

LAKE HERMAN ROAD

BACK ROAD BLITZKRIEG

A COMPREHENSIVE COMPENDIUM



Acknowledgements

For those who were kind and generous with their time, energy, wisdom and knowledge:

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1.0 - Geography

1.1 Introduction

Lake Herman Road is a stretch of pavement running east-west from Columbus Parkway in Vallejo, until it dead ends at the United States Transportation Department facility in Benicia, a total distance of 5.9 miles (9.5 km).

The county back road between neighboring communities Vallejo and Benicia has long been home to local ranchers. In 1968 parts of the road belonged neither to Vallejo nor Benicia but instead remained unincorporated tracts of land belonging to Solano County.

Lake Herman Road is also home to the lake for which it is eponymously named. The reservoir and dam, finished in 1906, was designed to satisfy Benicia's growing water requirements under direction from the Benicia Water Company.

Sulphur Springs Creek was dammed by the design of prominent San Francisco hydraulic and civic engineer Herman Schussler, the titular figure behind the naming of the lake.

1.2 Old Lake Herman Road



Now known as Reservoir Road, "Old Lake Herman Road" serves as a north-south access to Lake Herman Road from East 2nd Street in the city of Benicia.

Lake Herman Road was originally a winding thoroughfare connecting the city of Benicia to its ranchers, quarries, waterworks and sister city Vallejo. It ran from Columbus Parkway on the Vallejo side and followed the path of "Old Lake Herman Road" ending at East 2nd Street in Benicia.

In late 1963, county planners approved the realignment of Lake Herman Road to follow a more direct route, connecting both the I-680 (State Route 21) and Columbus Parkway. Work was completed by 1965, tying Lake Herman Road in with the I-680 at a more northern point. The old alignment would then take the name "Old Lake Herman Road", colloquially.

1.3 Gravity Hill

0.4 miles (0.8 km) east of Columbus Parkway, as the twin lanes pare to single lane traffic, there exists an apparent gravitational phenomenon known as “Gravity Hill”.
(38.1149039, -122.1891119)

The phenomenon is known to pull stopped cars uphill and has been documented as early as the 1960s.

Lake Herman Road's Gravity Hill

Scientifically speaking, the area in question at the bottom of the first hill where traffic merges into a single lane is actually an optical illusion, much like others around the world. In the case of Lake Herman Road's “Gravity Hill”, the surrounding landscape makes a downhill slope appear to be an uphill slope, causing the appearance of gravitational misbehavior.



1.4 Sulphur Springs Creek

4.2 miles (6.7 km) northwest of Lake Herman (as the crow flies) lies Sulphur Springs Mountain. Situated in the southwestern quadrant of Solano county between Fairfield and Vallejo, Sulphur Springs Mountain sits amid the once hotly contested Sky Valley sphere of influence.

Historic Location of Hastings Mine



Draining slopes and natural springs from the mountain provide Sulphur Springs Creek its natural flow. The Lake Herman watershed includes Sulphur Springs Creek, its primary source of freshwater, constantly replenishing from the northwest and southwest side of the lake where the creek meets.

Elevated levels of mercury in the water at Lake Herman can be attributed to mining activities that took place in the early half of the 20th century. Specifically the St. John's mine on Sulphur Springs Mountain, and the Hastings mine located roughly 2 miles (3.2 km) north of Lake Herman Road adjacent to Sulphur Springs Creek.

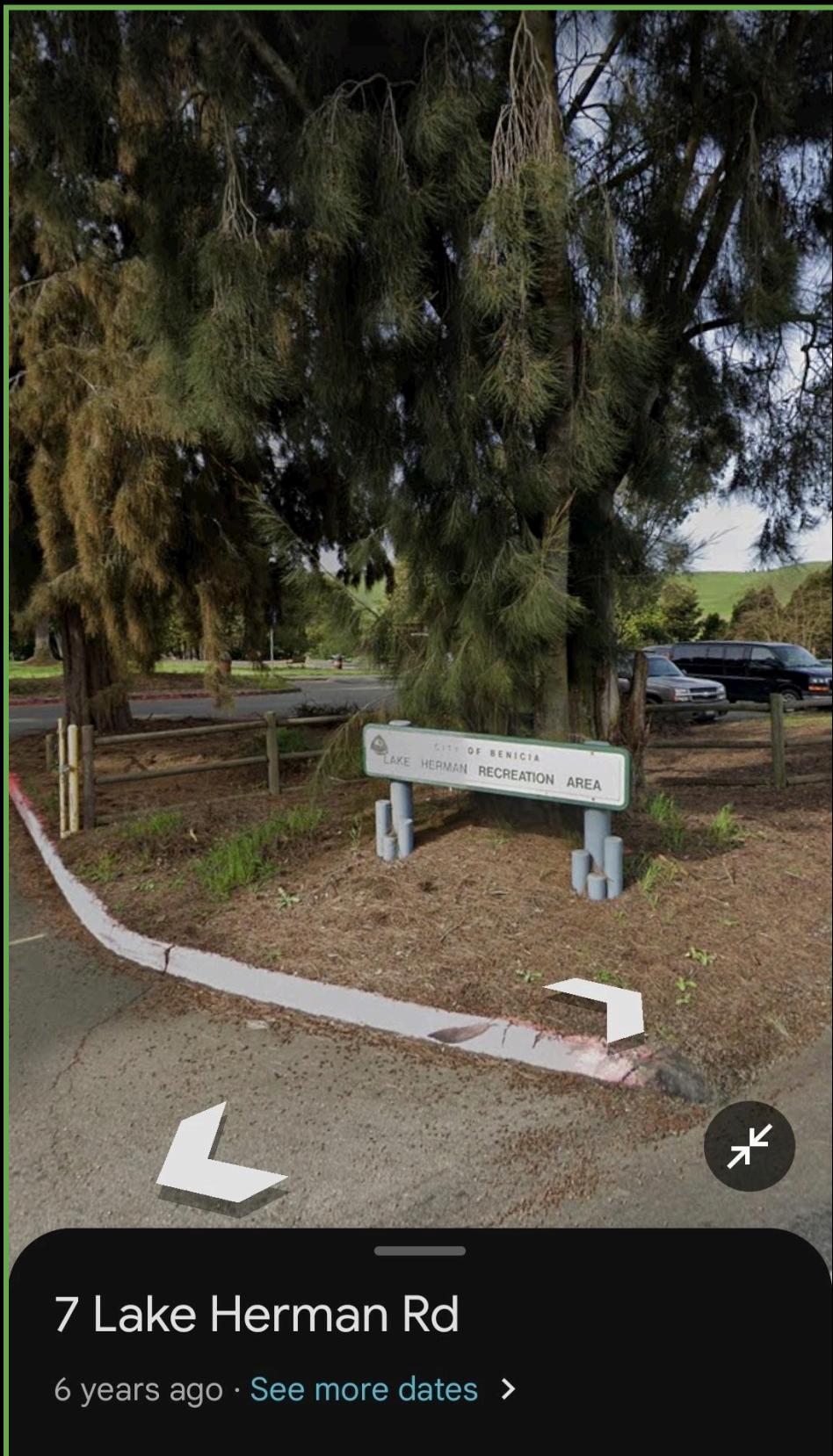
Historic Location of St. John's Mine

The Sulphur Springs (Sky Valley) School was originally built one mile west of Lake Herman in 1870. In 1880, the school was physically moved one mile east and was located just inside the gates of what is modern-day Lake Herman Recreation Area at 7 Lake Herman Road. The historic one-room schoolhouse

was purchased and then moved across the yard by Frank Dotta in 1934; he turned the school building itself into a garage and the two smaller buildings were used as a tool shed and filter house - used for filtering lake water.



Primary Location of Sulphur Springs School



1.5 Sky Valley

Lake Herman has been described as the gateway to Sky Valley, a roughly 5,000-acre (2023.4 hectares) expanse of land sitting approximately 3.5 miles (5.6 km) north of Benicia and 5 miles (8 km) northeast of Vallejo.

Throughout the 1970s and early 1980s this area was a common talking point between city councilors in Vallejo and Benicia, each of whom believed they held the rights for future development of the land. Each community held parts of the Sky Valley area within their so-called sphere of influence.

In December of 1986, Vallejo released its Sky Valley Specific Plan along with an Environmental Impact Report. Benicia would release its own Specific Plan in June of 1991.



Vallejo Independent Press - March 5th, 1981

To date, part of the Sky Valley area that fell within Vallejo city limits has been developed into a residential subdivision known as Hiddenbrooke. The foothold of Sky Valley remains just north of Lake Herman and in the city of Benicia's sphere of influence.



Construction of Paddy Creek Dam circa 1883.

1.6 Paddy Creek Dam

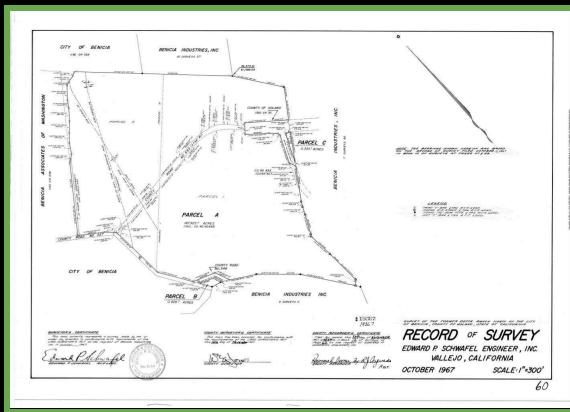
In 1879 the Benicia Water Company acquired water rights on Paddy Ranch Creek. In 1883 land was purchased from Hastings Ranch along Paddy Ranch Creek, and construction began on what became known as the Paddy Creek Dam.

The dam created a 52-million-gallon reservoir approximately 5 miles (8 km) northeast of Lake Herman.

The dam served Benicia until 1961, when the city was integrated into a regional water supply system by approval of a new water bond on September 21, 1961.

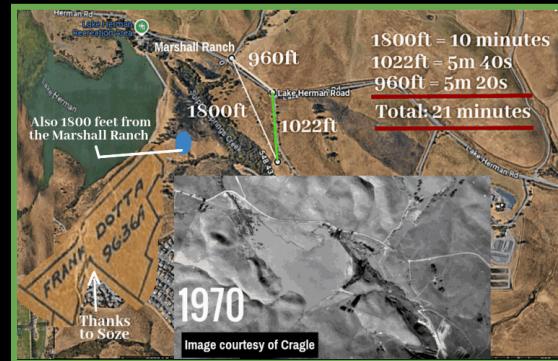
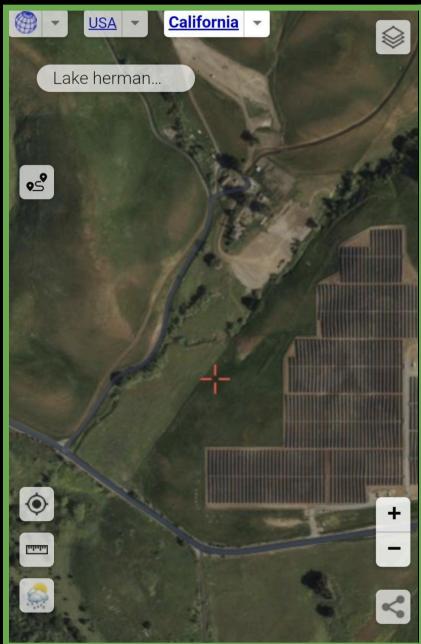
1.7 Dotta Ranch

At the southeastern corner of Lake Herman lies the parcel of property belonging to Frank Hugo Dotta (1916-1989) and his father Frank Joseph Dotta (1892-1966) before him.



The Dotta family was headed by patriarch Frank Joseph Dotta and his bride Kathleen G. Mansfield (1895-1967). Together they raised three children plus one child who was tragically lost at birth - Charlot M. Dotta (May 17, 1930). They raised one son; Frank Hugo Dotta and two daughters; Patricia Elizabeth Borcich-Mini (1920-1997) and Colleen Marguerite Casagranda (1925-2000).

In 1916 the elder Dotta leased the 1200 acres surrounding Lake Herman and Paddy Reservoir Dam to the Benicia Waterworks Company. The lease included title of caretaker and access to the cottage (originally built in 1910 as a clubhouse for duck hunting), located at the northernmost point of Lake Herman (present-day Lake Herman Recreation Area). Frank and Kathleen would make the cottage their home for the next fifty years until his death in 1966.



Courtesy of ZodiacCiphers.com

1.8 Marshall Ranch

Roughly 0.2 miles (0.32 km) west of the Gate 10 turnout stands the entrance to Marshall Ranch. The actual ranch is further north, up a dirt service road - 0.3 miles (0.48 km).

Manuel Franco Marshall (1880-1969) of Azores, Portugal and Virginia Leona Siqueira (1880-1938) of Napa, California, raised three daughters; Mary L. Marshall (1900-), Pauline A. Cohrs (1904-) and Louise J Braito (1910-).

Virginia was a proud member of the S.P.R.S.I. (Portuguese Society of Queen Saint Isabel), a fraternal benefit society, focused on providing support to its members and members of the Catholic Church.



It appears as though, up until at least 1947, the road leading to and extending past Marshall Ranch was called "Water Works Road".

