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DB = P88

DOCNO = 115155

THE PROVIDENCE SUNDAY JOURNAL  
November 12, 1989

PAGE: A-01  
SECTION: NEWS  
EDITION: ALL  
LENGTH: 3000

MEMO: \*\*\*\*\* CORRECTION NOVEMBER 14, 1989 \*\*\*\*\*

Warwick police Sgt. Edmund F. Pierce, the subject of an article in the Sunday Journal, incorrectly attributed to Winston Churchill a quotation he cited in explaining why he expounds against satanism. The source of the quotation - "The only thing necessary for evil to triumph is for good men to do nothing" - is disputed by some but generally is attributed to Edmund Burke.

\*\*\*\*\* END OF CORRECTION \*\*\*\*\*

Lawman warns of satanism but R.I. evidence is sparse

By ELIZABETH RAU

Journal-Bulletin Staff Writer

Members of the Cranston Rotary Club are just finishing their lunch of chicken cordon bleu, macaroni and cantaloupe when William F. Holt, club president, rises to introduce the day's guest speaker.

"We're fortunate to have the sergeant here today," he says, referring to Sgt. Edmund F. Pierce, a Warwick detective. "Apparently, there's a tremendous problem facing our youth today with respect to satanism and the occult."

Holding a well-worn copy of The Satanic Bible, Pierce faces the dozens of lawyers and business people gathered in the Holiday Inn.

"How many people want me to tell the way it is or do you want me to tone it down?" he asks.

"The way it is," several mumble self-consciously.

"Okay," he responds. "Because some people get a little grossed out."

Then Pierce begins a well-rehearsed lecture, describing in extraordinarily graphic terms what he contends is a major police problem in Rhode Island and elsewhere - satanic crime.

He says at least three murders with satanic overtones have been committed in Rhode Island. He says many teenage suicides were influenced by satanism. And he tells in explicit detail of groups in other states that he claims skin babies alive in sacrificial ceremonies, eat their hearts and cannibalize or burn their bodies.

Some audience members squirm in their seats, shudder or grimace as Pierce paces, jokes about his girth, then moves on to more grisly details. When he's finished, the Rotarians give him a standing ovation.

'The cult guy'

In the last year, Pierce, 44, has gained a reputation as Rhode Island's

expert on satanism, or as he calls himself, "the cult guy."

In speeches to hundreds of people in religious groups, PTOs, schools and Rotary Clubs, he warns of pervasive satanic activities in the state's neighborhoods - including self-mutilation, murders and teenage suicides for Satan.

His next presentation will be during a five-day conference for law enforcement officers on satanism starting tomorrow at the Holiday Inn at the Crossings in Warwick.

About 60 people will each pay \$375 to attend the conference, which is sponsored by the Northeast Law Enforcement Officers Association and the Warwick police union.

Despite his popularity on the lecture circuit, his stories of satanic activity are nearly impossible to verify and are riddled with inconsistencies. When pressed, he provides little evidence to support his claims, many of which are based on secondhand accounts. And he refuses to provide police reports about crimes he says have satanic overtones.

Pierce's allegations omit critical facts, and in some cases, are simply wrong. Law enforcement officials, including Atty. Gen. James E. O'Neil, and others deny his assertions.

#### Worried parents

Pierce, when told no one in authority corroborates key elements of what he says, sticks to his stories.

"I stand by everything I said to you, period, end of case," Pierce said. "Everything I told you, you can take to the bank."

"I'm not lying. I don't have to lie. What would be the reason?"

Many of the hundreds of people who have sat through Pierce's one-to-two-hour lectures walk away convinced satanic crime is a serious problem in Rhode Island.

"I have an 11-month-old boy at home," Rotary President Holt said after Pierce's speech to the club. "I just want you to know that that lecture made my skin crawl."

"You have to believe what he said," said Barbara Bartlett, of Inez Avenue in Buttonwoods in Warwick, who heard Pierce speak at St. Clement's Church. "If you're a parent . . . just seeing what is happening in the world today, there is no way you could deny this."

Some residents of Buttonwoods, where a mother and her two daughters were murdered in September, said they are worried about Pierce's claim that 31 satanists are active in the neat, middle-class neighborhood.

In lectures and interviews, Pierce has hinted that the murders had satanic overtones. During a speech to the Christian Fellowship Group at Roger Williams College, for instance, Pierce was asked if 16-year-old Craig Price, who admitted killing the family and, in 1987, another neighborhood woman, is a satanist.

"I'm under a gag order not to comment on the case," Pierce said. "But the only thing I can say, he lived in Buttonwoods."

Warwick Police Chief Wesley M. Blanchard and other investigators involved in the Price case say there is no evidence that the murders had anything to do with satanism.

#### Only a rumor?

To some, satanism is a legitimate, organized religion whose members worship Satan and reject the values of other established religions.

