

# Police theorize women sur

## No suspects in slayings

By PAUL GROSSWILER  
Missourian Staff Writer

The Cape Girardeau woman and her daughter whose bodies were found Monday apparently were fatally shot shortly after walking in on a burglary in progress Friday night, police are theorizing.

The two women, Mrs. Mary Parsh, 58, of 612 Koch, and her daughter, Miss Brenda Parsh, 27, of Milwaukee, Wis., apparently surprised an intruder who had broken into Mrs. Parsh's home through a bedroom window, Chief Henry H. Gerecke stated.

"We are working with the idea that there was a burglary in progress," Chief Gerecke said.

About \$150 in cash was apparently stolen from the women's purses, but a strong box containing securities and jewelry worn by Mrs. Parsh were not disturbed, police said.

Although it is rare for a burglar to carry a weapon, police have discovered no other motive to the slayings. It is still believed, however, that the intruder was an acquaintance of one of the women, Chief Gerecke noted.

"But I may be dead wrong on that," he said.

Chief Gerecke said the murders did not appear to be planned. "I don't think any of this was planned, except that the intruder was in the house," he said.

Asked whether the slayings could have been prompted by revenge, he said that no such motive has surfaced.

Police also have not ruled out the possibility that two intruders were involved in the slayings.

"I haven't ruled anything out at this point," Chief Gerecke said.

The investigation so far has not led to any suspects in the slayings.

The two nude bodies were found lying face down with their hands tied behind their backs side-by-side on a double bed in the small

frame house in southwest Cape Girardeau.

Mrs. Parsh had been shot once in the side of the head and her daughter was shot once in the back of the head, police said.

Two bullets, apparently from a .38 caliber revolver, were recovered by the Cape County coroner's examination.

A neighbor discovered the bodies Monday morning after a second daughter in St. Louis, Mrs. Bruce Chesser, telephoned her and asked her to check on her mother.

During a three-hour investigative session Monday night, police detectives reviewed films taken at the crime scene and drew together all the information collected Monday, Chief Gerecke said.

Officers also reconstructed the crime as it appears to have happened, role-playing the victims' and intruder's parts, he stated.

Reconstructing the crime, Chief Gerecke said the two women were returning Friday to the house from Municipal Airport, where Miss Parsh had arrived on a 9:30 p.m. flight.

Mrs. Parsh had picked up her daughter after leaving Southeast Missouri Hospital, where she had visited for several hours with her husband, Floyd E. Parsh, who recently suffered a heart attack.

Mrs. Parsh and her daughter were to drive to Alton, Ill., Saturday for a family reunion, meeting Mr. and Mrs. Chesser and other relatives, police said.

Chief Gerecke said the two women apparently entered the house and had taken Miss Parsh's one piece of luggage to a bedroom when they encountered the intruder. The suitcase was not unpacked and locked.

"They came into the house and based upon the positioning of the luggage, they had gone all the way into the house. We believe that at that point the intruder stopped them," he said.

The women apparently were forced to strip, were bound with a cord torn out of a

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### Glass fragments from window

Evidence technician, Ptlm. Ronald Thomas, picks glass fragments from the broken rear window of the home of murder victim, Mrs. Floyd Parsh. City police theorize the killer gained entry into the house through this window and into the bedroom where Mrs. Parsh and her daughter were slain. (Missourian photograph by Philip Nash)

# The women surprised burglar

## Neighbor heard shots



### Glass fragments from window

Evidence technician, Ptlm. Ronald Thomas, picks glass fragments from the broken rear window of the home of murder victim, Mrs. Floyd Parsh. City police theorize the killer gained entry into the house through this window and into the bedroom where Mrs. Parsh and her daughter were slain. (Missourian photograph by Philip Nash)

James G. Blattel thought he heard two gunshots between 10 and 11 Friday night.

A neighbor, Mrs. Regina Hoffman, said she heard dogs "raising a fuss" about the same time.

Both considered calling the police but didn't.

The two are neighbors of Mrs. Floyd Parsh, 612 Koch, who with her daughter, Miss Brenda Parsh, was found shot to death at the home Monday morning.

The double slaying, apparently occurred about the time the noises were heard Friday night, police say.