X	31	31	James	son
Fm	33	33	Virginia, Manuel	Head!
V			Eaton, Charles B.	Head!
V			Olson, Albert E.	Brother
Fm	33	33	Marshall, Manuel	Head!
V				Virginia
V				wife
V			Mary L.	Daughter
V			Pauline R.	Daughter
V			Louise J.	Daughter
V			Borges, Frank	Son
V			Ralph	Cousin
Fm	34	34	Chasola, Manuel L.	Head!
V			Mary V.	wife
V			Ellora V.	Daughter
V			Manuel B.	Son
X	35	35	Castro, Angelo	Head!
Fm	36	36	Perry, Antoinette J.	Head!
Fm	37	37	Achlin, Ross G.	Head!
V			Manuel B.	wife

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--

Vallejo Times-Herald - April 23rd, 1947

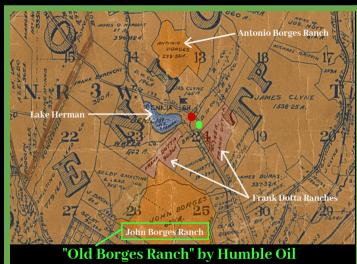
1.9 Borges Ranch



*Modern Day Home of Stella Medeiros in 1968
a.k.a: "Stella Ranch"*

Antonio (Tony) Silveria Borges (1897-1973), wife Stella Lopes (1914-1973) and daughter Stella Medeiros (1937-2007) lived at and operated a dairy farm on Borges Ranch for the better part of the first half of the 20th century.

Courtesy of ZodiacCiphers.com

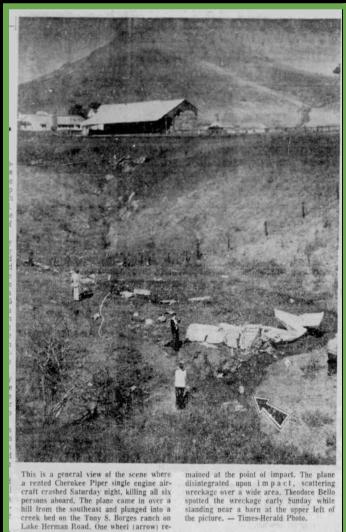


1.5 miles (2.41 km) from the Gate 10 turnout and 1.7 miles (2.73 km) from Columbus Parkway in Vallejo, lies the Tony Borges and Stella Medeiros Ranch. Flanking Lake Herman Road with Tony's to the north and daughter Stella on the south.

In the 1960s, miner Jack Reid, leased mineral rights from Tony Borges to mine quicksilver on the ranch. Prices had skyrocketed due to demand for missile casings from the American government.

On October 30, 1971 tragedy struck Borges Ranch when a Piper Cherokee crash landed in a swampy area on the property, killing all six passengers on board including two children.

In an article published by the Benicia Herald, nephew of Stella Borges (and cousin to Stella Medeiros), Albert Losado retells the tale of how his aunt had come across the murder scene at Gate 10.



This is a general view of the scene where a rented Cherokee Piper single engine airplane crashed Saturday afternoon, killing four persons aboard. The plane came in over a steep hill from the southeast and plowed into a grassy hillside just west of the Borges Ranch on Lake Herman Road. One wheel (arrow) remained at the point of impact. The plane disintegrated upon impact, scattering wreckage over a wide area. Losado, who spotted the wreckage early Sunday, while standing near a barn at the upper left of the picture. — Times-Herald Photo.

Vallejo Times-Herald
November 1st, 1971



Borges Ranch buildings still stand in the distance.

This account, however, contradicts police reports that clearly state it was his cousin, Stella Medeiros, who was driving that night while the elder Borges was not present in the vehicle.

In that same article, he confirms stories in Robert Graysmith's *Zodiac Unmasked*, about a large, haunting

figure of a man who would swim in the nearby creek. "*His stopping outside her house to stare at her happened more than once*", Losado continues, "*She would tell us that she would see this guy driving up and down the road, and I would hear from other people*

also that he was constantly seen out there on Lake Herman Road. I guess a few times he stopped and stared at her. Gave her the chills."

Tony was an active member in many social clubs up until his passing in 1973. He was a proud member of the I.D.E.S. Lodge in Benicia, the S.D.E.S. Lodge in Vallejo and the Cabrillo Club of Concord.



Vallejo Times-Herald
April 2nd, 1973

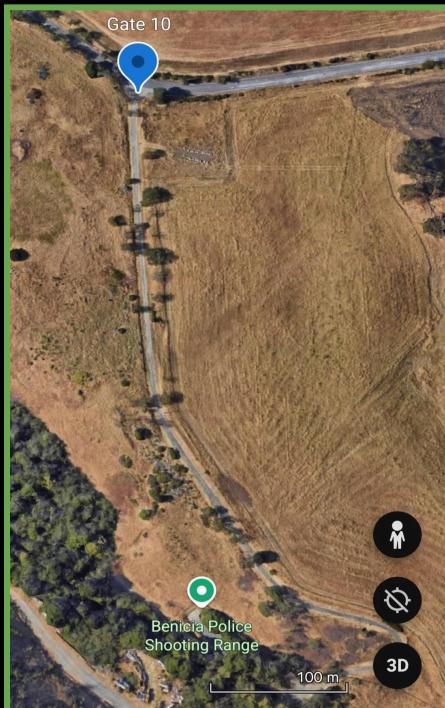
1.10 Gate 10



38.094871, -122.144099

The turnout at Gate 10 has remained largely unchanged in over 50 years. The 10th Gate in a sequence of gates along the reservoir pipeline serves as the genesis point for the entire Zodiac saga.

Gate 10 Geography Remains Unchanged



A small patch of dirt on the side of winding Lake Herman Road serves as the turnout for the Benicia water pumping station and Benicia Police Department's shooting range. For well over half a century the dirt road has been protected by a locked gate.

Well known among locals as a "lover's lane" spot, the turnout offers relative privacy in the late evening hours. Remote, desolate and cloaked in absolute darkness, young people used the Gate 10 turnout as a getaway from the prying eyes of local town life.

1.11 Humble Oil



*Modern Day Valero Refinery
Benicia, California*

Founded in 1911 in Humble, Texas by Walter Fondren Sr. and brothers Ross and Frank Sterling. In 1919 Standard Oil of New Jersey would acquire 50 percent of the business holdings at Humble with full ownership changing hands in 1959.

In 1965 Humble Oil announced plans to open a 50,000 barrel-a-day plant at Moss Landing in Monterey County, California. Mixed local reaction, stringent permitting guidelines and a last-minute bid for a larger refinery by Humble all caused the Texas oil company to pause activities in the Moss Landing area.

On May 17, 1966 Humble announced plans to swap locations and build its \$160 million, state-of-the-art refinery in the more welcoming community of Benicia.

Ground was broken for the Benicia refinery on October 3, 1966. Three years later on October 3, 1969, the construction phase was complete.

Located at 3400 East 2nd Street on the old Benicia Arsenal grounds, Humble Oil's refinery would signal an age of economic



The dedicatory plaque for the new, \$160 million Humble Oil Co. refinery at Benicia was unveiled Friday afternoon as the climax of ceremonies marking completion of the three-year construction project. Gazing at the plaque, from left,

are Robert J. Keyes, who represented Gov. Ronald Reagan; M. A. Wright, chairman of the Humble board of directors, and Ed Patton, manager of the Benicia refinery — Times-Herald Photo.

Vallejo Times-Herald
October 4th, 1969

prosperity for the small Bay Area community. In 1973 Standard Oil would rebrand as Exxon and retire the Humble namesake. Today the refinery still stands and operates under the Valero Energy Corporation umbrella.

2.0 - December 20th, 1968

2.1 Jensen and Faraday



Betty Lou Jensen was born on July 22, 1952 in Hawkins, Colorado to Verne Marion Jensen (1919-1993) and Virginia Lee Blendersman (1924-2009). She had one older sister; Melodie L Jobe (1944-).

Betty Lou was a junior at Hogan High School. She was an active Sunshine Girl in the Knights of Pythias organization - a collective centered around friendship, charity and benevolence.

According to police reports Betty Lou had been the recipient of unwanted advances from schoolmate Ricky Burton. Ricky (who sported an airtight alibi) was suffering from some jealous feelings over Betty Lou and David's flourishing relationship. He was vetted and soon cleared of suspicion.

David Arthur Faraday was born on October 2, 1951 in San Rafael, California to Thomas Arthur Faraday (1926-2012) and Nina Jean Latourette (1926-2010). He had two brothers; Robert Charles Faraday (1953-) and Steven Elliot Faraday (1956-), and one sister; Debra Elizabeth Uhlman (1952-).

David Faraday was a senior at Vallejo High School. He was a longtime Boy Scout with Troop 69 of Explorer Post 209, where he attained the rank of Eagle Scout. He was an active member of the First Presbyterian Church, gaining notoriety for his scout religious award - "God and Country."



On the evening of December 20, 1968, between 5 and 6 p.m. the couple visited with Joe, a friend of David's. Joe states that the two had left without divulging their plans for the evening.

According to Mrs. Faraday, at 7:10 p.m., David returned home to drive his sister Debbie to a meeting of the Rainbow Girls at the Pythian Castle. We can assume that sometime after 6 p.m. and before 7 p.m., David and Betty Lou parted ways. David returned home again at 7:20 p.m. and left at 7:30 p.m. It is important to note that Debbie recalled a

conversation with David that afternoon, telling her that he would be going out to Lake Herman Road that night because some other kids were also going to be there.

At 8 p.m., David arrived at the Jensen home so that Betty Lou could introduce him to her parents. The couple had permission to attend a concert at Hogan High and a party afterwards, promising to return no later than 11:00 p.m. This was Jensen's first "official" date.

While the pair had mentioned attending a Christmas concert at Hogan High, no such event was slated for that evening. Instead, Betty Lou and David stopped at the home of Betty Lou's friend Sharon Henslin. Sharon's mother relayed that the couple arrived at approximately 8:20 p.m. and departed at approximately 9:00 p.m., without sharing their plans for the rest of the evening.

The two were not seen again with any certainty until they were spotted at the Gate 10 turnout at 10:15 p.m. by witness Helen Axe.

The last time the Faraday Rambler was seen was at roughly 11:14 p.m. by James Owen, a night shift supervisor at the nearby Humble Oil refinery. The time at which Owen passed the turnout remains a point of contention with some. The official time given in the police reports is 11:14 p.m.

David was shot once behind the left ear, presumably as he exited the car. Betty Lou was shot five times in the right side of her back, presumably as she fled. Both succumbed to their injuries.

2.2 Timeline

The following timeline is courtesy of Richard Grinell at ZodiacCiphers.com

- **9:00 p.m.**: Robert Connelly and Frank Gasser notice a 1959/1960 white Chevrolet Impala in the turnout and an unidentified truck exiting Gate #10 while heading to the Marshall Ranch.
- **9:30 p.m. - 10:00 p.m.**: William Crow and his girlfriend are in the Lake Herman Road area. They park in the turnout for a brief time.
- **10:00 p.m.**: Bingo Wesner is tending his sheep in the field and notices a white Chevrolet Impala in the turnout.
- **10:15 p.m.**: Helen Axe spots the Rambler in the turnout while heading to Benicia.
- **10:30 p.m.**: Helen Axe spots the Rambler in the turnout while heading back to Vallejo.
- **10:55 p.m.**: Peggy and Homer Your head west (in the direction of Vallejo) to the Marshall Ranch and spot the Rambler on the east bank.
- **11:00 p.m.**: Peggy and Homer Your leave the Marshall Ranch and pass the turnout heading to Benicia, yet again noticing the Rambler on the east bank.
- **11:05 p.m.**: Robert Connelly and Frank Gasser leave the Marshall Ranch and pass the turnout heading to Benicia, noticing the Rambler on the west bank, facing south.
- **11:08 p.m.**: An unidentified vehicle passes the turnout heading to Vallejo.
- **11:14 p.m.**: James Owen passes the turnout heading to Benicia and notices the Rambler on the east bank and another vehicle to its right.
- **11:20 p.m.**: Stella Borges/Medeiros passes the turnout and notices Betty Lou Jensen on the turnout floor.
- **11:25 p.m.**: Stella Borges/Medeiros flags down Captain Daniel Pitta in Benicia at the Enco Gas Station and alerts him.
- **11:28 p.m.**: Captain Daniel Pitta arrives at the turnout.

3.0 - The Dirty Dozen

3.1 The Raccoon Hunters

"The Raccoon Hunters", refers to two men who appear in the Solano County police reports as hunters who were in the general vicinity at the time of the murders.

The elder of the two was Frank Gasser (1900-1971) of Napa, California. Husband of Helen L. Underhill (1915-2008), and father of two daughters, Louise Marie Kraus (1938-) and Frances Ann Cenotti (1942-).

Frank Gasser's WWII Registration Card

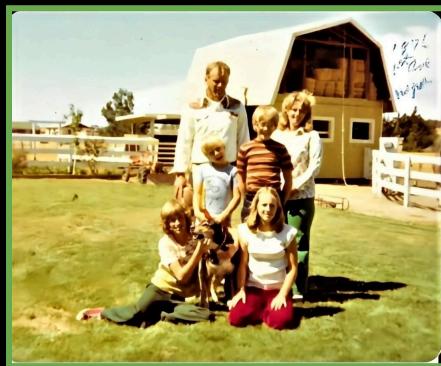
Frank was a dairy rancher and farmer in the Napa/Benicia area his entire life. He raised his family at the Gasser Ranch, located on Goodyear Road, parallel to the Luther E. Gibson Freeway (I-680), between Benicia and Cordelia.