But whether a teenager who listens to heavy-metal music and scribbles a pentagram - a five-pointed star used as an occult symbol - on his bedroom wall is a satanist, for instance, is questionable. Skeptics say many people drawn to satanism, particularly young people, are merely curious or rebelling.

Such skeptics reject the view expressed by Pierce and others that

satanism leads to criminal behavior.

"What police lectures tend to do is gloss over details . . . That's because they haven't turned up a real dead body, a real crematorium," said David Bromley, a sociology professor at Virginia Commonwealth University. "But they're getting attention by making these extreme claims."

Growing fear of satanism among law enforcement officials and the public is "a rumor at its height," he said. "That's what we have going here at the moment."

Pierce's presentations, which he gives on his own time during his lunch break or after working hours, are filled with details of crimes he alleges were inspired or influenced by satanism. He tells crowds that cults molest children and support themselves by selling drugs and child-pornography films. He attributes the rise of satanism to a breakdown in the country's moral fiber.

His props consist of 25 books on the occult, record album covers of rock bands such as Ozzy Osbourne, Slayer, Alice Cooper and Dio - he believes their songs contain satanic lyrics - and objects with occult markings on them: a red staff, goblets and a dagger he says was used locally in a ritualistic ceremony. He usually shows a tape of ABC's 20/20, in which children say they witnessed cannibalism and murder when they were involved in satanic cults.

Pierce also reads an excerpt from The Satanic Bible, a book by Anton Szandor LaVey, describing a ritual supposedly performed by a defrocked priest. In the ritual, Pierce says, a nude woman serves as the altar. She grasps a black candle supposedly made from the fat of unbaptized babies. A chalice supposedly containing a prostitute's urine rests on her stomach.

"And this is what really disturbs me," he says, stopping for a moment, before reading the next line:

"If a baby can be slaughtered during the ritual, so much the better; for as everyone knows, this is the favorite sport of the satanist!"

What the audience doesn't know is that on the very next page of the book, LaVey describes the passage as a lie he says was conjured up by Christians centuries ago to draw people to their faith.

"The stories of unbaptized babies being stolen by satanists for use in the mass were not only effective propaganda measures, but also provided a constant source of revenue for the Church, in the form of baptism fees," LaVey writes.

Pierce says he does not refer to the denial on the following page in his speeches because he believes youths don't read it.

"The kids don't turn the page and they take this and use it as their model," he said. "The point I was making is that this is what the kids are reading."

#### Trail of the occult

A Roman Catholic, Pierce says he does not have any religious motives in his fight against satanism. His primary concern, he says, is to help youths resist the temptation of cults.

"I think it's a problem big enough where it has to be dealt with," he said. "I think it's a problem where kids are hurting, emotionally, physically, intellectually."

When asked why he commits so much personal time to his cause, he quotes ( SEE CORRECTION ABOVE ) Winston Churchill: "All it takes for evil to triumph is for good men to do nothing."

Pierce joined the police department in 1971, was promoted to detective in 1975 and to sergeant in 1980.

This year, he was appointed to head the Youth Service Bureau, which handles all juvenile cases. He also is the department's chief polygraphist. He and his wife, Lourdes, live in Warwick and have two children, both college

students.

Pierce's interest in satanism began three years ago when he attended a seminar in New York. He then researched 12 teenage suicides in Rhode Island and decided that satanism played a role in six.

His interest heightened two years ago when Warwick police picked up a 14-year-old runaway. At the station, Pierce says, he found her curled up in a corner, clutching a drawing depicting what he contends is a satanic ritual, mumbling about "somebody stealing her soul."

During hours of questioning, Pierce said the youth led him "on a trail of the occult that I never thought existed in this country, never mind Rhode Island."

He said the girl, whom he would not identify, told him she was "ritualistically raped" and beaten by the cult's leader, a 19-year-old Warwick man.

She also told him, he said, about animal killings, a male teacher in the state who is recruiting students into a cult and a Newport teenager who was raped with a pipe during a ritual.

Pierce would not identify the teacher or say where he works. He also said charges were never brought against the man who allegedly raped the girl because she refused to testify against him.

#### Asked to write a book

Last April, Pierce, in conjunction with the Warwick police union, organized a closed-door seminar for 170 law enforcement officials, clergy and teachers in Warwick on satanic cults.

Within weeks, police departments, churches and school principals in the state were asking him to give speeches. Eventually, he started appearing on radio and television talk shows and lecturing as far away as Las Vegas.

NBC asked him to work as a consultant on a two-hour special on satanism last October, narrated by talk-show host Geraldo Rivera. And he said Dell Paperbacks has asked him to write a book.

Now, he gives two to three speeches a week, many of them to church groups. Pierce, who has an associate's degree in criminal justice from Salve Regina College, says the school has offered him a part-time job to teach a course on ritualistic crime, and he says he has thought about becoming a full-time consultant on his specialty after he retires in June, 1991..

