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Former Owner Shows Police Bay Home's Hidden Crannies

BY TODD SIMON

Just in case some weed-choked pipe, some hidden cranny might hold the death bludgeon, deputy sheriffs brought to the lakefront home of murdered Marilyn Sheppard yesterday a previous owner who had rebuilt the place years ago.

He is Dr. Charles F. Briggs, a dentist who now lives at 30628 Winston Road, farther out in Bay Village.

Deputies Dave Yettra and Carl Rossbach, wearing blue prisoners' shirts from County Jail and newly bought jeans, poked around in the dank old gas well out on the lawn of the home. Dr. Briggs showed them that.

Then he pointed out where an old pipe was laid leading to a septic tank, now out of use and filled with earth.

The dentist also took Raymond E. Keefe, investigator for the coroner, down to the beach house. Under its stilt-like supports are dark crannies where a searching hand comes out covered with spider webs and flecks of dead leaves.

Potential Clubs Litter Yard

There are hundreds of club-like sticks, pipes, hunks of firewood and odd pieces of broken furniture all over the back yard and scattered down the steep bank behind the Sheppard home.

While divers hopped off their launch to look for the weapon on the lake floor, systematically yard by yard, the county men picked over the same old heaps of wood and rubbish, hunting for the lucky find, the tire iron, the wrench, the ax handle, the chair leg that may be a key to the killing.

Among the empty beer cans, dog food cans, soup cans and paper ice cream cups at the incinerator, there are dozens of facts to be read about the life of this family.

There are price tags from their clothing. Mrs. Sheppard was a size 14. Their son's things were size 11 1/2.

Boxes Lie Unburned

Hundreds of boxes from medicine samples lie there unburned—a sunburn remedy, a medicine for reducing swellings. There are the empty packs from the cigarettes the victim smoked.

There is the crayoned picture of a jet plane in black and red,

done by the child, Chip, 6 1/2, broken bits of plastic toys. There is one of his comic books.

The divers are moving their launch to work on another patch of the sandy lake bottom. They send out for more gasoline. Boys bring it in old army cans and then bring sandwiches and milk and are taken out by the small boat with an outboard motor.

Trying to dramatize what the killer did if he ran down the 53 steps to the beach, the county men scrutinize the white painted handrails. No stains turn up.

Throw Sticks Off Cliff

They throw sticks off the cliff to see where a club might land and then they scan the cut-down brush there. Nothing is there to solve the mystery.

A loose board is found in the back step behind the screened rear porch. Deputy Yettra pries it up and looks beneath.

For the third or fourth time they overturn the woodpile next to the house.

And finally they give up again for the day and drive over to the Bay police station to change back from work clothes to street clothes.

The divers keep on working until dark. Almost every passing car on Westlake Road slows down when it gets to 28950 to stare.

If the solution is there none of those thousands of peering eyes can see it.