Helen owned and operated Saul's, a custom upholstery business next to Terry's Barrel Club in Vallejo.



The Solano-Napa News Chronicle
Sept. 8th, 1964

The younger of the two was Robert Michael Connelly (1941-) of Fairfax, California. Robert married Christine Doris Gorman (1943-) of San Anselmo, California, on November 18, 1961 in San Anselmo, California. The couple lived at 1088 First Avenue, in Napa, California. The pair previously lived together at 1019 Hargus Avenue, in Vallejo.



The Connelly Crew on First Avenue - 1976

Robert was employed as a lineman for the Pacific Gas & Electric Company in Vallejo, but worked out of Napa.



Robert and Christine circa. 1959-1961

Deputy Ben Villarreal of the Solano County Sheriff's Office identified Connelly and Gasser as '*the raccoon hunters*' described by Peggy Your.

In their initial interview with Detectives Lundblad and Butterbach, dated December 21, 1968, at 9:22 p.m., it is learned that they had their 1959, red pickup truck parked inside the field of Marshall Ranch.

The pair had been hunting in the area between 9:00 and 11:00 p.m. Connelly says the time is approximate because he looked at his watch prior, so it could have been 10:50 or 10:55 p.m.

The two estimated that it took anywhere from 3 to 5 minutes to walk back along the creek (Sulphur Springs Creek) and to their truck at Marshall Ranch. They agreed that the vehicle driven by the Yours family pulled into the entrance to Marshall Ranch and turned around at about 11:00 p.m. The hunters left shortly after the Yours and stated that they passed the turnout at roughly 11:05 p.m.

The two went on to describe the light-colored station wagon parked southwest of where it finally ended up (officer's note in the report that the discrepancy was not noticed at first).

When they arrived at 9:00 p.m., they observed a white-colored, four-door hardtop 1959 or '60 Impala parked at the gate. They also noted a truck coming out of the gate. This information corroborates information given by Bingo Wesner about seeing the Impala parked at the gate as well as the red pickup truck driving by.



Vallejo Times-Herald
November 4th, 1971

The second interview took place on December 26, 1968, at 2:55 p.m. The reason given for the second interview is, "*due to some discrepancies and misunderstandings in the first interview*".

Mr. Connelly was being interviewed without Mr. Gasser and was asked to pinpoint his activities with more clarity on that day.

Robert said that he went out to Gasser Ranch at about 6 p.m. The two sat around a while and didn't leave until several hours later. They then arrived at the area near the pumping station at about 9:00 p.m. and parked the truck 25 feet inside of Marshall Ranch property, just off the road.

The two then walked the creek towards the pump station. Robert stated that they had their dogs loose and they either treed a cat or a raccoon in the area near Dotta Ranch. While they were there, they noticed some sort of activity going on at the Dotta Ranch, all the lights were on, but they were some distance away and couldn't tell what was going on.

In the area of the pump station, the dogs treed a raccoon that was shot with a long-barrel .22 revolver. The revolver was retained and eliminated as the suspected murder weapon by shell casings.

Robert reiterated that he checked his watch somewhere around 11:00 p.m., probably 5 or 10 minutes before. At this time he and Gasser made their way back to the truck.

He stated he was at the truck for a total of 5 minutes when a car pulled into Marshall Ranch, backed out and headed back towards Benicia.

He estimated that 5 minutes after the Yours left, they followed in his 1959 red Chevrolet (white wooden sideboards and cattle guards on the sides). He noted that while heading back to the Gasser Ranch they passed the car.

Connelly maintained that the car was parked on the south bank and that he didn't see anybody inside the car. He estimated the time as between 11:00 and 11:15 p.m.

He stated that he remained at Gasser's home for approximately an hour and returned home to Napa out through Highway 21 and Jamison Canyon. He arrived home at roughly 12:30 a.m.

Connelly was then asked if he owned a rifle, in which he stated that he had an automatic rifle. The ROs advised him of his constitutional rights, due to the fact he had admitted to having a rifle and being in the area that night, even though he claimed it was not with him on that night. He was given a receipt for the rifle and it was tested by Rangemaster George Parks. On the basis of the findings of George Parks, the rifle was eliminated as the suspected murder weapon.

Rancher Reports Theft Of Safe

Theft of a 600-pound safe containing an undisclosed amount of money and personal papers from the Frank Gasser ranch on Good-year Rd., off State Route 21, was reported to the sheriff's office yesterday.

Deputy Ben Villarreal said the report of the theft was received by telephone at about 5 p.m. but most details were lacking. The safe was described as freshly painted and being red and white in color, with dimensions of 32 by 32 by 36 inches.

Villarreal said also Gasser had indicated the safe probably was removed from the ranch either by car or in a small pickup truck.

*Vallejo Times-Herald
November 19th, 1965*

Mr. Connelly stated that Mr. Gasser did own an automatic rifle but suggested he didn't keep it at the house due to recent thefts. He also suggested that ROs contact Ralph Harland Hall at 1006 Hargus Avenue in Vallejo, for access to the rifle.



MR. AND MRS. RALPH HARLAND HALL honeymooned in Carmel following their exchange of vows recently at St. Vincent's Church. The bride, the former Donna Ruth Mason, is the daughter of the George H. Masons, 820 Fulton Ave.

*The Solano-Napa News Chronicle
December 23rd, 1963*

3.2 William Crow

William Lewis Crow (1946-) was born in Vallejo, California to Albert Lewis Crow Jr. (1923-2002) and Dolores B. Doyle (1924-2005). William had one sister; Donna Marie Crow (1948-2024).

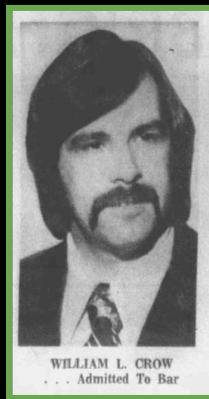


Two local high school seniors recently were awarded scholarships for their scholastic achievement by agents of the State Farm Insurance Corp. From left, Robert Lawson, William Crow, right, agency manager, presents the scholarships to Robert Lawson, left, and William Crow.

*Vallejo Times-Herald
July 27th, 1964*

William graduated from Hogan High in 1964 and received a bachelor of arts degree in economics from Sonoma State in 1972. He went on to receive a juris doctor degree from the University of the Pacific McGeorge School of Law, in 1975.

William has served as an attorney in Vallejo since 1976.



*Vallejo Times-Herald
January 6th, 1976*

After reading an article in the paper asking for assistance regarding the double homicide at Lake Herman Road, William contacted law enforcement with the following details...

On the night of December 20, 1968, between 9:30 p.m. and 10 p.m., William was out with his girlfriend on Lake Herman Road, testing out her sports car and tuning the motor.

While pulled off in the open area near the pumping station (Gate 10), William stated that he observed a blue car, possibly a Valiant, approaching from Benicia toward Vallejo. The car passed by the turnout where he was parked and stopped in the middle of the road. He saw the white reverse lights come on as the car started backing up towards them.

William stated, at that point he put the car in gear and accelerated at a high rate of speed toward Benicia. The trailing vehicle followed at a similarly high rate of speed but did not attempt to gain on them. When they got to the turnoff to Benicia (Old Lake Herman Road/Reservoir Road), William turned and the chasing car continued on, unable to make the turn.

Both subjects were Caucasian, and this ended William's report dated December 22, 1968 - 4:30 p.m.

It wasn't until 2002 that William's recollections of the night started to change. At least from an official perspective. Tom Voigt of ZodiacKiller.com, states the following about an email exchange with Crow: "*A few weeks later he contacted me again, this time with the added detail that he saw the driver and it looked like the Zodiac.*"

Longtime Zodiac researcher Howard Davis had also been in contact with Crow, this time in 2004. I will reproduce the email replies from William Crow - with utmost respect for the legacy and contributions made by Mr. Davis.

"I received your e-mail concerning the Zodiac and, yes, I was the driver of the sports car that night in December 1968. I was born and raised in Vallejo, and I was living with my parents at that time. My former girlfriend who had moved to San Francisco was visiting her parents in Napa and had just purchased a sports car. She dropped by our home in Vallejo, and since I was going to get up early to go hunting with my father the next morning, instead of going out, we decided to go for a ride and catch up. She asked if I wanted to drive her sports car, and I went down Lake Herman Road to see how the car handled. There is a place where a private road intersects the main road. There is a gate across the private road maybe thirty yards down it. It provided a spot known to

local teens as a place to "park" and I will leave it at that. This night I was in a small two-seater and "parking" was not in the picture. I had just went through the gears and pulled into the private road area and turned the car around with the front pointing to and a few feet from the main road. The engine was running and the lights were on. I had never driven a car that had toggle switches on the dashboard. As my former girlfriend was explaining to me what each one controlled, I noticed a car coming down the road from the direction of Benicia. The car passed in front of me and then I noticed that it came to a stop and its taillights told me it was backing up. Common sense suggested to me to put the sports car in gear and leave. I pulled out and started driving toward Benicia. The other car backed into the area where I had been parked, turned around and in a second or two was behind me. The car hit its bright lights and then did a bright off, bright on, bright off, etc. I went through a few young testosterone moments where I was going "to pull over and kick this guy's ass". My former girlfriend starting getting upset and I sped up. The car behind me also sped up, and at one point as I was looking over my shoulder the car behind me came up on my side with its right front fender near the driver's rear quarter panel and appeared to be moving toward making contact. I shifted to a lower gear and hit the gas. There is a fork in the road where one continues towards Benicia and the other more towards the freeway toward Vallejo. The other car was clearly chasing me and I waited until the last moment and then turned off. The larger car behind me could not make the turn. I went down approximately two hundred yards and stopped in the middle of the road. The other car had stopped shortly after the turn-off. Each of us sat there in the road. Again, youthfully stupid, I yelled about kicking his ass. After some moments, the other car turned around in the roadway and went back down the road from which we had come. I kept making macho statements, but not totally without some sense about me, I drove home. I did not see the car again. I could not see the passenger seat, but the driver was a man with short hair and glasses. I did not see his specific facial features. The two from Benicia were killed exactly at the same place where I was parked that night when I first encountered the other car. Therefore, in my opinion, he either randomly came upon that spot or was from the area and knew of it.

Either that next morning or the day after there was a story in our local newspaper, the Times Herald. I believe there was a picture showing where the car of the slain couple had been parked. For sure there was a description. I put my shotgun in the car, as if he would really still be there and drove back out Lake Herman Road to confirm the location. I came home and told my mother that I had been where the couple had been shot shortly before and of the car that had chased me. She suggested that I report it

and I called the Vallejo Police Department. They explained that they did not have jurisdiction and referred me to Solano County Sheriff. I was interviewed and gave an account. I have never seen the report, nor been asked any further questions. A few years ago, a sheriff I knew who was reviewing the Zodiac records asked me if I was the W. Crow who made a report. I told him it was me and asked him if he could get me a copy of the report. I am still waiting.

There is a part of your e-mail that I find extremely intriguing. I never told the sheriff who interviewed me that the car I encountered was a Valiant. As I recall, as I was attempting to describe the car, the sheriff came up with a "Valiant". In the years that have passed, when I have shared the events of that night, I have described the car as a four-door light-colored Chevy. Until your e-mail I have never known that two hunters came upon a white Chevy or that any reference to a Chevy existed in the investigation. I know this does not support the theory of two cars, but it is important to me that my account be accurate.

I can assure you that the events of that night remain vivid in my mind. I still cannot drive down Lake Herman Road without goose bumps. I feel very fortunate.

W. Crow"

There was a follow-up exchange between Mr. Davis and Mr. Crow, as reproduced below. All emphasis by Mr. Crow, as per Howard Davis.

"Your email asks two main questions. First, as to the lighting conditions. It is true that there are no street lights and that this is a rather desolate county-type road. As I indicated, that evening I was driving my former girlfriends car to see how it handled. I pulled off the road and turned around. The car I was in was perpendicular to the road. My intent was going to go back towards Vallejo. The front of the car I was in was a few feet from the road and my headlights were on. I was determining what the toggle switches controlled when the car I described came from the Benicia direction and passed right in front of me. This road is not a thoroughfare and any other car on that road at night would be an event to take notice of. As I was watching the car pass, I

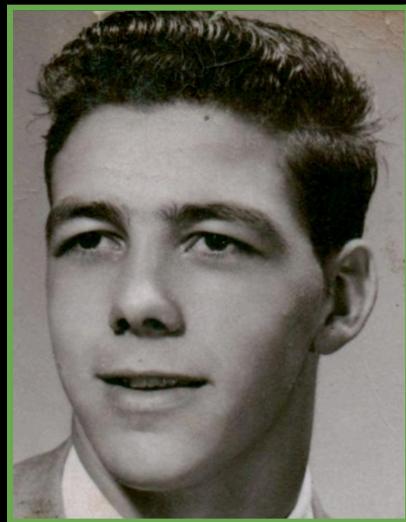
noticed that he stopped and the back-up lights came on. It was at that point that I decided to pull out and go towards Benicia.

As to the speed and the road conditions. I am not sure where you got the "cold icy roads". This is a paved road and it was not iced over that night. I initially pulled out and started toward Benicia. I had no idea what the other car was going to do. It took time for the other car to back up, turn around and come in my direction and then catch up with me. The encounter with the other car did not take place over many miles and did not reach break-neck speeds. This is a county type road with turns and I was in a sports car. The two times that I sped up were incremental. Each time it took the car behind me time to react. At the point where there is a fork in the road he had caught up with me again, I waited until the last moment and then turned. Again, I am in a sports car with a manual transmission and he was not. Because of a combination of conditions he could not make the turn.