But his identification with the subject has led to some problems. Last year, he said, he found a cat heart with a pentagram attached to it in the back seat of his car. He said someone also scrawled a pentagram on the door of his daughter's dormitory room.

Pierce says he earned \$500 in the last year from his speeches, which are usually free, and will receive \$264 for speaking at this week's seminar on satanism. He said he gave about six speeches to law enforcement agencies during working hours in the last year, with authorization from Chief Blanchard.

Blanchard was on vacation and could not be reached for comment. Cmdr. John J. Mulhearn declined to say whether the police department supports what Pierce does.

But he was enraged by Pierce's claim that 31 satanists practice in Buttonwoods.

"I dispute it," he said. "I think it's totally erroneous."

He says he is unaware of any crimes in Warwick involving satanic cults.

An examination shows several other instances in which authorities contradict Pierce's claims. For example:

\* Pierce said William Sarmento, accused of the 1987 murders of Jason Wolf and Frankie Barnes, is a satanist. He said Sarmento wrote a letter to Providence police before his arrest that said: "Cops, kill me before me and

Satan do it" and also scribbled the numerals "666" - a biblical symbol referring to the Antichrist - on his bedroom wall. He said O'Neil told him Sarmento drew an upside-down cross - a satanic symbol - on the boys' chests.

The autopsy reports make no mention of occult markings.

Tom Connell, spokesman for O'Neil, also says O'Neil "never had such a conversation with Sergeant Pierce."

And, Dr. Michael A. Ingall, a Brown University medical school professor who conducted a psychiatric evaluation of Sarmento, said Pierce's claim that Sarmento is a satanist is wrong. He said Sarmento's disorder is a biological-chemical illness he inherited from his father, not a consequence of cult activities.

\* Pierce said members of Volunteers of Warwick Schools told principals during a meeting last fall that a group of fifth- and sixth-grade students worships Satan every morning before class. Pierce spoke at the meeting and repeated the claim during a later speech.

Sally Peck, the group's executive director, is enraged by Pierce's claim.

"We have never had a child disclose satanism . . . devil worship or any of those things," she said.

Pierce stands by the story but has agreed not to repeat the claim.

\* Pierce said Cranston Patrolman Raymond Gemma responded to a disturbance in the city last year and witnessed a satanic ritual, in which a man was on the floor with a knife in his chest.

Cranston Capt. Robert H. Brown provides a different account.

He said two men got into a fight in an apartment on Montgomery Avenue concerning a woman living there. The woman stabbed one man in the back and told police: "The devil made me do it."

Brown said police found no evidence that the group was participating in a sacrificial ceremony. He said police found posters of heavy-metal rock groups and a copy of The Satanic Bible but do not believe the woman was part of an organized cult.

Gemma, who also lectures about satanism, says he was not involved in investigating the stabbing incident.

But, he says, he walked in on the same family two years ago as they were preparing to sacrifice someone in a satanic ritual. He said no one was arrested, but declined to be more specific.

Cranston Police Chief Kenneth R. Mancuso is not taking the incident seriously.

"Was he going to watch?" Mancuso asked, referring to Gemma. "I mean, this doesn't make sense to me. I'm sure if they were going to sacrifice someone, he would have arrested everyone."

\* Pierce says at least 30 youths have gone to Bradley Hospital for psychiatric evaluations after they attempted suicide in the name of Satan, carved satanic symbols on their skin or drank the blood of animals. He said others were treated at Butler Hospital and Fuller Memorial Hospital in Attleboro, Mass.

Officials at the three hospitals confirm Pierce's account that youths who have been treated for mental illness or drug problems have shown indications of interest in satanism, but they say the youngsters' interest in satanism was probably a sign of other problems.

Dr. Timothy M. Rivinus, attending psychiatrist at Bradley Hospital, disputes Pierce's claim about suicide attempts, saying none of his patients tried to kill themselves because of their involvement with satanism.

\* During one interview, Pierce said at least 100 satanists live in Rhode Island. In a subsequent interview, he said he did not know the number. He said there are six satanic cults in Warwick and five in Providence and at least one each in Charlestown, Cranston, Coventry, Cumberland, Lincoln, Richmond, South

Kingstown and West Greenwich. He said he finds out about the cults from law enforcement officers or former cult members.

Police in all 10 communities said they were unaware of any organized satanic activity.

"As far as I'm concerned we don't have one bit of iota of evidence saying there are five cults in the city," said Inspector Urbano Prignano Jr., head of the Providence Police Department's special investigations bureau.

Police in several towns say they have found evidence of some interest in satanism, such as spraypainted graffiti and objects with occult markings. But many attribute it to youths dabbling in the occult. None had any knowledge of crimes committed as part of a satanic cult.

\* Pierce said he was told by a deputy warden, whom he would not identify, that 50 practicing satanists are in the maximum security section of the Adult Correctional Institutions.