The crime was met with sorrow and disbelief in the quiet southwest Cape Girardeau neighborhood.

To that add fear and tenseness today.

Mrs. Blattel, who discovered the bodies after being asked to check at the house, recalled that her husband told her Saturday morning that he had heard two shots the night before.

"I told him it was probably a car back-firing, but he insisted he had heard shots," she said. "He told me he nearly called the police," Mrs. Blattel commented.

The dogs Mrs. Hoffman heard were next door to the Parsh residence.

"The dogs bark a lot," he said, "but I thought they were going to take someone's leg off. I should have called the cops."

Some neighbors, including Mrs. Hoffman, thought it odd that Mrs. Parsh's car had remained in the driveway all weekend without being moved.

She (Mrs. Parsh) worked everyday, and she went to see her husband at the hospital everyday. He's a very sick man. He's been there for about two months, but poor Mrs. Parsh told me the other day he was getting a little better," said Mrs. Hoffman, who lives across the street at 611 Koch.

"I saw Mrs. Blattel go across the street, and then a few minutes later, she ran back to

her house," Mrs. Hoffman recalled. "I got real worried then, so I called her and she said, 'They're dead! They're both dead!' Oh, I hope they find who did it before they strike somewhere else."

Mrs. Emma Renner, another neighbor said, "this has always been such a wonderful neighborhood. I won't sleep very good until they find who did it," she said.

The fear left in the wake of the murder is evidenced by the sound of door locks being snapped when strangers approach, being asked to show identification before being allowed into a home, and doorbells going unanswered, cautious glances from behind closed curtains.

Mrs. L. A. Roberts, who lives near the scene of the crime said, "We're all in a state of shock. This has always been such a quiet neighborhood. We all keep our doors locked now, even during the day, and we never used to do that. We have a dog, and he barks a lot, but now, we get up and look if he even makes a sound.

"When I come back into the house, even if I've only been gone a few minutes, I check all the doors and windows now," Mrs. Roberts said. "I never used to do that."

Mrs. Roberts also said several of her neighbors "are so upset, they won't even come out of their house. We're all terribly frightened," she said.

Mrs. Bill Surman said, "My husband told me, 'Keep your doors locked.' I've never locked my doors during the daytime. I've had friends just walk in on me. But, no more. My doors are locked," she said, adding, "but we can't let some kook like this make us prisoners in our own homes. We've got to learn to live with it."

"Yesterday was a real nightmare," Mrs. Surman said, "but it seems to be a little better for us today."

Mrs. Surman's mother, who lives on  
(See Reaction, Page 5)

# MURDER

(Continued from Page 1)

television set and part of an extension cord and shot as they lay face down on the bed, police said.

The women apparently disrobed in the bedroom where they were found. Mrs. Parsh's dress was draped over a chair in the room and her daughter's slacks and underclothes were found under the bed, police said. Her blouse was found between the bodies. There was no blood on the clothing.

During a canvass of the neighborhood by police Monday, a neighbor reported hearing several pops about 11 Friday night and another neighbor reported hearing several dogs barking.

There was no sign of a struggle in the bedroom, although medical evidence shows Mrs. Parsh may have been struck in the eye. Indications of rope burns were found on her daughter's neck, the coroner's office said.

Police and the coroner's office theorize the women were shot within minutes of each other. The bodies were covered with a bedspread, police said.

A determination of whether either or both of the women were sexually assaulted is awaiting a pathologist's report. The delay in the discovery of the bodies, however, will make such a determination more difficult, the coroner's office said.

Tracking down evidence at the crime scene, police are processing a footprint found near the window in the bedroom where the break-in apparently occurred and the bodies were found.

The print consisted of dust or dirt apparently carried in through the window and imprinted on the hardwood floor, Ptlm. Det. B. J. Lincecum said.

An examination of the window facing, which had recently been repainted according to a neighbor, revealed no fingerprints, he stated.

Other fingerprints taken in the house are also being processed, he said.

A team of four police detectives and the

chief of detectives are working full time on the investigation, Chief Gerecke said.

All the residents within a three-block radius of the Parsh home were questioned Monday in the search for information, Cpl. John B. Brown said. One hundred to 150 neighbors were interviewed.