It should be noted that the police reports reflect a similar vehicle, having been seen exiting Lake Herman Road onto Columbus Parkway in Vallejo and headed toward Blue Rock Springs, around 10:30 p.m. If the timeframe is correct, it makes the vehicle highly unlikely to be driven by the person responsible for the Lake Herman Road murders.

OFFENSE REPORT		CASE NO. V-25564	
OFFICE OF SHERIFF County of Solano, California			
OFFENSE	187 P.C., Murder		
LOCATION	Lake Herman Road, entrance to Benicia Vapor Pumping Station		
REPORTED BY	CAPTAIN UTTA	ADDRESS	Benicia P.D.
RECEIVED BY	Sgt. Cunningham	PHONE	
		DATE	12/20/68 TIME 11:22PM
<input type="checkbox"/> LETTER <input type="checkbox"/> DESK <input type="checkbox"/> PHONE <input type="checkbox"/> TELETYPE <input type="checkbox"/> RADIO			
DESCRIPTION OF PROPERTY			
(1)	Suspect No. _____	Sex. _____	Deceased _____
(2)	Height. _____	Weight. _____	Age. _____
(3)	Hair color. _____	Eye color. _____	
(4)	Mark/score. _____		
(5)	Occupation. _____		
	Disguise or dress. _____		
	Arrested? <input type="checkbox"/> (Yes or No) _____	Identification No. _____	
TOTAL VALUE			
RO: BUTTERBACH 12/21/68 8:51PM			
Officer G. MEYRING (#298 Vallejo P.D.) came into the S.O. He stated to RO that a STAN _____, 14 yrs, 406 Street 644- _____, told him today that he () and a friend of his, a student from Solano College, were going towards Blue Rock Springs on Columbus Parkway and a Olds, 2-door H.I. 88 (Don) blue in color and a 63 Chevrolet, Impala, Blue, with two persons in it turned off Lake Herman Road on to Columbus Parkway heading in the direction of Blue Rock Springs, this was at approximately 10:30PM Friday 12/20/			
AFB	Date	Inv. Officer	BUTTERBACH

3.3 Bingo Wesner



Bingo George Wesner (1935-2021) married Janet L. Gomez (1939-) on August 4, 1957.

Bingo and wife Janet lived at and operated the former John Borges Ranch, next to the Frank Dotta Ranch on Lake Herman Road. Gate 10 offered one of very few road accesses to his leased property.

On the morning after the attack, December 21, 1968, at 8:00 a.m., Bingo arrived at the crime scene while detectives Lundblad and Butterbach were re-examining the area. He told the ROs that he tends sheep east of the Benicia Pumping Station. He notified the officers that the previous night (December 20, 1968), he was tending to his sheep at approximately 10:00 p.m. when he noticed a white Chevy Impala sedan parked by the south fence of the entrance to the pumping station. He also stated that he had observed a red pickup with wood sideboards in the area. The pickup he describes was later identified as belonging to Robert Connelly and Frank Gasser.

Bingo states he did not see the Faraday Rambler that night.

3.4 Helen Axe

Helen Marie Bridges (1950-) grew up in Hermleigh, Texas. She married Thomas Frank Axe (1946-2001) of New Braunfels, Texas on August 26, 1965.

Thomas Axe was with the United States Navy until his discharge in 1970, he then took a job in Vallejo with PacTel.

Helen herself lived a troubled life. She was married at 15. At 17 (January 1, 1968), she was left to babysit three local children in Vallejo for the weekend, when the house went up in flames. Helen was not at the residence when the blaze started around 3:00 a.m., but another man, Daniel Munn (aged 24) was. All three children survived.

Between the years of 1990 and 1998 she was arrested eight separate times for writing bad checks.



Helen Axe circa 1997-98

December 23, 1968, at 11:55 a.m., Detective Lundblad took the following report from Mrs. Axe - On the night of December 20, 1968, Helen and her sailor boyfriend (likely her sailor husband) were traveling Lake Herman Road. Helen stated to police that she had recognized the Rambler and both victims Jensen and Faraday.

When they passed the turnout at 10:15 p.m., the Rambler was facing in, towards the gate. When they were en route back to Vallejo after having gone to the end of the road and back, the car was turned and the front was facing the field and a little to the side. She estimates 15 minutes had passed between.

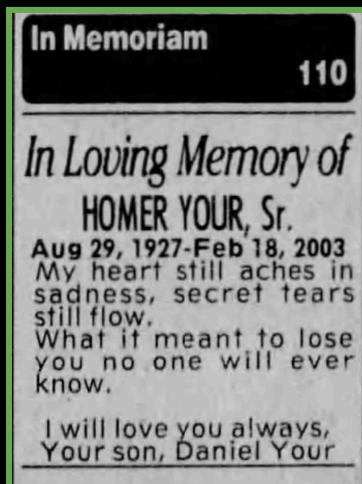
The police reports note a discrepancy - that being, when Helen originally called, she had stated that the Rambler was backed in. She was contacted by telephone on December 25, 1968 at 12:00 noon, and consented to bring her boyfriend (husband) in to clarify the car's actual position.

If this interview ever took place, the files have not been made available.

3.5 The Yours

Homer Your Sr. (1927-2003) was born in Noxapater, Mississippi. He was married to Peggy Suzanne Young (1938-2000) of Houston, Texas. The couple lived together in Sacramento and also in Vallejo, California.

In December of 1968, Homer was working for C.F. Fedrick Inc., of Novato. The company was contracted to complete a \$1.9 million water system improvement project. Improvements under the bond included: a 14-mile, 36-inch pipeline to bring Monticello Dam water from Cordelia to Benicia, as well as a new treatment plant and pumping station on Lake Herman Road with distribution lines and other appurtenances.



The Sacramento Bee
February 18th, 2004

Peggy was employed at Ed's Drive-In Restaurant in 1968, but lived much of her adult life as a grifter. She had been arrested several times for swindling unsuspecting people and businesses out of money.

Peggy was arrested and jailed for 9 months on welfare fraud in 1975.

In 1978 she was charged with failure to provide rental payments that she was paid to collect on apartment properties.

In 1979 she was again arrested, this time on felony Grand Theft, when she gained the trust of an elderly woman in her care and bilked her of her life savings.

Peggy made three separate statements to police regarding the murders on Lake Herman Road, while Homer was interviewed once.

Sobbing Mother Gets Jail Term In Welfare Fraud, Perjury Case

Peggy Your sobbed yesterday as she was sentenced to nine months in jail by a judge who said she not only "cheated the taxpayers" but also deprived "needy children of aid" by committing welfare fraud.

Mrs. Your, 37, the mother of three children herself, maintained she committed no moral crime, but was only doing what was necessary to keep her own family together.

But probation officer Donald F. Ladd, who made a presentencing investigation, claimed her actions were motivated by "nothing more complicated than greed."

She was sentenced by Sacramento Superior Court Judge John M. Sapinor, who also ordered her to make restitution of between \$3,000 and \$4,000. The exact amount will be determined by the probation officer.

Mrs. Your was convicted earlier by a jury of 12 women of welfare fraud

and perjury after a trial of two weeks. According to the probation investigation, she signed official forms declaring her husband, Homer, did not live at home and did not provide aid for her and the children when she applied for welfare.

Because of these statements, which the jury found to be false, she received \$311 a month in welfare payments, plus another \$134 in food stamps monthly, the probation report said.

It also noted that the Yours owned two cars, a 1969 Lincoln Continental and a Comet. The total overpayments made to Mrs. Your were \$3,306 in welfare grants and \$1,133 in food stamps, the report added.

Several witnesses said the Yours lived together including one who said Your had a construction job in Fresno and returned home on weekends, according to the report.

The Sacramento Bee
November 8th, 1975

The first was a phone call, December 21st, 1968, at 5:15 p.m. received by Officer Warner of the Benicia Police Department.

Peggy related that at 11 p.m. she and her husband were checking the pipes and equipment at the construction site related to his work on the ongoing Pumping Station project in the vicinity of Gate 10. She continued that they proceeded down the hill and turned into the Marshall Ranch entrance to turn around and head back toward Benicia.

Peggy stated, as they passed the turnout, the girl was leaning on the shoulder of the boy who was sitting upright and that when the lights of their car flashed on the Rambler, the male subject put his hands on the steering wheel. Peggy continued, after turning around and heading past them once again, going the other way this time the car was in the same position, facing east toward the field and left of the gate.

She noted that when they turned around at Marshall Ranch, they saw a red pickup truck with wooden sideboards parked in the field, about 25 feet in. She stated the vehicle was facing toward the road and inside were two white males, one of whom was 25-30 years old, wore a stocking cap over his head and a hunting jacket and held a 3 cell flashlight. They passed no other cars, and only the station wagon was parked at the Gate 10 turnout.

The second interview was conducted by Det. Les Lundblad on December 27, 1968 at 4:10 p.m. to clarify the departure time from Sacramento that night.

Peggy stated that they left Sacramento between 10:00 and 10:15 p.m. and that Homer was driving at the speed limit or less. She estimated arrival in the Benicia area, off Highway 21, at approximately 11:00 p.m.

She continued that they drove the 3 or 4 miles at a slow rate of speed while Homer checked pipes and equipment on the side of the road.

She described the location of the car as the front of the Rambler facing the fence and the rear of the Rambler facing directly west towards Vallejo.

Peggy was asked at this time to check the clock in her car. It was found to be 7 minutes fast. This established her arrival time as closer to 11:00 p.m. than 11:15 p.m.

The third interview was conducted by Det. Russ Butterbach on March 22, 1969 at 5:20 p.m. (Homer) and 7:15 p.m. (Peggy).

Homer stated that he was going west on Lake Herman Road and pulled into the entrance leading to Marshall Ranch in order to turn around. Approximately 30 feet inside the road from the gate, he saw a red pickup truck with white wooden sides.

Homer related that there was a man by the truck who shined his flashlight into the Your's car. His wife, who was in the front passenger seat, said "there is a man with a gun, let's get out of here". Homer explained that Peggy said nothing to the man, but that he, himself, had a .38 special on the rear seat of the car. Homer said the gun was unloaded and the shells were in his pocket.

Peggy's final statement states that sometime between 11:00 and 11:20 p.m., she, her husband and their children were returning from Sacramento. She stated her husband worked for a construction company doing work in the Lake Herman Road area and wanted to check some pipe lines.

As they were driving west, Peggy stated that she observed a Rambler station wagon at the turnoff to the Benicia Pumping Station. She also stated the station wagon was parked with the front facing east, and two Caucasians were in the front, a male and a female. When the lights came upon the Rambler, Peggy noted that the male sat upright.

It was a cold night and Peggy noticed no frost on the station wagon.

She reiterated that her husband carried on to the bottom of the hill and turned right onto the road leading toward Marshall Ranch, in order to turn around.

Peggy said that when they got to the gate she saw a tall WMA, approximately 28 years old, dressed in dark clothing and standing by the gate on her husband's side. The man was roughly 6 feet from the car, and had a long-barreled gun in hand.

Ahead of their car approximately 40 feet was a red pickup truck with white wooden sides. Peggy stated that another WMA, who appeared to be an old man, got out of the truck and shined a flashlight into the car. She told her husband, "...there is a man with a gun standing by the car. Get the hell out of here". The man did not say anything or point the gun at them, he just kept staring at her.

They turned around and headed east on Lake Herman Road past the station wagon, which was still in the same spot. She estimated this time to be between 11:15 and 11:18 p.m.

They drove slowly over Old Lake Herman Road and she noticed no lights from any other vehicles behind them.

Peggy said that as they drove by the entrance to Humble Oil, she saw a long, dark colored car, which had a long speedometer indicator light that gave off a greenish glow. The guard at the gate was leaned over talking to the male driver.

Butterbach then asked Peggy if they had a gun in their car and if she had pointed it at the man, stating: "my gun is bigger than yours"? Peggy answered that they did have a small .38 special with them that night and that it was lying on the rear seat of the car. She stated it was not loaded and that Homer had the shells in his pocket. She also stated that she did not point the gun at the man standing by the gate, nor did she say anything to him.

The last part of this interview leads me to believe that Robert Connelly had, at some point and possibly off the record, told police that she had done just that.

Peggy Your appears again in the law enforcement reports some six months later, during the investigation of the homicide at Blue Rock Springs. She is named twice in the files.

The first of two mentions in the report occurred on July 7, 1969, at 11:00 a.m. Captain Bird passed along a note, presumably after taking a call from Peggy, stating that she had information on a person named Bob who matched the description of the suspect in the Blue Rock Springs case. It is noted in the report that Peggy lived in a pink house on the frontage road one mile north of Lake Herman Road, between Benicia and Cordelia.

The second mention occurs on August 12th, 1969, at 6:10 p.m. when she called to report that she had observed the way the letter writer had signed his cryptograms with a crossed circle. She elaborated that her ex-husband John Francis _____, signed some of his letters with a circle and cross hairs.

3.6 James Owen



James Alfred Owen (1930-2012) was born in Kalamazoo, Michigan. He married Verna R. Larsen (1930-) on June 10th, 1950.