"Did he have names?" asked Joseph A. DiNitto, assistant director of the ACI. "No names? Well, I haven't heard of anyone or anybody practicing such cults within our presence."

\* Pierce says four Rhode Island women say they got pregnant to sacrifice their babies to cults. Pierce would not identify these "breeders" or say where they now live.

He says one "breeder" is a 16-year-old from East Providence who left a cult before she had her baby last year. He learned of the girl through a phone call from a lawyer he refused to name and whom he has talked to only by phone.

Pierce said he told East Providence police about the case. He said police found her and referred her to a psychologist.

Capt. Carl Winquist, acting deputy chief in East Providence, says he knows nothing about the case.

"I'm going to look into it now that you told me about it," he said. "To be quite honest with you, this is the first time I have heard of this."

Pierce says he stands by his stories, despite the lack of corroboration from authorities. He says he would like to provide police reports and other documents about satanic-related crimes, but says he is prohibited from doing so because the cases involve juveniles or have been sealed by the courts.

"Let me tell you something. I'm sitting on some information right now that I can't disclose because if I do, I'll get fired," he said. "It was a case that was sealed by the Family Court."

When asked if he was referring to the Price case, which was sealed by the Family Court, he continues:

"There is a particular case that if I could ever come out and give you some facts on, boy . . . "

He is asked the same question again.

This time he responds, "I can't say."

KEYWORDS: biography Pierce picture religion crime  
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DB = P88

DOCNO = 106795

THE PROVIDENCE SUNDAY JOURNAL  
September 24, 1989

PAGE: A-01

SECTION: NEWS

EDITION: ALL

LENGTH: 2782

MEMO: Related stories on page A-10.

YOUTHS IN TROUBLE

Vicious crimes stun a suburb

Many ask if today's teens are more violent

Story written by Journal-Bulletin Staff Writer Peter Lord,  
with reports from D. Morgan McVicar, Tom Mooney,  
Tony De Paul and Karen Ziner.

Assault. Assault with a deadly weapon. Larceny. Breaking and entering.  
Sexual assault. Stolen motorcycle. Shoplifting. Reckless driving. Possession  
of marijuana. Drunk driving.

It is 10 a.m. Thursday and the calendar in Kent County Family Court reads  
like a diary of the times.

Judge Carmine R. DiPetrillo will call 64 juvenile cases this morning.  
From Warwick alone, more than half involve some form of assault.

The kids shuffle in - some with parents, some without - most in the same  
uniform: high-top sneakers, faded blue jeans, T-shirts. They take the same  
chair, hear the same words of warning or encouragement, then leave when the  
marshal says loudly, "Okay."

In the cafeteria next door, a rough-looking woman with bleached blond  
hair sits at a table trying to talk sense to her teenage daughter, who is  
about to see the judge.

"I will be honest with you," she says. "I was a son of a ---- when I was  
your age. My father beat the ---- out of me. I've been through the process.  
I've been through the days. I don't want to see you in and out, in and out of  
places. I don't want that for you. I want my daughter back, the daughter of  
eight months ago."

The girl stares at her hands in silence.

Hours later, a pudgy, 15-year-old Craig Price enters the courtroom. He is  
accused of crimes that have gripped the public mind for weeks - stabbing and  
beating four people to death. He stands before the judge and calmly admits the  
crimes. He shows no remorse, even cracks a joke to his friends as he is taken  
away.

Police and court officials familiar with Price say he is different from  
the thousands of young people who appear in Family Court every year on  
criminal offenses. The murders he committed were the worst in a series of

shocking crimes in the city.

A month before the triple homicide, another young Warwick woman was beaten to death in her apartment by an intruder. And two days after the triple-homicide, four young men allegedly dragged a woman from her apartment, punched her and then grabbed her tongue and sliced it with a knife. She was a key witness to a shooting earlier in the summer. Testify, her attackers warned, and you'll lose your tongue.

That spate of suburban crime rattled throughout the state.

Women began buying shotguns. Families jammed neighborhood crime stoppers meetings. Home security systems sold like fans in the first summer heat wave.

And people began asking disturbing questions.

Are our young people - immersed in suggestive rock lyrics and horror videos - becoming more violent? Or does the media's fascination with all crime only make it seem that juvenile crime is getting worse?

In dozens of interviews last week with judges, police, a social worker and kids, a few themes emerged:

\* There is a perception, at least, that the young people who do get into trouble are more violent, more turned-off. Many just don't care.

\* Juveniles commit many violent crimes. But statistics fail to show any major increase in Rhode Island in recent years.

\* Most young people, including those from the same neighborhood as the five youths charged in the recent Warwick crimes, are doing quite well.

The five young men recently charged in Warwick are doing less well. Each got involved with drugs or alcohol at an early age. Each has an arrest record. They are among a group of young people that seems to share a different set of values than those held by much of society.