"Two witnesses saw a car pull in (to the Parsh driveway), but they are uncertain whether it was Thursday or Friday," Cpl. Brown said.

One neighbor knew about the scheduled reunion and was puzzled by the Parsh vehicle in the driveway Saturday, he stated.

"He apparently thought it was unusual enough to ask Mr. Parsh about it when he visited him in the hospital," Cpl. Brown said.

Most of the neighbors were home Friday night, but with windows closed and air conditioners on, any telling noises were covered up, he said.

The neighborhood canvasses and examination of the crime scene will be repeated today, Chief Gerecke said.

Associates and acquaintances of Mrs. Parsh and her daughter also will be interviewed, he said.

"It's the first time around. Now we are going back," he said.

An acquaintance of Miss Parsh from St. Louis, where she was employed at Famous and Barr until a month ago, voluntarily came to police headquarters Monday for questioning and was released, Chief Gerecke said.

The acquaintance was "very upset," he stated.

Police also learned Miss Parsh visited Cape Girardeau for the weekend two weeks ago and apparently attended a Central High School reunion.

Miss Parsh, winner of several beauty contests in southeast Missouri, had recently moved to Milwaukee to work as a buyer with the Le Grand specialty stores in Milwaukee.

Mrs. Parsh was employed as a key punch operator for the Inman Freight Systems, Inc., here.

# REACTION

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(Continued from Page 1)

Bloomfield Road, said that she, and many of her neighbors "are terribly frightened by the murder." Doors and windows there too, are being locked, checked and double checked by residents, she said.

The trauma also is taking its toll on some of the children of the neighborhood, with some parents having to sit at bedside, reassuring youngsters before they would go to sleep

Monday night.

"The killer might be among the hundreds of people who have been driving by the house," remarked one woman.

"Some of us are thinking, he might be looking around trying to find out if anyone saw him, and what the police might know," said Mrs. Roberts. "It's a terrible thought, but it's something we have to think about," she said.

AUG 1 1977

# Council expresses grief

8-17-77

A sense of communitywide grief felt over the slayings of Mrs. Floyd Parsh and her daughter Brenda Kay Parsh was expressed in commentary by members of the City Council Tuesday.

Paul A. Stehr, who employed Miss Parsh when he operated the University Shop on Broadway, said he knew both mother and daughter well.

"Brenda was just a beautiful girl, inside and out," Mr. Stehr said at Tuesday night's council study session. "She was just a super girl; if she ever did anything wrong I never knew about it."

Councilman Robert K. Herbst echoed that statement, saying, "who would ever want to do anything to harm her?" He said she was friendly and outgoing, frequently stopping in "just to say hello" when she was visiting here.

Mr. Stehr said that Mrs. Parsh and Brenda "were very close." He recalled that when Brenda's friends would drop in at the store to talk "she would tell them, 'Mr. Stehr is paying my salary' and she didn't have time to stand and chat.

"That was the kind of person she was. She

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# PARSH

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had values . . . she was just a beautiful, beautiful person."

Councilman Stehr finds it hard to believe that neither of the two women "put up a fight." He said that Mrs. Parsh was not the type to permit someone to push her around without fighting back.

The crime was a topic of conversation for several minutes before councilmen got down to the business of preparing for the Wednesday council meeting. All asked how the investigation was going.

Mr. Stehr commented: "Whoever killed them is not worth one per cent of what Brenda's life was worth."

# Polygraph clears friend in deaths

By PAUL GROSSWILER  
Missourian Staff Writer

The boyfriend of Miss Brenda Parsh passed a polygraph test administered here Thursday and has been cleared as a suspect in the execution-style killing of Miss Parsh and her mother, Mrs. Floyd E. Parsh, police said.

"The polygraph showed no deception. He was telling the truth," Chief Henry H. Gerecke said.

The boyfriend, described as an unemployed actor working as a restaurant bus boy, said he was at the residence of his brother and sister-in-law in Florissant at the time of the killings, detectives said. His statement was corroborated by relatives.

He agreed voluntarily to the polygraph after two detectives went to interview him Thursday at his home in De Soto. Detectives said the relationship between him and Miss Parsh had begun six years ago.

8-19-77  
The 2½-hour polygraph, and further questioning, eliminated him as a suspect "unless something would develop," Chief Gerecke said.