James and Verna raised two boys; Kenneth Franklin Owen (1951-) and Timothy James Owen (1951-), and one girl; Laura Lee Oriarte (1959-). In 1968 James and his family lived at 1735 Mini Drive in Vallejo.

James Owen retired from military service in 1967, where he was a decorated member of the US Air Force, not the least of his achievements being promoted to the rank of Chief Master Sergeant after the rank of E-9 was created. After retirement he moved to Vallejo to work at Humble Oil as a refinery technician and finished his career with Exxon in risk management.

At 8:15 a.m., December 21, 1968, James Owen, while returning home from work at the Humble Oil refinery in Benicia, stopped at the Gate 10 turnout, and gave the following statements to Detectives Lundblad and Butterbach.

He stated that the night prior, December 20, 1968, he had approached the turnout and observed two vehicles parked near the entrance to the pumping station. The one vehicle closest to the road was a 1955 or 1956 station wagon, boxy type and neutral in color.

The other vehicle was parked to the right and abreast of the station wagon, he said. While he could not give a description of the other vehicle he remembered them being approximately 10 feet apart.

At this time James mentioned they may wish to speak with a Mr. Prentis, who lived at the apartments on the end of Springs Road. James suggested that Mr. Prentis may have driven by the location last, as he also worked the graveyard shift at Humble.

That evening at 8:33 p.m., James Owen called Det. Butterbach and reported that he had spoken to Mr. Prentis and that Mr. Prentis hadn't driven to work via Lake Herman Road on the evening of December 20, 1968.

On December 24, 1968, at 12:20 p.m., Butterbach and Lundblad again interviewed James Owen.

James detailed his story once again, saying that he definitely saw two vehicles: one being a station wagon and the other a vehicle he could not identify, located 3 to 4 feet to the right of the station wagon.

James said he did not see anyone in either car or around the cars. He stated that about a quarter of a mile (.4 km) past the turnout he thought he heard a shot. He said his radio was on low.

James continued on, saying that just before he approached the crime scene, around the Borges Ranch, a vehicle passed him going toward Vallejo. He could not identify this vehicle.

Officers pressed Owen about what time he had left his home in Vallejo and he responded that it was 11:00 p.m., as per the cuckoo clock in his dining room. Lundblad and Butterbach had him phone home to get the exact time on the clock and it was determined that his dining room clock was 5 minutes fast, putting him at the crime scene closer to 11:15 p.m.



In subsequent years, sometime after 2010 and before his passing in 2012, Mike Morford reached out and interviewed James Owen about the events on Lake Herman Road that night. I have provided the interview with all credit to Mike Morford of abjacketertainment.com.

My Interview of James Owen from a couple years ago:

RE: Interview of Lake Herman Rd. witness, James Owen.

I have stated previously, that this witness should have been looked at closely by police, as a suspect, due to the fact he was at the scene of the LHR Crime, during the small window when the crime happened. Due to this, and multiple inconsistencies with his statements to police, along with other circumstantial things, I feel like he should have been checked out a bit closer. I am NOT calling this man the Zodiac!! I repeat, I am NOT calling this man the Zodiac, merely saying that the police should have ruled him out properly.

With that being said, I have wanted to reach out to this witness for quite some time now. Since police don't seem to be in a hurry to solve the Z case, and since witnesses and retired police are becoming older and dying off due to age & illness, I wanted to reach out while I had the chance and speak with Mr. Owen, with an open mind. It worked with ZODE from Southern California. It was my hope that Mr. Owen would be able to fill in the holes regarding the 12/20/68 LHR incident. Here is the text from the interview, which took about 20 minutes (I condensed some of the material into a more easy to read format, and eliminated some of the chit chat, for an easier read). I will not state my thoughts or opinions until I hear that of some others. The words you see from Owen are his exact words, NOT mine!

Mr. Owen, who is in his 80's, sounds alot like my Grandfather, or what any other elderly man would sound like. He did have a slow & steady voice...and again, not to influence people, but I think Bryan Hartnell used a term..."MEASURED", to describe Zodiac's voice. I would also use the term MEASURED to describe Mr. Owen's voice, like a slow delivery, not excited or nervous. He sounded like he had all of his faculties, and was still pretty sharp. I learned that he is going thru an illness, but I greatly appreciate him corresponding with me.

START:

MORF13- Mr. Owen, Thanks for taking the time to speak with me. I know alot of time has passed, and I am not sure how much you remember, but maybe you still have some information that can help my research. What was life like in Vallejo when the Z murders were going on? As a resident were you or your Family afraid?

JO- "It was pretty quiet, there were alot more people there then with Mare Island being open, etc". "I wasn't afraid for my Family. It didn't really effect us all that much, it was just something you read in the papers, like any car wreck or murder"

MORF13- Had you always lived in the Vallejo area, or had you lived there long before the murders? (I already knew he had previously lived there and moved back a few months before the murders started)

JO- "I had just retired from the service in 1967 and moved to Vallejo to work at Humble Oil"

MORF13- What was your position at Humble Oil, when did you start there?

JO- "1968, I was a shift supervisor, I always went in about a half hour early, thats how I got involved in the case". "I always left around 11:00 p.m."

MORF13- Tell me in your own words, how did you get brought into the Zodiac case?

JO- "I was in the wrong place at the wrong time. I took Lake Herman Rd pretty often, not every night"

MORF13- Did you always see people parked there at the spots where the murders happened?

JO- "no, it was not normal for me to see any cars there, let alone 2 side by side. You could really see that spot good because of the way the lights shine in there, and because it was around a bend"

MORF13- You gave your first report to the police the following day after the murders. How did you come to give that statement?

JO- "As I was getting ready to leave work the next morning, a worker on the morning shift came in talking about the crime. When I left work, I passed the scene, and there were police there working, so I stopped and told them what I had seen."

MORF13- I know the police took multiple statements from you, the second was a few days later. What did they discuss with you?

JO- "They wanted me to drive & retrace my route".

MORF13- So they actually drove in the car with you?

JO- "Yes"

MORF13- One thing I have a question about was regarding what you told them in your 2nd statement and not in the first statement. In the 2nd statement, you said that you thought you heard a gunshot, but you did not mention that in the first statement. Why didn't you?

JO- "I didn't know if it meant anything, I didn't really know what was going on"

MORF13- So what can you tell me about hearing the shot?

JO- "when was it again? November?"

MORF13- no, it was December

JO- "It was a cool quiet night, and the leaves were off the trees. I think the sound carried well"

MORF13- Did you ever feel like you were a suspect since the police asked you to submit your guns over to them for examination, and since they had you give more than one statement?

JO- "They took my guns and had them for a couple of months and did some tests on them, then they gave them back to me". (I should have pressed him about the extent of his gun collection)

MORF13- Did they have a warrant for your guns, or did you voluntarily give them over?

JO- "It was voluntary".

MORF13- Did they treat you like a suspect or a witness in your opinion?

JO- "no, it was like a witness. They never interrogated me or anything like that"

MORF13- Besides testing your guns, did they ever ask you to let them take writing samples or finger prints?

JO- "no"

MORF13- How closely did you follow the case?

JO- “not much, like I said, it didn't have any effect on my Family, it was not biggie”

MORF13- Were you Friends with anybody else that was involved in the Zodiac case such as police, or witnesses or suspects?

JO- “no”

MORF13- Did you know any of the victims?

JO- “no”

MORF13- Why do you think Zodiac was never caught?

JO- “I have no idea”

MORF13- Do you think Zodiac was somebody that the police talked to?

JO- “I have no idea”

MORF13- I am trying to get a feel for the layout of the area & the crimes. One of the attacks took place at Lake Berryessa in NAPA. Have you been there?

JO- “Oh yeah, I have been there. It was a place for people to picnic at and fish at, like a recreation place”

MORF13- Did you go there often?

JO- “no, just a couple times”

MORF13- In trying to get a feel for the layout of the Vallejo/Napa area, can you tell me anything interesting about the area? How familiar with the area were you?

JO- “Not very familiar, I never did cruise around the area”

MORF13- Perhaps you can help me with a theory of my own. I suspect Zodiac may have worked at Humble Oil. This is based on clues that he left. In one letter, Z wrote “ I AM MILDLY CEROUS” which is a misspelling of CURIOUS, but is a chemistry term used in petroleum production. Do you remember that word, or did you ever use it?

JO- “what's the word again?”

MORF13- CEROUS, C E R O U S (I spelled it for him) a chemistry term used in petroleum production.

JO- “No, I can't remember that word”

MORF13- In the Halloween card, Zodiac placed a skeleton that left words exposed that read “OIL ME”. In the same Halloween card, Zodiac drew what I believe to be a PENTENE with possibly a LEWIS DOT STRUCTURE. Are you familiar with those? If I sent one to you to look at, could you help me figure out what it means?

JO- “A pentene is a gas or hydrocarbon... based on the fact it ends in ENE...5 c's and 12 h's” (he went on to break it down, but I did not catch it all)

MORF13- I am asking the people I am interviewing if they would be willing to share a photo of themselves from 1969 when the Z case was going on. Would you be willing to share a photo of yourself from back then?

JO- “No thanks”

MORF13- Thanks for your time, I appreciate your effort in helping me research the case further.

JO- “Okay, thank you”

3.7 Mr. Prentis

Mr. Prentis, as a possible witness, was brought forth by James Owen on the morning of December 21, 1968. James informed that Mr. Prentis may have traveled the Lake Herman route to work the previous night. His only identifying information was that Mr. Prentis lived in the apartments at the end of Springs Road.

In a somewhat baffling move by homicide detectives Lundblad and Butterbach, they noted their interaction with Owen, but did not follow up with Mr. Prentis. Instead they allowed for James Owen to contact Mr. Prentis himself and report back to them. As it turned out, James did get back to them at 8:33 p.m. that night - reporting that Mr. Prentis did not take Lake Herman Road to work the previous night.

SHERIFF'S OFFICE -SOLANO COUNTY Time 11:52PM Date 12/20/68 V-25564
 Nature of Complaint: 187 P.C. MURDER
 Complainant: CAPTAIN PITTA
 Received by: Sgt. Cunningham Letter Desk Phone Teletype Radio

RO: BUTTERBACH & LUNDBLAD 12/21/68 8:15AM

JAMES OWEN, 1735 Mini Drive, Vallejo, 644-4768

MR OWEN was driving home from work at Humble Oil, Benicia. MR OWEN stated last night, Friday 12-20-68, at 11:20PM he drove by the location on Lake Herman Road. He states he saw two cars parked near the entrance to the pumping station. He stated the car parked nearest to the road was a 1955 or 1956 station wagon, boxy type, neutral color. The other was parked to the right and abreast of the Station Wagon. The cars were about ten feet apart. He stated he could not give a description of the make or color of the other car. MR OWEN advised the RO's they might check with a MR PRENTIS who lives at the apartments on the end of Springs Road. He stated MR PRENTIS may have driven by the location last, as he (PRENTIS) also works the graveyard shift at Humble Oil.

(Butterbach & Lundblad) ab

OFFENSE REPORT

OFFICE OF SHERIFF
County of Solano, California

OFFENSE	187 P.C. Murder	CASE NO	V-25564
LOCATION	Lake Herman Road, Entrance to Benicia Water Pumping Station	ADDRESS	Benicia P.D.
REPORTED BY	CAPTAIN PITTA	PHONE	
RECEIVED BY	Sgt. Cunningham	DATE	12/20/68
		TIME	8:15 P.M.
<input type="checkbox"/> LETTER <input type="checkbox"/> DESK <input type="checkbox"/> PHONE <input type="checkbox"/> TELETYPE <input type="checkbox"/> RADIO			
DESCRIPTION OF PROPERTY		Suspect No. 1. Sex _____ Descent _____ Height _____ Weight _____ Age _____ Hair color _____ Eye color _____ Marks/scars _____ Occupation _____ Disguise or dress _____ Arrested? _____ Identification No. _____ (Yes or No)	
		TOTAL VALUE	

RO: BUTTERBACH 12/21/68 8:33P.M.

TELEPHONE CONFERSATION: JAMES OWEN 1735 Mini Drive

RO called MR OWEN about the possibility of a MR PRENTIS who is also employed at Humble Oil on the graveyard shift of his (PRENTIS) driving pass the crime scene on the night of Friday 12/20/68. MR OWEN stated he talked to PRENTIS today and PRENTIS said he did not drive to work by Lake Herman Road last night 12/20/68.

As fate would have it, friend and fellow researcher Rob (RL) would nail down the identity of the elusive Mr. Prentis in July of 2025.



Howard Prentice Holder (1915-2015) of Thurber, Texas married Palma Geraldine Riley (1917-1977) of Wooster Village (Baytown), Texas on September 26th, 1937 in Goose Creek (Baytown), Texas.

They raised one daughter; Becky Suzanne Renaud (1949-2007) of Baytown, Texas.

Howard was known socially by his middle name, Prentice. Prentice began his 41 year career at Humble Oil in 1935 at the Baytown refinery.

An article in the *Baytown Sun*, dated February 15, 1968 lists Prentice as one of many Baytown refiners being loaned out to the startup refinery in Benicia. The loan term is said to be anywhere between 18 and 24 months, the crew of men were slated to leave between May 1st and July 1st of 1968.

Prentice moved his family to Vallejo and found residence at an apartment on 402 Avian Drive. 1000 feet (304.8 meters) from the east end of Springs Road proper.