In the neighborhoods where these young people grew up, in the courtrooms where so many end up, and in the schools that most of them have walked away from, strong and very different viewpoints were being voiced last week.

On Monday, when Price was first presented in Family Court to face four counts of murder and two of burglary, many of his friends stood outside to wave and shout to him as the marshals led him back to the Training School.

They yelled encouragement and told anyone who listened he must be innocent. He was too happy-go-lucky to commit a murder.

Later, they gathered at a home of one friend, Bob Furney, near Rocky Point. Everyone was talking at once and lighting up cigarettes.

Someone showed a photo of Price taken last Christmas. It showed him flashing a smile and wearing a long wig, Tina Turner style. To his friends, this was not the face of a boy who had already committed murder, and would commit three more in the year to come.

The group was all white, from working class families. Most had attended Veterans Memorial High School and had dropped out before graduation.

Price was black, and well on his way to dropping out. He was four to five years younger than his friends, but everyone said he fit in because of his size. They said he was welcome because he was funny.

"The kid was a joker, a big-time joker," said Scott Putman holding out the picture. "Does that explain it all or what?"

"If there was a party, we were there," Furney said.

Everyone knew that Price had broken into houses in Warwick, but it was no big deal to them. In fact, to his friends, his history of breaking and entering seemed to prove his innocence in the Heaton murders.

"If it was him, his reason for going in the house would be to take something, and nothing was taken," Jim Marrold said.

"Exactly," Furney said. "When he was younger he got in trouble for B and E's, just for going in and trying to find something, whether it was a VCR or whatever."

The murders were "probably more like a group effort," Patrick Skelly said. "Everybody just hanging around."

"He (Price) wasn't really into it, like, 'I'm planning to do this tonight,'" a girl in the group said. "It was, like, something came up."

"It was not like he was smart and planned the things out," Furney said. "It was only by luck, you know?"

Furney explained that in Craig Price's circle of friends, stealing was not wrong: It was a private choice.

Furney pointed around the room. "She don't steal, she don't steal, but if he says he steals, it's not like she's going to tell, you know what I mean? I won't steal because you steal, but if you did you wouldn't be ashamed to say it, or to talk to us about it. It's just common sense. It's, who cares? It's in one ear and out the other."

"Like, if your best friend said he did something, what would you do? Would you run and tell somebody? Or would you just - in one ear and out the other - you don't know nothing. You don't care what he does, you don't want to know, it's just, you're my friend and that's it. You don't want to be involved."

On Thursday morning, before Price pleaded guilty to the four murders, Police Sgt. Edmond F. Pierce, who heads the Warwick Police Youth Service Bureau, appeared before Judge DiPetrillo with 28 juvenile cases from his city.

"This is a pretty routine day," Pierce whispered, as DiPetrillo went through the docket. "The biggest increase lately has been in sexual assaults. Kids assaulting other kids. If I knew why, I would know the answer and could stop it."

Later, Pierce said that "the great majority of teenagers are good kids; there is a core faction that has been participating in more violent crimes" and who appear to be "desensitized to what is acceptable behavior."

Assaults ranging from attacks on family members to friends, and involving weapons from sticks to guns, have "dramatically increased," Pierce said. Part of the increase may be because police now take more domestic abuse cases to court - but that's not the entire reason.

"A lot of these kids," says Pierce, "really don't have any conception of the future or what lays ahead. That is not important. What is important is the things of here and now. They want everything for me and the hell with everyone else." Their attitude is, "If you got something I want, I'll take it."

Pierce believes teenagers are greatly influenced by the standards their parents and society set for themselves. And often those are pretty low standards.

Pierce says he has "many kids" brought in for domestic assaults "because a mother was living with her boyfriend and her daughter really resented it. That sets the standards for that kid to live by."

Teenagers also relate to the societal standards set by television, Pierce says.

And to get an idea what those are like "all you have to do is turn on the TV in the afternoon. What do you see? John jumping in the sack with Jean who has been sleeping with Jack who's worried about getting AIDS from Herman."

The problem also has to do with kids having too much time on their hands and not enough worthwhile diversions to keep them busy.

A decade ago in the Buttonwoods and Oakland Beach neighborhoods, as throughout Warwick, the junior and senior high schools ran drop-in centers; places where kids could hang out after school and play games, sports or socialize.

A police officer monitored the centers, getting to know the kids and building positive images. But the drop-in centers were closed for a lack of funding, Pierce said.

"It gave the kids a chance to interact and form some bonds that were constructive instead of destructive," said Pierce. "I saw some hard-core kids really turn around."

For the last three years Christopher J. Torem has been a clinical social worker at the Eleanor Briggs School in Buttonwoods, a school run by the Kent County Mental Health Center.

In one sense, Torem said, kids have always been in trouble. But today there seems to be groups of teenagers who are drawn to the danger of violence and crime more than ever before.

"Average rock 'n roll groups aren't good enough anymore," Torem says. "Now they have to be rock 'n' roll groups that are into satanism."