Detectives also questioned a man whose car was seen Thursday or Friday at the Parsh residence, where the killings occurred.

The man, described as an "old fishing buddy" of Mr. Parsh, is not a suspect in the case, police said.

Detectives today were given a list of 18 assignments to check backgrounds of the two women and follow up leads in the baffling case now in the fifth day of investigation.

Both the theory that the women happened in on a burglary being committed by someone who knew them, and the theory that their killer was waiting to seek vengeance on one or both of them are being pursued, Chief Gerecke stated.

8-19-77  
But police are still without a motive in the slayings.

"We have not been able to find an enemy, a person who felt something, by rumor or whatever, against them," Chief Gerecke said. "It was a senseless, wanton killing, without rhyme or reason or purpose."

Interviews with friends and associates of both women were to continue today, including persons Miss Parsh visited here the weekend of July 29 while attending the Central High School reunion of a friend, detectives said.

A passenger list from the flight Miss Parsh took here the night of her death Aug. 12, also was obtained Thursday and will be checked, Chief Gerecke said.

8-19-77  
Police have checked with Municipal Airport employes but have developed no information indicating anything suspicious occurred there, Lt. Crites said.

While the slow, methodical investigation continues, detectives have begun piecing together a profile of the killer, drawn from physical evidence, although no contact has

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been made with a criminal psychologist.

Chief Gerecke speculated the killer was a young man, in his late teens or early 20s, who was tidy, but who also "wants to inflict pain and enjoys seeing someone suffer."

The killer is assumed to have a regressive personality, being outwardly passive, Chief Gerecke stated.

"He humbled and demeaned these women," he said. "I would suspect he did this in sorrow, as though he felt, 'Well, I have to do this.'"

The possibility that more than one person was involved has not been eliminated, although evidence suggests there was only one, Chief Gerecke said.

And the possibility the killer was a woman has not been ruled out because of the "feminine trait here, in respect to the tidiness, the neatness, the covering up of the bodies," Chief Gerecke said.

8-15-77

The window which was broken in the bedroom to gain entry was only 10 inches wide and would have admitted only a slender person. Police determined entry was gained through the window by the break of the pane and by footmarks found on the outside wall of the house, police said.

The pathologist's report, which was mailed Thursday to the Cape County coroner's office but which has not yet been received, determined the deaths of the two women occurred within minutes of each other, Chief Gerecke said.

The advanced decomposition of Miss Parsh's body compared with the body of her mother apparently was due to age and physiological factors rather than time of death, Chief Gerecke said.

The pathologist was unable to determine whether Miss Parsh was sexually assaulted, because of the decomposition of the body, but

tests showed no evidence Mrs. Parsh had been assaulted, he said.

A ballistics test, which should take several more days to complete, of two .38-caliber bullets taken from the victims' heads, will determine the make and type of the weapon, he said.

The laboratory report on physical evidence taken from the crime scene has not yet been completed, he said.

Chief Gerecke discounted published reports of a bloody footprint and gold coins found at the scene.

"There were no bloody footprints or gold coins," he said.

About \$1 in change was found near an emptied coin purse on the living room couch, which was otherwise not disturbed. A footprint created by dust carried on the sole of a shoe was found near the broken bedroom window, detectives said.



# Cut manpower in death probe

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Police today cut back the manpower devoted full time to the investigation of the Aug. 12 shooting deaths of Mrs. Floyd E. Parsh and her daughter, Miss Brenda Parsh, Police Chief Henry H. Gerecke said.

The five detectives who previously worked on the investigation for more than two weeks have been reduced to two, Chief Gerecke said.

"You do come to a certain point when you evaluate what you have and where you are going," he said. "Now it can be centered around one or two men."

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The entire department, however, will continue to assist in the investigation as needed, he said.

One aspect that remains to be completed is the test firing of all locally sold weapons matching the make and type of weapon used in the double homicide.

The bullets that have been fired will be compared to the two bullets removed from the victims' bodies, when those bullets are returned from Washington, D.C., Chief Gerecke said.

Police also are awaiting a

report from SEMO Regional Crime Laboratory on evidence collected at the Parsh family home at 612 Koch, where the killings occurred.