Holder Ann M Mrs ofc wkr Industrial
 Vending Mach r33 Melvin Rd
 " Barbara B Mrs ofc wkr h1031 Grant St
 " Dewey emp MINS r1031 Grant St
 " Howard P (Palma R) emp Humble Oil
 h402 Avian Dr

3.8 Stella Medeiros

Stella Elizabeth Medeiros (1937-2007) was born in unincorporated Solano County, California, to Stella Lopes (1913-1973) and Antonio Silva Borges (1897-1973). She was the crown jewel of the Borges Ranch and bride elect of Oliver (Al) Medeiros (-) of Oakland, California.

Vallejo Times-Herald
May 6th, 1951



STELLA BORGES
Queen Selected
For Vallejo Fete

Plans have been completed for the annual three day HOLY GHOST celebration in Vallejo next Saturday and Sunday, May 12 and 13, the committee for the event announced.

Highlights will include a grand ball, a colorful parade and a traditional banquet in the SCDES bandshell. Miss Stella Borges, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Maximino Borges of Lake Herman Road, will reign as queen.

The ball will start with a grand ball Saturday night in the SCDES Hall on Contra Costa Street at 9:30 p.m.

The parade will start at 9:30 a.m. Sunday May 13, and end at St. Vincent's Church, where a Solemn High Mass commemorating the Feast of the Holy Ghost will be celebrated.

The banquet is scheduled at 1:30 p.m. Sunday, May 13. It will be followed by dancing all afternoon and evening until 11 p.m.

Attending Queen Stella will be two maids of honor, Maxine Lopez, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Paul Lopez of Napa, and Joaquin Duarte, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Joaquin Duarte of Vallejo.

Stella had the unfortunate responsibility of being the first to happen upon the crime scene after the murders on December 20, 1968.

December 24th, 1968, at 11:25 a.m., Stella sat down with Detective Les Lundblad and gave her only statement.

The report starts off stating that Stella lived on Lake Herman Road, across from her parents' home 2.7 miles from the crime scene (actual distance: 1.6 miles/2.5 kilometers).

Stella stated that she arrived home from Oakland at approximately 10:50 p.m. Her mother had called and requested that she pick up her 13 year old son from the movie theater. She hadn't even taken off her coat, and glanced at the clock in her kitchen, believing that it read 11:10 p.m.

She said she left with her daughter and mother-in-law and drove casually to the scene (n.b. Officers noted they were verifying distances during the interview.) She believed she arrived at the crime scene 4 minutes later, putting the estimated time of arrival as 11:14 or 11:15 p.m. The report notes that they established during the interview that her clock was 1 minute fast.

Stella indicated that no other cars were going in either direction while she was on the road.

When she arrived on scene her headlights picked up the car, and what appeared to be a boy who had fallen out of the open door. The girl was lying on her side facing the road. She was wearing a purple dress and looked "well dressed", in Stella's opinion.

She continued that she saw only one car at the crime scene. It appeared to be a Rambler, grayish in color with a chrome rack on top. She then stated that she drove 60 or 70 mph on her way to Benicia to report the incident.

She said that when she saw the police officer she flashed her lights and honked her horn to attract his attention.

It is noted in Les Lundblad's synopsis of the incident that Stella Medeiros got to the scene at 11:20 p.m. and alerted the police in Benicia at 11:25 p.m.

The initial police report reads that before Stella could reach the police station she came across Captain Daniel Pitta and Officer William Warner of Benicia PD, at the Enco Gas Station, which was located at 1925 East 2nd Street.



Courtesy of ZodiacCiphers.com

3.9 Daniel Pitta and William Warner

Captain Daniel Pitta and Officer William T. Warner, of Benicia PD, were the first officers on the scene. Although the crime was committed on an unincorporated section of Lake Herman Road and would fall in the jurisdictional lap of the Solano County Sheriff's Office.

Daniel Anthony Pitta (1922-2002) was born and raised in Lowell, Massachusetts, before moving to California, post WWII. He married Ramona Lucille Joseph (1927-2005) of Benicia, California. Together they raised two children; a boy, Lawrence Joseph Pitta (1954-2001) and a girl, Josephine Correla Flannery (1949-). The family lived together at 1500 East 3rd Street, in Benicia, California.

Captain Pitta spent 28 years serving the Benicia community. All but 3.5 months were spent with the police force. Three years into his service he was promoted to rank of sergeant and held his captaincy until his retirement at the end of 1974.



Officer William T. Warner
(1933-2019) of Merced, California,
married his high school sweetheart
Lillian Roslie Mattos (1935-1999)
also of Merced, on April 24th, 1953.

Warner was called to active duty on
the Benicia PD in 1967.

REGISTRATION CARD—(Men born on or after January 1, 1922 and on or before June 30, 1924)	
SERIAL NUMBER	100-17048
N 95 Daniel Anthony Pitta ORDER NUMBER 11-12-192	
20386-Johnst Capland Calif	
THE PLACE OF RESIDENCE GIVEN ON THE LINE ABOVE WILL DETERMINE LOCAL BOARD JURISDICTION FOR THE REGISTRATION CERTIFICATE WILL BE IDENTICAL	
3. MARINE ARMED FORC ^E None	
4. TRADESMAN 5. AGE IN YEARS 20 Place of Birth May 23 1922 Taunton Mass	
6. HOME ADDRESS 7. EMPLOYER'S NAME AND ADDRESS 8. EMPLOYER'S NAME AND ADDRESS 20386-Johnst Capland Calif	
9. PLACE OF ENLISTMENT ON REGISTRATION CERTIFICATE Capland Calif	
10. I AGREE THAT I HAVE VERIFIED ABOVE INFORMATION AND THAT IT IS TRUE DAN PITTA	
11. SIGNATURE DAN PITTA	

Daniel Pitta's Military Registration Card

Vallejo Times-Herald
October 24th, 1974



Police Officer William Warner of Benicia, left, gave the valedictory address Friday night at the North Bay Police Officers Academy commencement exercises. Ceremonies were held at Solano College. With

Vallejo Times-Herald
April 10th, 1968

The initial report doesn't make it clear which officer wrote the report, but both signatures at the end make it at least somewhat plausible that it was a joint effort.

11:25 p.m. - While on patrol, the reporting officer's were flagged down by the Enco Station on East 2nd Street in Benicia by Stella Borges (Medeiros). She advised the

officers that there were two bodies laying on the road, just east of the Lake Herman cottage.

11:28 p.m. - Reporting officers arrived at Gate 10, roughly one fourth of a mile from the Lake Herman cottage. Upon lighting the scene with their patrol car, the ROs noticed a white female lying face down in a pool of blood. The blood had pooled to the north, which was the left side of her face. From here on she is referred to as Victim 1.

Further investigation uncovered a white male (Victim 2), lying to the south side of a 1960 Rambler, four door station wagon. Victim 2 was lying face up, with a large pool of blood at the back of his skull. Officer Warner detected breathing on Victim 2, he advised Captain Pitta to call an ambulance and a doctor, code 3. Victim 2 was lying with his feet to the right rear wheel, and his head away from the vehicle.

Upon arrival of A-1 ambulance, Victim 2 was transported to Vallejo General Hospital, code 3.

Solano County Coroner, Dan Horan, was requested by Captain Pitta for Victim 1. Captain Pitta also advised the sheriff's office in Vallejo to dispatch a sheriff's unit and an investigator.

Victim 1 was located approximately 25 feet to the rear and the west of the above noted vehicle. Her head was facing east and nearest the vehicle.

Victim 1 had no sign of breath or pulse, and upon arrival of Dr. Byron Sanford and County Coroner Horan, was pronounced dead at midnight, December 20, 1968 (Should read December 21, 1968).

A purse found by Captain Pitta, tentatively identified Victim 1 as Betty Lou Jensen of 532 Jennings Street, Vallejo.

The Rambler's front passenger door was left standing open, and on the right front floorboards, approximately 3 inches from the floor mat molding, lay one spent .22 caliber casing. An additional 3 expelled casings were found parallel to the right side of Victim 2. Measurements were taken by Captain Pitta and Officer Warner and recorded by Sergeant Lundblad, Investigator for the SCSO.

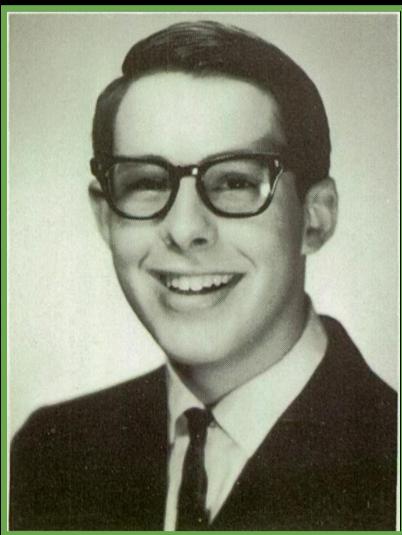
The officers note that the vehicle was left with the right, front door left open, and the other three closed and locked. The front seat back had been let down into a reclining position. The right rear window had a hole, with the entirety of the glass shattered

around, which appeared to have been made by a bullet. The left rear wheel housing also appeared to have a bullet hole.

Records of events and evidence, including photos, were turned over to County Coroner Horan and Sergeant Lundblad for proper disposition.

There was not a disturbance to the crime scene, except during removal of Victim 2. Prior to Victim 2's removal, a chalk outline was made by Officer Warner.

3.10 Thomas D. Balmer



Tom Balmer
1966 Armijo High School

Daily Republic photographer Tom Balmer had already been to one scene that evening; the hijacking of a gambler's bus on the I-80 and Travis Boulevard exit. "That was pretty exciting", Balmer remembers in 2003, when he was interviewed for a piece in the same paper he once shot for.

So when he heard the dispatch on his scanner of a double homicide on Lake Herman Road, he got his map and started on his way.



Photographers:
Linda Haines and
Tom Balmer

Tom Balmer
1966 Armijo High School

the rear of window. RO requested the reporter stay out of the area until Detective Sgt. Lundblad and the coroner arrived and gave him their permission to enter the area.

Once Lundblad arrived on scene, he snapped three shots and was promptly told by one of the officers on the scene to hand over the film or he would "spend the night in jail",

erroneously stating that it was illegal to photograph a dead body. When Tom reported the incident to *Daily Republic* editor, Al Donner, the film was quietly returned the next morning. His photo ran on the front page of the December 22, 1968 edition of *The Daily Republic*.



MURDER of two Vallejo teenagers happened Friday night on a lonely stretch of Lake Herman Road near

Benicia. At the scene a law enforcement crew, center, which included County Coroner Dan Horan, county sheriff's deputies and Benicia

policemen, found the bodies of Bettie Jean, foreground, and David Faraday.

—DR Photo by Balmer

The Daily Republic - December 22nd, 1968

"I think they were looking for a clue. But there was nothing I could provide them with (that) they didn't (already) know." Balmer stated about the request by detectives to interview him while he was away at basic training in early 1969.

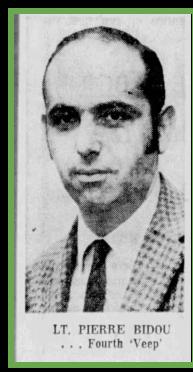


The Daily Republic - March 3rd, 1970

Balmer spent four years in the United States Air Force, and by 2003 had settled into a teaching job at Vallejo's Hogan High.

Thomas David Balmer (1947-) of Fairfield, California, married Jill Hoerer (1955-) of Costa Mesa, California on November 24th, 1974.

3.11 Pierre Bidou and Steven Armenta



*Vallejo Times-Herald
October 27th, 1972*

Pierre Thomas Bidou (1937-) of Alameda, California was married to Suzanne H. Weimer (1939-), also of Alameda. Together they raised six children, three boys; Matthew Thomas (1960-), Christopher P. (1963-) and Andrew John Bidou (1969-), as

well as three girls; Bernadette Marie Gutierrez (1958-), Cecilia Anne Beak (1962-) and Mary E. Bidou (1965-).

Pierre was accepted into the force on June 15, 1964. He would spend 12 years with Benicia PD before being promoted to Chief of Police in July of 1976.

Steven Laurence Armenta (1930-1973) of Lincoln, California (and later Clarksburg and Sacramento, California), was married to Sandra Faye Randles (1939-) of Sacramento on May 28th, 1960 in Carson City, Nevada. Together they raised two children; daughter Peggy Lyn Armenta (-) and son Steven Laurence Armenta III (1959-).

Steven and Sandra filed for divorce in November of 1968. One month before the murders on Lake Herman Road.

A thirteen year veteran with the State Bureau of Narcotics Enforcement, Armenta was shot and killed in a botched undercover assignment in Benicia, California on December 7th, 1973.

The evening of December 20, 1968, was a busy one for Bidou and Armenta, who had admittedly been within a half mile of the crime scene just prior to the murders. The pair were serving out a narcotics search warrant at the Lake Herman Cottage that evening. They seized roughly a kilo (2.2 lbs) of marijuana (depending on the source) and stolen welding equipment. The welding equipment belonged to C.F. Braun, chief contractor on the new Humble Oil refinery in Benicia.

Arrested that night was Charles Anthony Borcich (1946-2000), grandson of Frank Joseph Dotta and occupant of the Lake Herman Cottage. Charles would be suspected by an anonymous tipster in the Blue Rock Springs case, some seven months later.