Much of the change in teenage behavior, Torem said, has to do with family and social tolerance of behavior historically considered unacceptable.

"Twenty years ago, very few parents would have ever touched drugs. Now I think a lot do. I've had 15-year-old students say they have been doing drugs with their parents since they were eight."

And because some teenagers have no conception of a future, Torem said, they choose to live the present as excitingly as possible. Often that means participating in antisocial behavior like crime or satanism.

"The fear of danger is more exciting than the appeal of safety," Torem said.

Twenty years ago when Family Court Judge Edward P. Gallogly first took the bench, he said he would "once in a while have an assault and a murder but nothing as frequent as today. Today there is much more serious crime, no question about it."

Galogly attributes much of the increase in violence to the breakdown of family relationships, values and peer pressure. As does Sergeant Pierce, the judge also cites the effect of television in redefining what is acceptable behavior.

"The guns start going off by 9 (p.m.). You watch television some nights and you can see 15 to 20 murders in an hour. Everyone has an Uzi and there are bombings. . . . It subliminally conditions the minds of these kids that this is the way to properly behave, that you solve problems by shooting people, and I suppose the movies are worse."

Not all professionals dealing with young people are so certain of a rise in crime.

Florence St. Jean, executive director of the Boys and Girls Clubs of Warwick, knows most of the boys charged in these crimes, but she said she's not sure if the nature of crime had taken a sordid twist or if that was just the perception.

"Are the incidents of (violent) crime more prevalent or is it just that through the media we hear more about them? I don't know the answer."

Figures supplied by the Governor's Justice Commission also fail to support arguments of a juvenile crime wave. In fact, they show a drop in juvenile crime.

Three juveniles were arrested for murder in 1984, but only one in 1988.

Twenty juveniles were arrested for rape in 1984, 12 in 1988.

The number of other sex offenses dropped as well: from 57 in 1984 to 35 in 1988.

The figures showed a fluctuation in the total number of juvenile arrests in recent years as well: They rose to a high of 9,674 in 1986; then declined to 7,825 in 1988.

Judge DiPetrillo, who handled the Price case last week, has been on the bench for 16 years and for all that time kids have been getting into trouble - serious trouble.

So it's difficult to gauge whether kids are participating in more brutal

crime today, he said.

"They had guns back then and they were committing crimes. I was wondering back then what is going on. If you look around you will always find bad cases and Price is a bad case."

But with the proliferation of drugs and alcohol and apathy toward religion and authority, opportunity abounds today for kids to choose violence, he said.

On Wednesday, students, parents and teachers at Warwick Veterans Memorial High School - where Craig Price was a student - had a meeting of the school's senate, part of an innovative form of school government that encourages participation of all three groups in running the school.

Built in 1955, Vets has the feel of the Wally Cleaver era with old wooden desks, ugly rectangular ceiling lamps and a principal's office that hasn't been touched in 34 years.

The shock of Price's arrest hit hard at Vets, where students knew him as a football player and a class clown.

After the senate meeting, student moderator Matt Wilkinson and Kara Sulmasy, the body's secretary, discussed their generation and the recent violence in their city.

"I think it's a small minority of kids, and the press brings out the small minority," said Wilkinson, a senior honors major hoping to major in pre-law at Syracuse University. He is wearing a Ralph Lauren plaid shirt, pleated khakis, Dockersiders and close-cropped hair.

He acknowledges that the values of today's youth are different than those of their parents, but attributes that to the example set by the "yuppies" of the 1970s and 1980s.

"I think society is different," Wilkinson says. "We're only supposed to look out for ourselves, to succeed and not care about anybody else. But I think we should go back to caring about our community, and I think we are."

"We have more problems to face than they did," he says, referring to his parents' generation. "And we handle them just fine."

"We're pretty straight," says Sulmasy, a straight-A student involved in many after-school activities. "Most people drink. But to say most people drink and most people have a problem is different. Most people don't have a problem."

School psychologist Dr. Louis Turchetta has counseled students at Vets for 14 years, and he said many kids sought his counsel after Price's arrest.

"These kids have a lot to deal with," Turchetta said. "You almost want to be a cheerleader for them. I understand everybody is blown away by this. But if what comes out is the impression that we manufacture violent kids, we've blown this way out of proportion."

Problems that Turchetta sees today's youth having to deal with include: earlier physical maturation - kids are entering puberty at 12 1/2 now - the accessibility of drugs, alcohol and weaponry, and instability in a growing number of families.

Given that, it is remarkable what they are accomplishing, he said.

"There is a small portion of kids today who are delinquent and antisocial," he said.

One former Vets student who might represent a counterpoint to those who have gotten all the publicity in the last two weeks is Tom Kilday: president of his class, voted most respected by his classmates, student council and wrestling team member.

Articulate, friendly and polite, Kilday, 18, is studying at the Community College of Rhode Island this year, and says he plans a career in politics.