The laboratory's main findings should be completed this week and provided to police, Dr. Robert C. Briner, lab director, has said.

A \$25,000 reward posted anonymously several days after the bodies were discovered has to date brought forth no positive information, Chief Gerecke said.

Meanwhile, a \$2,000 reward posted for information leading to the person who allegedly raped a 16-year-old Cape Girardeau girl at the Ramada Inn in July has resulted in several "tips," Chief Gerecke said.

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In all, about 20 persons have been questioned in connection with that incident and a rape reported several weeks ago of a 20-year-old woman in her apartment here, he said.

Chief Gerecke added that police now suspect the person responsible for the rape at the Ramada Inn, who was initially described as having a moustache, is clean shaven.

# Parsh reward to end 3

SEP 22 1977

A \$25,000 reward posted anonymously last month for information leading to an arrest in the Aug. 12 killings of Mrs. Floyd E. Parsh and Miss Brenda Parsh will be canceled midnight Saturday, Police Chief Henry H. Gerecke said.

Chief Gerecke said the decision to cancel the reward, which was posted two days after the bodies of the women were found at the family home at 612 Koch, was made by the attorney entrusted with the reward money and his client.

He said the reward is being withdrawn because it has brought forth no information to aid police in the in-

vestigation of the shooting deaths.

SEP 22 1977

The nude, decomposed bodies of the two women were found side by side on a bed, face down, with their hands bound behind their backs. They had been shot once in the head with .38 caliber bullets.

Meanwhile, police have one detective assigned full time to the investigation, with the entire detective division and the evidence technician assisting, Chief Gerecke stated.

Cpl. John B. Brown, working full time on the case, is tracing down leads and interviewing several persons a day. Cpl. Brown said calls related to the

killings have tapered off recently.

"But information may come in or we may develop a lead this afternoon, six months from now, or a year. The important thing is to keep at it," he said.

SEP 24 1977

Cpl. Brown said that Perry County authorities have developed suspects in a beating of a Perryville taxicab driver that occurred the weekend of the Parsh slayings but no arrests have been made. Police are investigating a possible connection between the two incidents.

"As soon as they find the  
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# PARSH

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suspects, we will be into them, too," Cpl. Brown said.

Police also are in contact with the homicide division of the St. Louis Police Department, which sent two detectives here to review the investigation for a week last month.

"They have not run into a homicide quite like this," Chief Gerecke, who is maintaining close telephone communications with St. Louis, said.

Chief Gerecke met with St. Louis detectives for three hours last week while attending a conference there, he said.

SEP 22 1977

The test-firing of weapons of the make and type believed to have been used in the slayings is continuing at the rate of three or four firings per day, Chief Gerecke noted.

So far, more than 40 weapons, which have been voluntarily surrendered to police and come from as far away as St. Louis, have been fired. The slugs are to be compared with the two bullets removed from the heads of the women.

A total of six polygraph examinations have been conducted in relation to the case, polygraphist Ptlm. B. J. Lincecum stated.

Since polygraphs were run on a boyfriend of Miss Parsh and several persons in connection with a weapon turned in to police the week after the slayings, a local family associate and a St. Louis man have been examined and cleared, Ptlm. Lincecum said.

"Chief Gerecke said we will polygraph anyone who has the most remote involvement," he added.

A possible connection

between a Cape Central High School reunion, which Miss Parsh attended here two weeks before her death, and the shootings also is being pursued, Chief Gerecke said.

More than 100 letters seeking information have been sent recently to persons who may have contacted Miss Parsh during that reunion weekend, he stated.

# Parsh, Cole cases linked?

DEC 29 1977

Area law enforcement officials theorized today, following the receipt of a preliminary FBI ballistics report, that the August killings of Mrs. Floyd E. Parsh and her daughter, Miss Brenda Parsh, and the November slaying of SEMO State University coed Sheila Ellen Cole, might "be the work of a psychotic individual."

A warning to area residents, especially women, was issued following a meeting between officials of the Cape Girardeau Police Department, the Illinois State Police and the FBI.

In a prepared statement, authorities advised "the public should exercise extreme caution. Women should not travel alone, should be cautious while shopping, should not open doors without being aware of who is at the door and should report any unusual or suspicious activity immediately to the police."