CRIME CLASSIFICATION.....	MUR DER.....	CASE NO.243 146.....
7-25-69 Anonymous letter received; "To whom it may concern There is a young man who used to live in the pink house bordering Lake Herman. His name is Charles [redacted]. He is around 22 and is short and heavy set. I do not know if this boy still lives at this residence or if he is guilty. I do know that he is off balanced by things that he has done in the past and very capable of committing the murders that were committed in that area and at Blue Rock. If he is innocent I will not have hurt him-but if he were guilty and another person died, I would never forgive myself. Please check this man out!"		
7-15-111 Went to the Sheriffs Office and received a mug shot of Charles [redacted] [redacted] A.A. 22 years P.L. Box [redacted] Benicia phone 745-[redacted].		
Went to Kaiser Hospital and Michael Lynch is sleeping at this time. He will be contacted later toni t. (Lynch.		

July 25th, 1969
Anonymous Tip

The execution of the search warrant along with the subsequent arrest was the likely source for Robert Connelly's statement to police of: "*something going on at Dotta Ranch*".

The cops are reported to have passed the turnout en route to Benicia via Old Lake Herman Road, at approximately 11:00 p.m. With an estimated travel time of ten minutes to the Benicia police station, that would leave fifteen minutes until Stella Medeiros had alerted Captain Pitta and Officer Warner at the Enco Station. So, we can assume that Bidou and Armenta had been at the station for at least fifteen minutes before they were radioed to head back out to Lake Herman Road to offer assistance.

As the story goes, the two Benicia cops had just arrived back at the station, arrested in tow, when according to *The Benicia Herald*, they received a radio dispatch shortly after 11:15 p.m. It was in regards to a "car and a body" on the side of the road. The timeframe has been subject to conjecture, as we know that police hadn't been made aware of the crime scene until 11:25 p.m. Therein lies the problem; without official reports by the Benicia officers, we are left with a fractured timeline. So what we likely have is an "as-best-as-can-be-remembered" timeline from Pierre Bidou.

Piecing together the events of that night from various interviews given by Bidou, we can be assured they arrived before the ambulance sometime after 11:30 p.m. and before midnight, and that they assisted the Sheriff's Office with protecting the crime scene. Officers Bidou and Armenta never participated in the investigation as that responsibility belonged to Les Lundblad, Russel Butterbach and Wayne Waterman with the SCSO.

It is not known whether Charles Borcich was ever questioned as to what he remembers seeing as they passed the turnout.

3.12 Les Lundblad and Russell Butterbach

Detective Sergeant Leslie Burton Lundblad (1913-1977) of Vallejo, California married Emma Marie Petrie (1916-1990) of Phoenix, Arizona (and later Napa, California) on September 19, 1936 in Vallejo, California.

Together, Emma and Les raised three boys; Leslie Burton Jr. (1938-), Robert Dennis (1943-1983) and James Reed Lundblad (1945-). The family made 1016 Ohio Street in Vallejo, their home.

Les joined the Vallejo PD on December 9, 1940. Two years later he was promoted to the rank of sergeant. In 1946, Les quit the force to run a supermarket with his brother Bill on Wallace Avenue, in Vallejo. He returned briefly as a patrolman, but soon quit to go back and run the Annex Market. In the summer of 1953, he sold the store and became a deputy sheriff out of the Vallejo field office, where he remained until his retirement on August 1st, 1975.

The Lundblad family was not without its own dark history. In 1955, Emma's father David Petrie, a well known Napa plumber, escaped confinement at the Napa State Hospital and bludgeoned his wife Gertrude to death.

On December 30th, 1992, Les Lundblad Jr. was arrested by Contra Costa County sheriff's deputies while walking away from a phone booth in Clayton, California. He had called to inform law enforcement that he had not killed his wife Nancy, the day before. He went on to be convicted of shooting his wife in the chest and killing her.

Deputy Russell Theodore Butterbach (1920-2008) of Joliet, Illinois, married Hope Wilma Thomas (1922-2019) of Challis, Idaho on October 31st, 1942 in Salt Lake City, Utah.

Hope and Russell raised three daughters; Sharon Downey (1943-), Karen Lynn Dussell (1950-) and Debra Ann Miller (1951-). The family took up residence at 233 Las Palmas Avenue, in Vallejo.

Butterbach worked for the Sheriff's Office until the end of 1978, when he moved on to work for Interstate Security Services Inc., of Fairfield, California.

Russ Butterbach was on patrol that night with Deputy Sheriff Wayne Waterman. A relative newcomer to the Solano County Sheriff's Office, Waterman volunteered to partner with Butterbach that night when Butterbach's regular partner had called out sick.

In 2007, Russ offered the following about that infamous night back in 1968 - "*We got a call from the sergeant, that a man from Benicia who fishes at Lake Berryessa [probably meant Lake Herman] wasn't at home... and that was at 7 o'clock, 8 o'clock. He asked us to look down Lake Herman Road and see if his truck was there, it was a blue truck... and just as we turned onto Lake Herman Road we had a call to go to the Hell's Angels pad on Warren Street. We were there... oh, 30... 40 minutes. When we got back in the car we were told we had a double 187 on Lake Herman Road.*"

Butterbach would work through the night with Lundblad and Waterman, gathering what they could for shell casings and other evidence - "Then the next morning I got a call and they told me I was going to be an investigator on it."



Vallejo Times-Herald
August 14th, 1975
(Randall, Lundblad, Parks & Waterman)

"It was a senseless murder I believe." One of the most iconic soundbites related to the Zodiac case, uttered by lead investigator Lundblad to a news reporter in the dying days of 1968.

Lundblad was mum on the subject of possible suspects he has in mind.
"We have a great deal of information," he said, "and we are getting more all the time. We expect to have an answer before very much longer."

Vallejo Times-Herald
December 25th, 1968

Lundblad and Butterbach spent much of the days following the murders interviewing witnesses, possible witnesses, persons of interest, friends, family and schoolmates of the slain pair. Lundblad had even spent Christmas day reviewing the case files with Fairfield's Sheriff Sergeant Jack Oller. Butterbach and Lundblad worked tirelessly trying to track down any semblance of a motive. It soon became apparent that there was no obvious motivation for the brutal killings.

Nine shell casings were found on the turnout floor at Gate 10, and one on the front passenger floorboard. Ten in total.

In subsequent years, Tom Voigt has indicated that one of the casings from the crime scene was kept as a souvenir by Butterbach. This rumor was given further credence by Mike Rodelli, who claimed on Discord that, *"When I stayed at Butterbach's house in 2003 he told me that he had a shell casing around the house from Lake Herman Road and we looked in all the little ashtrays and everywhere around the house but we couldn't find it. But he told me he had it. He was a nice guy but his wife was a bit more testy and she definitely wore the pants in the family."*

The overall disappointment with the investigation has been covered ad nauseam and the Sheriff's Office has been criticized harshly over the last five decades for many mistakes and perceived missed opportunities.

It is my contention that the investigators, while perhaps punching above their weight class, did their level best to catch the man who would go on to be known as the Zodiac killer.

4.0 - Magris and Schwerdtfeger

The unusual case of David Luis Magris (1948-2023) and Michael J. Schwerdtfeger (1946-) begins with a series of service station and convenience store robberies in 1969. The two were tried and convicted of kidnapping, armed robbery, attempted murder and first-degree murder.

In the early morning hours of June 3, 1969 a half mile east of Interstate-80, in a field off Blue Rock Springs Road, 20 year old Steven Tompkins was shot and killed with five bullets from a sawed off M1 carbine after being robbed and abducted from the Standard service station at which he worked.

Critically wounded in a separate robbery that night was 26 year old Dennis Tapp, who was working at a service station operated by his father. Tapp survived the attack.

The four men involved in the attacks have been loosely linked to the Vallejo area narcotics network, with unsubstantiated claims. It is probable, however, that the group were in fact heavy drug users.

Gangland-Type Slayer Suspects Deny Guilt In Vallejo

VALLEJO — Four suspects in the gangland-type slaying of a service station attendant and wounding of another here last Tuesday were arraigned in Municipal Court.

Each was accused of murder, attempted murder, kidnapping and two counts of armed robbery.

Appearing yesterday afternoon before Municipal Judge Wallace W. Cox were Michael Joseph Schwerdtfeger, 22, a bottler in a Berkeley soft drink plant; David Luis Magris, 21, one-time ballet prodigy who gave his occupation as laborer; Mathew Francis Donohue, 20, discharged by the California Youth Authority last March, all of Vallejo; and his brother, Robert Sheridan Donohue, 18, Fair Oaks, the "baby" of the quartet who said he covered his eyes rather than watch the execution-type slaying of Steven G. Tompkins, 20, with a sawed-off M-1 Army carbine.

Denies Implication
The younger Donohue also has claimed he refused to have anything to do with the gunning down of another

service station attendant, plaintiff, Judge Cox advised all would try to hire a lawyer of the defendants to retain for him.

shot twice and left for dead in a second holdup.

Judge Cox read all the charges to the suspects as they bent over the counsel table. Solano County Dist. Atty. E. Glynn Stanley sat at their left and Deputy Public Defender Steve Cambden sat at their right, serving as temporary defense counsel.

After reading the complaint, Judge Cox waived further arraignment and entered pleas of innocent for all defendants on all charges.

Schwerdtfeger's mother spoke up from the audience to say she would try to engage counsel for her son but asked for the temporary appointment of a public defender.

A young woman who said she "used to be" the wife of Mathew Donohue said she

cused of committing a strong-arm robbery of the Short Stop market at Benicia Road and Laurel Street in Vallejo on June 1.

Security was heavy in and around the courtroom and in the conduct of the prisoners from the branch county jail to the court. Seven officers lined the walls of the nearly full courtroom and four bailiffs stood guard over the suspects.



Michael J. Schwerdtfeger



David L. Magris



Matthew F. Donohue



Robert S. Donohue

The Sacramento Bee

June 6th, 1969

Terry Cunningham, John Lynch, Roy Conway and George Bawart can all be counted amongst law enforcement officials close to the Zodiac case, who also believe that the Lake Herman Road murders were drug-related. David Faraday was said to have had an altercation over drugs at a restaurant the week prior to his murder. David had a reputation for being staunchly anti-drug. Sgt. Lynch of Vallejo PD believed David Faraday had been a confidential informant about a past drug deal. The Benicia PD executed a narcotics search warrant at the cottage on Lake Herman minutes before and a stone's throw from the murder scene. The Hells Angels were raided that night on Warren Avenue in Vallejo. Certainly enough circumstantial drug rhetoric to make you think twice.

In 1988 a television production crew for the program "Crimes of the Century" set out to document the Zodiac killer case. Thanks to Tom Voigt at zodiackiller.com, we are privy to the production notes. Of particular interest are the pre-interview notes on Terry Cunningham, former sergeant with the Solano County Sheriff's Office.

"Crimes of the Century" Production Notes

Terry Cunningham
(707) 745
retired
Solano County Sheriff
involved w/ Betty Lou Jensen / Faraday
Sgt. Det. at the time
Says they weren't Zodiaced
guys in charge are dead now
positive there were a couple young guys
first date, going into the just graduating
Lake Herman known as lover's lane
he'd gone by just a little while he left
saw them dead when he came back a
little while later
off duty ^{on} night of Ferrin killing at
Blue Rock Springs
a kid was convicted of killing a service
station guy w/ an M16
(two) four boys were together for killing
— all went to jail
he'd talk to them in jail; they were
afraid of the chair
told him things that they could only
know if they were there — one of them
told him the whole story about
Jensen and Faraday
(how they were dressed, etc., where shot
— not mentioned anywhere)