Are single-family parents, as many observers suggest, contributing to the malaise of today's youth? Kilday points to himself, raised the past three

years by his mother, following the death of his father.

"Our values are still honesty and integrity," Kilday says. "I feel the majority of students went to school to be successful and want to pursue a higher education.

"I went to my share of parties, and I didn't see any smoking of pot. Granted, there was drinking. One point I'd like to make about parties is you can go to parties and not be expected to drink. There's not the peer pressure just to drink."

Principal Donald R. Staley, says the typical student is, in the final analysis, probably little different from that of any generation reading this story.

KEYWORDS: crime juvenile murder Heaton picture

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DB = P88

DOCNO = 106791

THE PROVIDENCE SUNDAY JOURNAL  
September 24, 1989

PAGE: A-10  
SECTION: NEWS  
EDITION: ALL  
LENGTH: 1637

MEMO: Related stories on page A-01 and A-10.

YOUTHS IN TROUBLE

Craig Price: Humor hid a frightful secret  
By KAREN LEE ZINER  
Journal-Bulletin Staff Writer

WARWICK

He lived in a sky-blue ranch house in an all-American neighborhood called Buttonwoods. Not unlike other 15-year-old boys, Craig Price's tastes run to rock and rap, blue jeans and T-shirts, football and hanging around.

He had a puppy named Buds.

Given his unusual size for his age - 5 foot 10 and 240 pounds - he also loved to play football, baseball, and roughhouse with his friends.

And after the deep, swollen gash on his finger healed - the gash he got on the night of Sept. 1 - he was going to sign up for boxing lessons.

But Craig Price held a savage secret inside him, one no one had guessed in two years.

It began to leak out last weekend when he was arrested. It was no secret at all by Thursday, when Price, goofy comedian to his friends, polite and jovial boy to his neighbors, admitted in Family Court that he had slashed, stabbed, and beaten to death three neighbors - Joan M. Heaton, 39, a widow, and her two daughters, Jennifer, 10, and Melissa, 8 - after breaking into their ranch house Labor Day weekend.

He also confessed that two years ago, when he was 13, he had broken into a house two doors away from his own home on Inez Avenue, and stabbed to death Rebecca A. Spencer, 27, a mother of two.

Inside the Kent County Court House on Thursday, three young men with peach-fuzz mustaches and high-top sneakers fidgeted as they waited for a glimpse of the friend they vowed they would not abandon.

Scott Putman recalled standing in front of the Heatons' home on Labor Day, as police strung rope and tape around the crime scene.

Craig was there, along with his parents and "everybody else" in the neighborhood. "He was goin' around, asking people what happened, but nobody knew."

He didn't look nervous, his friends said. Just "normal." But "normal" may hardly apply here.

Dr. James Merikangas, a neuro-psychiatrist and assistant clinical professor at Yale University who has evaluated violent criminals on Death Row, outlined "the kinds of things that should be considered" for why a person might commit such savage murders as Price has confessed to.

Merikangas has never evaluated Price himself, but suggested that someone certainly should. It is not clear from court proceedings whether Price will receive a psychiatric evaluation.

The possibilities Merikangas outlined range from complications from drug use to "a major psychosis like schizophrenia or manic depression," where "somebody can appear very normal, but in a short period of time be very, very insane."

Other possibilities include migraine, brain damage, or in very rare instances, epilepsy. Another rare possibility is sexual sadism, in which a person is "driven to causing harm to people," says Merikangas. "It's a form of sexual gratification."

Finally, Merikangas says, the question is, "whether he is, in fact, a sociopath" - someone with "a callous disregard for the rights of others."

#### A nice kid

This year, Craig's mother bought him a sleek, \$600-metallic-red Ibanez electric guitar, so he could practice the songs of his favorite heavy metal groups - Iron Maiden, Guns N' Roses, Led Zeppelin, Metallica. Last winter, he and several friends made a tape of heavy metal music.

He named the group "Predator," says Putman.

Friends say Craig Price is a nice kid, a very funny kid. A joker, a great mimic who was so hilarious he often had everyone in hysterics.

"He was just a big marshmallow," says Patrick Skelly, 18.

Says Danny Pratt, who played next to Craig on the Hurricanes football team at Veterans Memorial High School last year until Price got bounced from the team because of bad grades, "He was a terrific football player . . . he had the size and strength," and he had agility "when he wanted to."

Neighbors knew him as "a Pied Piper," always with a crowd of friends. A boy who shoveled snow in winter, cut grass in summer, willingly helped out.

The flip side of this coin?

Craig Price used to "blow off" most of his classes, according to friends. He stayed back in seventh grade, and again in ninth grade.

He also smoked marijuana, according to friends, who shrug it off. "Nothin' heavy," says one friend. "No LSD or anything."

