus Christ, I rebuke the dark spirits that haunt this place! I rebuke the demons of drunkenness, adultery, drug abuse, and sexual perversion summoned here by the sin in this place’s past! In the name of God Almighty, I order you to depart.”

“Satan, we deny you!” exhorted an elderly woman in a blue dress. Wielding a crucifix, she commanded “In the holy name of Jesus, we order you to quit this place!”

Sixteen year old Jeremy Killman shook his Bible at the house and announced, “We are taking back this house and this land for God. We don’t want you in our county any more.!”

Meanwhile a group of teenagers and young adults sang hymns and contemporary Christian music to the accompaniment of Reverend Sage on acoustic guitar.

“We are here in our capacity as God’s people,” said Reverend Sage. “We are here as Christians to exercise the Lord’s charge to go out in the world and do battle with the forces of the adversary.”

“Christ has given us dominion over this world and power to defeat the enemy. As believers, we just have to use it.”

Reverend Sage explained that he believes a history of sin in a place can bring down judgment and create an opportunity for demonic activity.

“This place has been a hangout for trouble-makers since I was a kid. Drinking, drugs, fights, illicit sex, sodomy, rock and rap music, entry-level Satanism... it’s all been happening right here for the past thirty years..

“An atmosphere like that makes a demon feel right at home. I have no doubt that one or more of them have set up at this place.

“Once they’ve taken hold, they inspire more and worse sinning. Easily swayed young minds are led to suicide, violence, murder, and ritual sacrifice.”

Several worshippers claimed they could sense demonic presences at the site. They said they heard the buzzing of flies, smelled sulfur, or felt nauseous.

“There’s no doubt,” said one worshipper, “This place is thick with dark-sided activity.”

Reverend Sage said he believes the murdered young woman found last week was the victim of cult activities.

“It’s so obvious what happened to her, it’s painful. There are details about the body and the crime scene which haven’t been made public but if you saw them... Well, any reasonable person could only draw one conclusion. That poor girl was slaughtered as part of a Satanic ritual.”

The faithful concluded their ceremony by erecting a small wooden cross near the entrance to the property and saying a prayer of blessing followed by the Lord’s Prayer.

“We’re not done with this place,” announced one of the worshippers as he climbed into his car.

“We’re going to back here next weekend and the weekend after that. We’ve reclaimed this place and we’re not going to let the Devil take it back.”

Pikeville teen beaten

Attackers claimed “Goth” fan was Satanist

By Janet Park
CANDELL REPUBLICAN

Fourteen year old Jason Defries likes to watch horror movies. Zombie movies are his favorite. He likes listening to Rob Zombie and Pagan Holiday 1313. He wears a silver ring of a bat-winged skull. He dresses in black most days and calls himself a “Goth.” Halloween is his favorite holiday.

Monday afternoon, Jason Defries’ taste in movies, music, and clothes got him beaten badly enough to require a trip to the emergency room.

“I got off the bus at the stop as usual and I noticed a red car with four guys in it. They were giving me dirty looks but I get that a lot so I just ignored them and started walking home.

“I’m headed down the alley for home when suddenly the red car roars around the corner and screeches to a halt in front of me. The doors fly open and the four guys jump out and come after me.

“I take off running but one of them tackles me. Two of them held me while the other two beat on me.

“They were cussing me out and calling me ‘Satanist’ and ‘devil-worshipper’ and telling me I better get out of town and tell my friends to get out too. They said they knew we killed that girl.

“I don’t know what would have happened if Mr. Johnson hadn’t come out to the alley. He yelled at them and they dropped me, got back in their car, and took off.”

Jason’s neighbor Samuel Johnson helped Jason to his feet and seeing the condition he was in called the ambulance.

Jason was treated at Tafton Memorial Hospital. The attack left him with a broken nose and fractures to his cheekbone and two ribs.

Jason’s mom Christine isn’t a fan of her son’s fashion choices but defends him as a good boy.

“He’s an honor roll student at his school. He gets straight A’s. All the teachers adore him. He’s never been in trouble a day in his life.

“He likes all that spooky stuff but he’s no Satanist. To call him a devil-worshipper is just ridiculous.”

Looking at her bruised and bandaged son with tears welling in her eyes, she asked, “Why would somebody do a thing like this? Why?”

Defries’ attackers were driving a red 2000 Ford Taurus with a license containing the letters “P” and “H.”

The attackers were four white males, aged 16-20. One of them had short blond hair. One of them might have been named “Mike.”

Sheriff Ray Kates cites the beating of Jason Defries as one of the reasons that community leaders must work to restore calm and put an end to baseless rumors about the Walnut Fork murder.

“This has got to stop,” said the sheriff. “or someone’s going to wind up dead.”

Police called to Tafton High School

Disturbance blamed on rumors about Walnut Fork murder

By Janet Park

CANDELL REPUBLICAN

Tafton city police officers were called to the high school early this afternoon to break up a fight that had started between about twenty students in the lunch room.

No one was seriously injured and no one has been arrested but the incident remains under investigation.

Principal Stan Woodline blamed the disturbance on tensions arising from the unsolved murder of a young woman at Walnut Fork Inn last Monday.

"A rumor has been going around since last week that some of the students are members of a satanic cult and that they intend to sacrifice a blond, blue-eyed virgin under the full moon this Friday.

"One of our students decided his girlfriend was the intended target and confronted a student he believed to be in the cult.

"They started shoving each other, punches were thrown, friends came to their aide and a general melee broke out."