The long awaited FBI ballistics report

comparing the bullets that killed Mrs. Parsh, Miss Parsh and Miss Cole indicates "some similarity" between the deaths, but officials said "there is no positive, definite or specific indication that the same weapon was used in both cases."

Officials described the ballistics test as "inconclusive."

They noted that Mr. Parsh had resided at a nursing home next door to Miss Cole's residence at 39 South Sprigg following the deaths of his wife and daughter.

"While this may be coincidental, there is a possible connection between the cases," the statement read.

Officials also theorized that as the investigations into the homicides have not established apparent motives, the killings might be the work of one person.

"Law enforcement officials feel it is their responsibility to alert the community to the fact that these murders may be the work of a

psychotic individual," the statement said.

The nude bodies of Mrs. Parsh and Miss Parsh were found the morning of Aug. 15 side-by-side on a bed in the family home at 612 Koch. The two women, face down on the bed and with their hands bound behind their backs, had each been shot once in the back of the head with a .38-caliber weapon.

Police determined the shootings had occurred the night of Aug. 12 as Mrs. Parsh and her daughter returned home from Municipal Airport, where Miss Parsh had arrived from St. Louis.

Miss Parsh had visited Cape Girardeau two weeks before her death to attend the Central High School class reunion of a friend and was to visit her father, hospitalized following a heart attack, and to attend a family reunion in Alton, Ill., with her mother the weekend the women were killed.

Miss Parsh, 27 years old, had recently accepted a position as a fashion buyer in

Milwaukee, Wis., moving there from St. Louis, where she also was employed in the fashion industry.

Miss Cole's body was found the morning of Nov. 17 in a restroom of a rest area on Illinois Highway 3 near McClure. She had been shot once in the front of the head and a second time in the back of the head with a .38-caliber weapon. She had apparently been shot about 10 o'clock the night before.

Her car was discovered a day later on the parking lot at Wal-Mart on South Kingshighway in Cape Girardeau, which was where she had told friends she was going shopping the last time she was seen alive. Authorities speculated she either was abducted by or went voluntarily with her killer. The purchases she had made at the store were locked in the trunk of her vehicle and the keys were in the ignition.

Authorities have theorized in both cases that the women knew their killer.

DEC 29 1977

DEC 29 1977

# Family's death stayed m

AUG 16 1981 1981

By GREG SELLNOW  
Missourian Staff Writer

When Floyd E. Parsh, 612 Koch, died six weeks ago, he left behind a daughter, a sister, his mother, three grandchildren and a house locked full of haunting secrets.

For it was in this house four years ago Saturday, that his wife, Mary, and 27-year-old daughter, Brenda, were found dead, the victims of a brutal murderer whom police have never found.

Parsh, 64, lived the next few years a relatively solitary man, refusing to move from the house in which his wife and daughter were killed. Yet, he would not go into the bedroom where the murder had been committed, instructing police and family members to move what needed to be moved.

He died full of frustration **AUG 16 1981** the frustration of not knowing who committed the cruel act or why.

"He kept asking why," Police Chief Henry Gerecke said. "He said 'Who would do this.' He couldn't understand it."

any more than we could understand it." Bring up the name Parsh to Gerecke and you open a deep feeling frustration within him. To him, the unsolved case is like a wound that refuses to heal. He has spent hundreds of hours working on the case, long after most have forgotten it.

The police chief said he visited Parsh on several occasions during the last four years. Knowing Parsh was in poor health — he was in the hospital at the time of the murders — Gerecke said he wanted desperately to solve the case before he died. But four years later, with Parsh dead, and Gerecke nearing retirement, the incident remains as much a mystery as the day the bodies were found.

"I felt very badly he died not knowing," the police chief said. "It's a failure on my part. But I didn't fail because of a lack of time devoted to the case or a lack of assistance. We had all of this."

Police believe the two women were murdered the Friday before the bodies were found. That night, Mrs. Parsh had gone to pick her daughter up at the airport. Brenda had come from Milwaukee, where she was a fashion coordinator for a department store, to visit her father, who had suffered a heart attack.

There is evidence that the two women were killed shortly after they arrived from the airport. The key was still in the door when officers arrived and Brenda's suitcase, found just inside the front door, was locked and still packed.