There are also his prior offenses: a 1988 burglary in Warwick, and a recent assault on his sister. Probation reports say Price had "some difficulty controlling his temper."

Family Court Judge Edward P. Gallogly cited a probation officer's report that Craig "was still having problems with his parents, mostly with his father," whom he described as a "disciplinarian," and that the boy and his parents were in family counseling.

#### Kicked door off hinges

Putman described the events of that steamy summer day when Price had an argument with his sister, Kimberly, 21. Putman says he yelled at John, Craig's brother, for eating some of his food. Kimberly yelled at Putman. Craig yelled at Kimberly, and then Kimberly yelled that she was going to call the police on Craig.

Craig picked up the half-empty can of soda he'd been drinking and threw it at her. She called police.

Police arrived and tried to defuse the squabble. Craig, who was already on probation for the burglary, "was in a really bad mood," says Putman.

Craig's father came in, Putman said, and "was saying 'Take him out of here, I don't want him here any more, he has no respect for any of us.' "

That sent Craig into a rage, says Putman. Police called for back-up.

"... The next thing we know, the screen door came flying right off the hinges. Craig had kicked it right off. They had his arms stuck up behind him, wedged up in the air. He started singing some rap song. It made the cops mad or something so they threw him into the side of the car."

#### An 'ordinary' house

According to neighbors, John and Shirley Price and their three children, Kimberly, John Jr. and Craig, moved to Buttonwoods about 10 or 12 years ago from Cambridge, Mass., where some of their relatives still live.

Putman, 18, Charlie Whitehead, 17, and Richie Andrews, 18, who all lived at the Price home at various points this summer, describe the interior of the house as "ordinary" and "regular." In the living room, John and Shirley Price keep photos of all the children, and about 40 of Craig and John's sports trophies.

Craig furnished his basement bedroom with a bed, a boom-box, and a television set and kept his electric and acoustic guitars here.

John and Shirley Price welcomed Craig's friends, and imparted some rules.

"We got lectures every day. No smoking pot," says Putman. "We couldn't drink - not in the house."

#### 'From a good family'

"His mom and he got along real good. His dad he didn't really talk to that much. He didn't really care for the guy or anything. (Mr. Price) always tried to put down the rules, make Craig stay in," says Putman.

In general, says Charlie Whitehead, everyone in the family "would argue constantly, but in an hour they'd all be friends again."

Mr. Price, a diabetic who last year suffered a heart attack, would mostly "work, go to sleep, get back up and go to work" at his job as a late-shift supervisor at the Pepsi Cola plant in Cranston, says Putman.

Mrs. Price worked two jobs, at Brown & Sharpe and K-Mart. She liked to take the family out to dinner, even if it was only to a fast-food restaurant.

Some friends and outsiders alike describe the parents as supportive and interested in their children's lives.

Robert Weeden, a coach in the Babe Ruth Senior League, says that Craig's parents often showed up to cheer their son on when he played in the Warwick Police Athletic League.

Says Family Court Judge Carmine R. DiPetrillo, "Price's parents were great. He came from a good family."

#### Gash on his finger

The last any of his friends had seen Craig on what is believed to be the night of the Heaton murders was about 11 p.m. He was lying on his mother's waterbed watching television.

Putman, who had been to a party, returned to the Price home about 1:30 Saturday morning.

Craig answered the door, saying "Who is it? Who is it?

"And I said, It's me," says Putman. "Right before I got in the door, he said, 'Oh, look what I did from breaking a window,' " and showed Putman his cut finger. "I said, 'All right, I'm going to bed.' He just stayed up most of the night watching TV."

Price later told his friends that he'd cut his finger after trying to break into a car.

Then the bodies were found.

Within days of the murders, police began questioning Price after a patrolman noticed the gash.

Price acted "just normal," say his friends, even after intensive questioning by police.

Only the night before his arrest did Craig seem "a little nervous,"

according to Whitehead. That night, the friends got together and watched videos, including one of Craig's favorite comedians - Eddie Murphy, in a Best of Saturday Night Live tape. They watched a horror film called Scarecrow. And they watched a comedy movie called Dr. Jeckyll and Mr. Hyde Returns.

The next morning, police came and booked Craig Price for murder.

#### Trouble sleeping

Thursday, the blue sheriff's van pulled up to the rear of the courthouse. Craig Price, whose motive or mind no one seemed to be able to understand, got out and nodded toward a friend in the crowd. In court, he calmly admitted his guilt. Upon leaving, he yelled to friends, "Later," and "When I get out, I'm going to smoke a bomber."

Putman sat inside the courthouse and quietly confided that he and Richie and Charlie have all had trouble sleeping lately.

This past week, he had a dream.

Mrs. Price appeared to him, and she said, "You should have told him not to do this. You should have stopped him from doing this. You should have been the one responsible."

Just for a moment, Scott Putman looked down at his knees, and his eyes misted.

KEYWORDS: crime juvenile murder Heaton  
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