A teacher, Charles Townsend, was transported to Tafton Memorial where he received stitches for a wound over the eye. Two students were treated for unspecified minor injuries and released.

Megan Evans, a senior at Tafton was in the lunchroom at the time.

"There's a bunch of weird kids go here. They have piercings and big ugly tattoos and wear black clothes all of the time. They say they're atheists and devil-worshippers and stuff like that, They listen to real weird dark music.

"Anyway, what I heard was that one of them threatened C___. They said they were going to drug her and take her out to the woods and rape her and kill her like they did that other girl.

"D__ and some of the guys stood up to them and the weirdoes attacked them. One of them, N___, had a sacrificial knife and cut Mr. Townsend. They're just like wild animals"

Justin Case, a freshman, also witnessed the altercation but saw things differently.

"It's all the jocks' fault. They started it and they got what they were asking for.

"They been using this thing as an excuse to pick on people, on anybody who isn't just like them. They've been going around pulling up people's shirts claiming they were looking for the devil's mark.

"D___ grabbed N___'s girlfriend's shirt in the lunchroom and pulled it up over her head. N___ got tired of it and let D___ have it."

Teacher Stacy Hingle has had enough of it. "You wouldn't believe the stories that are circulating around here about the murder."

Hingle said attendance was low at Friday night's football game because of a rumor that satanic cultists were going to kill a blond, blue-eyed virgin under the stands.

"Half the cheerleaders and most of the band called in sick."

Tafton Police Chief Frank Drummer urged calm.

"These crazy stories have got to stop. I've heard them all and there's not a shred of truth to any of them.

"The people who are spreading these lies are reckless and irresponsible.

"These stories need to stop before somebody gets hurt."

“Wild stories” surrounding murder

Sheriff and coroner seek to dispel myths

By Janet Park
CANDELL REPUBLICAN

Tensions continue to grow in the area in the wake of a mysterious murder at the former Walnut Fork Inn.

- A Pikeville teen was jumped and beaten on his way home from school Monday afternoon by a group accusing him of being a Satanist..
- On Wednesday, a fight involving up to twenty students broke out in the lunchroom at Tafton High School. One group of students had accused another of being Satanists
- This morning, area grade schools sat half empty as parents kept their children home in response to a story that Satanists were planning to abduct a child for a sacrifice on the night of the full moon.

Under the shadow of these events, Candell County Sheriff Ray Kates, Tafton Police Chief Frank Drummer, and Coroner Paul Montgomery held a meeting today with community leaders, members of the press, local clergy, and educators. The officials wanted to dispel the myths and falsehoods that have grown up around the crime.

“People have already been hurt. If we don’t stop this, someone is going to get killed.” Said Sheriff Kates.

The sheriff described in detail the crime scene and showed photographs.

“Notice what you don’t see here. No pentagrams, no candles, no goat’s heads. There’s none of that stuff I’ve heard so many people say we found.

“All you see is an empty old building, some rusty paint cans, and the very sad sight of a young woman that somebody murdered there.”

Dr. Montgomery spoke about the condition of the body and showed autopsy photos.

“The things people are saying about this crime are all lies.”

“There is no ‘666’ or upside down cross carved in her forehead. Her heart has not been torn from her chest. There are no sacrificial knife wounds.

Reverend Rob Sage of Blood of the Savior Worship Center asked what the sheriff and coroner made of the removal of the woman’s left hand.

Sheriff Kates said he believed the hand was taken either as a gruesome trophy by the killer or possibly as a way to quickly make away with a ring the woman might have been wearing.

Dr. Montgomery speculated the hand might have been removed to slow identification of the body.

Reverend Sage asked why the authorities chose to keep this detail from the public.

Sheriff Kates said it is common to keep small details of criminal cases secret as a way to separate real versus false confessions and tips.

“There’s nothing sinister going on here no matter how much some people would like to make it seem like there is,” said the sheriff.

Murder victim identified

Body is missing Hartman College co-ed

By Janet Park
CANDELL REPUBLICAN

The Candell County Sheriff's Department announced Thursday afternoon that the murdered woman found in a house on Walnut Fork Road October 3rd has been identified. The body is that of Stephanie Dempsey, a 21 year old Hartman College student.



Stephanie Dempsey, missing Hartman College student found dead in Candell County, Oct. 3

"We were contacted Wednesday night by officers from the Hartman College Police. They had learned of our Jane Doe murder victim. The description matched their missing person.

Thursday morning, Hartman Police detectives drove out with one of Stephanie Dempsey's friends. She positively identified the body.

The identification was confirmed with dental records and fingerprints.

Dempsey was last seen in her dorm building on the Hartman College campus about 10:30 pm on the evening of Sunday, October 1st. A class project she was working on was saved to her computer hard drive at 11:33 pm. She has not been seen since.

According to police, Dempsey disappeared from her dorm room in Dunn Hall without money, keys, her cellphone, or even her shoes.

Her keycard was in her wallet on her desk. If she left the dorm she would have needed the keycard to re-enter.

Her room door was locked and the room showed no sign of a struggle. Her vehicle was still parked in the dormitory parking lot.

Hartman Police Chief Rick Meyers was present at the news conference and indicated that police have been questioning the victim's ex-boyfriend in relation to Miss Dempsey's disappearance. He refused to say whether he considered the young man a suspect in her murder.

Chief Meyers also said he knew of no connection that the victim, her family, or her ex-boyfriend had to the Candell County area.

"As far as I know, she was never here before in her life."

Sheriff Kates and Chief Meyers said they would work together and share evidence each had collected in hopes of solving the crime.