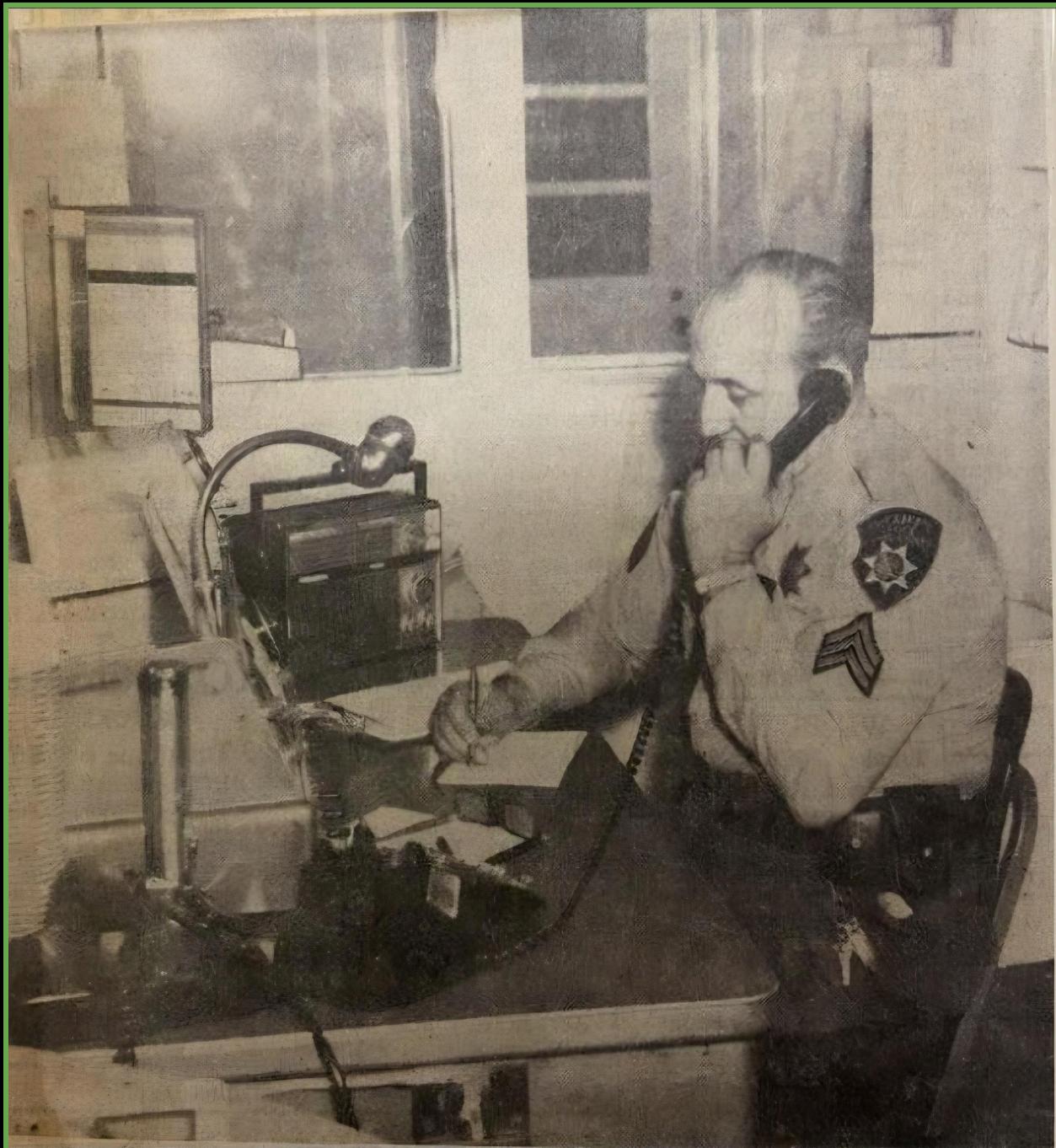
he verified it, passed it on to
Lundblad
Lundblad was too immersed in Zodiac,
but everything in the code could
come from newspaper
Lundblad was too narrow in his thinking,
obsessed
he knows the red-headed kid killed
the two teens
kids were just cruising, looking for
excitement (red headed one especially,
who coerced others into going along)
red headed one bragged about waitressing
killing to other boys
red head was convicted in service station
case w/ physical evidence and
eyewitnesses; kid's testimony was
flimsy and they were scared
red head had been everywhere w/
serviceman father
never believed in that Zodiac thing
Mrs. Your is an old trouble maker
Benicia

6 LaCruz Ave, Benicia
Sunday afternoon's OK

Terry Cunningham
(707) 745
retired
Solano County Sheriff
involved w/ Betty Lou Jensen/Faraday
Sgt. Det. at the time
Says they weren't Zodiacked
guys in charge are dead now
positive there were a couple young guys
first date, ~~going into her~~ just graduating
Lake Herman known as lover's lane
he'd gone by just a little while before
Saw them dead when he came back a
little while later
off duty on night of Ferrin killing at
Blue Rock Springs
a kid was convicted of killing a service
station guy w/ an M16
(two) four boys were together for killing
- all went to jail
he'd talk to them in jail, they were
afraid of the chair
told him things they could only
know if they were there - one of
them
told him the whole story of
Jensen and Faraday
(How they were dressed, etc, where
shot

- not mentioned anywhere)
He verified it, passed it on to
Lundblad
Lundblad was too immersed in Zodiac,
but everything in the code
could come from newspaper
Lundblad was too narrow in his thinking
obsessed
he knows the red-headed kid killed
The two teens
kid were just cruising, looking for
excitement (red headed one
especially
who coerced others into going along)
red headed one bragged about waitress
killing to other boys
red head was convicted in service
station
case w/ physical evidence and
eyewitnesses; kid's testimony was
flimsy and they were scared
red head had been everywhere w/
serviceman father
never believed in that Zodiac thing
Mrs. Your is an old trouble maker
Benicia
6 La Cruz Ave, Benicia
Sunday afternoon's OK

Unfortunately for us, Cunningham's interview never made the final cut. What we are left with is speculation as to who the "red-headed kid" being referenced by Cunningham actually was.



Sgt. Cunningham at the Vallejo Office - March 1975

General consensus is that the mysterious redhead is Michael Schwerdtfeger. Steven Tompkins was certainly the only service station attendant who had been killed by a group of four individuals in Vallejo during the time period. It is worth noting that Michael's father served in the United States Navy, further connecting Michael to the redhead in question.

Mr. and Mrs. Richard Schwerdtfeger have a 9 lb. baby girl born April 25th in the Mare Island Naval Hospital. Mr. Schwerdtfeger is in the Navy. They have two older children. The young mother is the former Ann Gambetta, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. A. Gambetta of Vallejo, who used to live in Novato. Mr. and Mrs. Julius Peterson are her uncle and aunt.

Novato Advance - May 5th, 1950

Either they are one and the same or the "facts that only the police could know", isn't the privileged information we assumed it to be.

Cunningham is critical of his old boss for being too narrow minded in his investigation of the Lake Herman Road murders. The former SCSO sergeant believes that the jailed Schwerdtfeger told him facts about the crime that only the responsible could know. The same can be said for the author of the July 31st, 1969 letters to the *Vallejo Times-Herald*, *San Francisco Examiner* and *San Francisco Chronicle*.

Dear Editor

This is the murderer of the 2 teenagers last Christmas at Lake Herman & the girl on the 4th of July near the golf course in Vallejo To prove I killed them I shall state some facts which only I & the police know.
Christmas

- 1 Brand name of ammo Super X
- 2 10 shots were fired
- 3 the boy was on his back with his feet to the car
- 4 the girl was on her right side feet to the west 4th July

- 1 girl was wearing patterned slacks
- 2 The boy was also shot in the knee.
- 3 Brand name of ammo was Western

Over

July 31st letter to the San Francisco Chronicle

5.0 - Dead End

An eerie warning and succinct summary from August of 1979...

Weird happenings on county road

Moving into the twilight zone

By DAN SHIYOCK
Times-Herald Staff Writer

BENICIA — By day, it's a pleasant stretch of road offering drivers a view of the city's northern boundary.

By night, the same stretch becomes a police officer's nightmare, a street filled with bizarre occurrences, violent murders, incidents.

The stretch is a two-mile section of Lake Herman Road, now known throughout the Benicia area as a place where, however, has changed all that, police say. The winding road from Columbus Parkway near Village B to Interstate 80 on the northern edge is one of the most heavily patrolled of all rural roads in the county.

"You feel funny on Lake Herman Road at night," police said recently. "It's like stepping into the twilight zone."

The remote, poorly lit road has become a popular hangout and hideout for stolen cars, police said. It also has become an equally popular territory for several criminal activity, police said.

The road is heavily used, it's said, by Benicia police, Solano County Sheriff's deputies and California Highway Patrol units who stop to drink beer and meet friends.

A series of violent incidents in recent months, however, has changed all that, police say. The winding road from Columbus Parkway near Village B to Interstate 80 on the

and the interstate highway. Police say this is one reason for the area's high crime rate.

A Portland, Ore., man brought his car to the area, parked near the highway after he turned off the road and apparently committed suicide, police said. The man and his body were discovered Saturday.

Officers agree the road's reputation took a disastrous turn when the infamous Sojourner killer claimed his first victim on the road just days before the suicide site Dec. 29, 1974. Since that tragedy, three other bodies have been found on the road. One man was executed and run over by a car on the Lake Herman Road less than a mile from the Interstate highway.

Two other bodies, a man and a woman, were found within yards of each other on Reservoir Road in two unrelated killings. The Reservoir Road sites are about a half-mile from Lake Herman Road.

"Nobody really knows what attracts this kind of thing (to the area)," Ellis said. "It's remote, yet it's handy. But, Sky Valley (Road) is even more remote and nothing happens there."

"It's a bad luck place. Even the accidents out there are bizarre. If there's ever a flying saucer landing here, it will land near Lake Herman Road."

"It's just a creepy place. There are a lot of horror stories that can be told."

The main concern of police is the well being of unsuspecting persons who may still use the road as a secret hideaway. "An isolated area such as this makes it a high crime area," Lt. Dennis Gard of the Benicia police said Saturday from the suicide scene. "It's not a good place for young kids to come to."

Sgt. Pete McArdle said the area's popularity with teen-agers drastically dropped following the Zodiac shootings. "It took a big, giant drop after those killings," he said. "It's not as near as popular as it used to be."

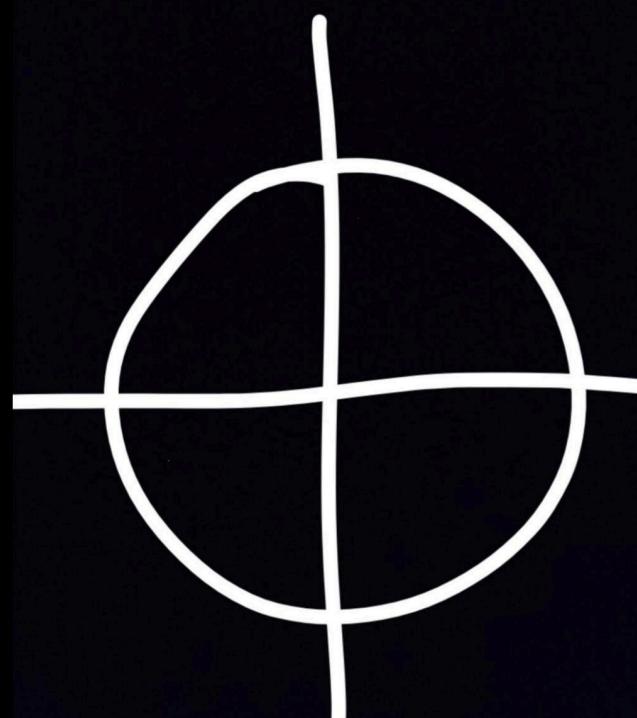
Ellis added that strange happenings almost seem commonplace in the Lake Herman Road area. "This is a weird area. There are a lot of recorded natural phenomena," he said.

One strange aspect of the road is what McArdle called "gravity hill" — a section of Lake Herman Road near the Columbus Parkway where an upheaval of gravity reportedly pulls stopped cars uphill. McArdle, for one, says he saw it himself when he was a Benicia teen-ager years ago.

"It's a strange road, no doubt about it," McArdle said. "It's the haunted road of Solano County."

Eerie events commonplace on area road

(Continued from page 1)



Vallejo Times-Herald - August 2nd, 1979

By DAN SHRYOCK

Times-Herald Staff Writer

BENICIA - By day, it's a pleasant stretch of road offering drivers a serene route along the city's northern boundary.

By night, the same stretch becomes a police officer's nightmare, a stretch laden with tales of strange occurrences, violent murders, suicide.

The stretch is a two-mile section of Lake Herman Road, once known throughout the Benicia area as a popular lover's lane, a spot where high schoolers often stopped to drink beer and meet friends.

A series of violent crimes in recent years, however, has changed all that, police say. The winding road from Columbus Parkway near Vallejo to Interstate 680 on the county's eastern edge is now one of the most heavily patrolled of all rural roads in the county.

"You feel funny on Lake Herman Road," one police officer said recently. "It's like stepping into the twilight zone."

The remote, poorly lit road has become a popular dumping ground for stolen cars, police said. It also has become an equally popular territory for nocturnal criminal activity, police said.

The road is heavily policed. It's policed so much, in fact, that Benicia police, Solano County Sheriff's deputies and California Highway Patrol units are a common sight.

Police said there are a few people who need to be in the area. "With the exception of a couple families who live nearby, no one should really be out there." Benicia police Lt. Gary Ellis said. "The only other people who go out there are crooks, crazy people and cops."

The area is remote, yet quickly accessible from Vallejo, Benicia and the interstate highway. Police say this is one reason for the area's high crime rate.

A Portland, Ore., man brought Lake Herman Road back into the limelight after he turned off the road and apparently committed suicide through asphyxiation. The car and his body were discovered Saturday.

Officers agree the road's reputation took a disastrous turn when the infamous Zodiac killer claimed his first two victims a short distance from the suicide site Dec. 20, 1968.

Since that tragedy, three other bodies have been found in the area. One man was executed and run over by a car on Lake Herman Road less than a mile from the interstate.

Two other bodies, a man and a woman, were found within yards of each other on Reservoir Road in two unrelated killings. The Reservoir Road sites are about a half-mile from Lake Herman Road.

"Nobody knows what attracts this kind of thing (to the area)," Ellis said. "It's remote, yet it's handy. But, Sky Valley (Road) is even more remote and nothing happens there.

"It's a bad luck place. Even the accidents out there are bizarre. If there's ever a flying saucer landing here, it will land near Lake Herman Road.

"It's just a creepy place. There are a lot of horror stories that can be told."

The main concern of police is the well being of unsuspecting persons who may still use the road as a secret hideaway. "An isolated area such as this makes it a high crime area," Lt. Dennis Gard of the Benicia police said Saturday from the suicide scene. "It's not a good place for young kids to come to."

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One strange aspect of the road is what McArdle called "gravity hill" - a section of Lake Herman Road near Columbus Parkway where an upheaval of gravity reportedly pulls stopped cars uphill. McArdle, for one, says he saw it himself when he was a Benicia teenager years ago.

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GorillaTrain