Evidence suggests the killer met them at the door and ordered the women to the bedroom where the murderer forced them to disrobe. The intruder then bound them

**"I felt very badly he died not knowing. It's a failure on my part. But I didn't fail because of a lack of time devoted to the case," Chief Gerecke reflects.** **AUG 16 1981**

with cord from a television set, forced them to lie face down on the bed and shot them at point-blank range with a .38 caliber weapon. The slugs were badly disfigured and could not be matched to a particular kind of gun.

Gerecke believes the women were murdered between 10:35 p.m. and 11 p.m. on Friday Aug. 12. He said Parsh received a call from Brenda at the hospital during that time period, and the killer may have been in the house when she called.

Parsh told Gerecke Brenda "didn't sound like herself" when she called. He said her voice sounded troubled.

The two bodies were found the next Monday by a neighbor after Mrs. Parsh's daughter, Mrs. Bruce Chesser who lives in

# ed mystery to father

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St. Louis, became worried when she was unable to reach her mother by phone. The killer apparently had entered the small frame home through a window which was found broken at the rear of the house. Beyond that there is little evidence and no motive.

Burglary has all but been ruled out in the case since several pieces of jewelry and several hundreds of dollars in cash and antique coins were left undisturbed.

Friends, neighbors and workers described the Parsh family as friendly and close-knit with no enemies.

Mrs. Parsh, 38, worked as a key-punch operator at Inman Freight Systems. Brenda, queen of her senior class in high school, runner-up in the Miss Missouri pageant and winner of numerous other beauty pageants, was a model, buyer and fashion coordinator for several department stores.

"We've gone into their backgrounds thoroughly," Gerecke said. "And we have found no evidence to cause us to believe that they weren't normal, average people."

Gerecke considers the case an open one, and still spends time checking leads and re-interviewing persons involved with Brenda and Mrs. Parsh. He has sought and been granted help from the FBI and the detective division of the St. Louis Police Department.

"The FBI has never turned me down to investigate a lead on this case," Gerecke said. "I don't care how outlandish it may have appeared." With the help of the FBI, he has pursued leads from California to Massachusetts.

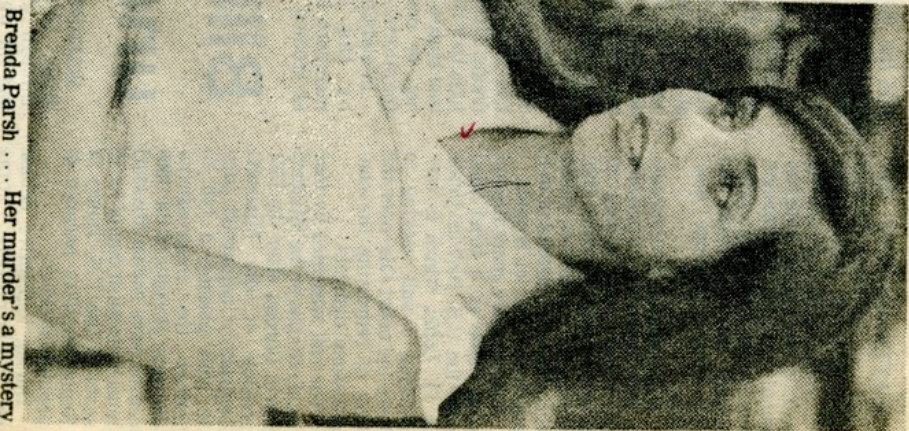
"You're just like Joe Delaney, (the main character in the novel 'The First Deadly Sin' who pursues a psychotic killer) you won't give up," a St. Louis detective told Gerecke several months ago.

Gerecke vows that he will not give up completely until he retires from the department. Then will he consider the case closed?

"Officially I will," he said. "But it will never be over for me until the case is solved."

The double-murder has nagged and frustrated Gerecke over and over again for the past four years. He forgets about it for a few weeks or a few months. But the frustration always returns and he pulls the huge file labeled 'Parsh' out of his desk drawer and meticulously peruses the material within. He makes a few notes, maybe a telephone call or two, but always with the same results — "nothing."

"Condemn me for not solving the case," Gerecke said. "But don't condemn me for not trying."



Brenda Parsh . . . Her murder's a mystery

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