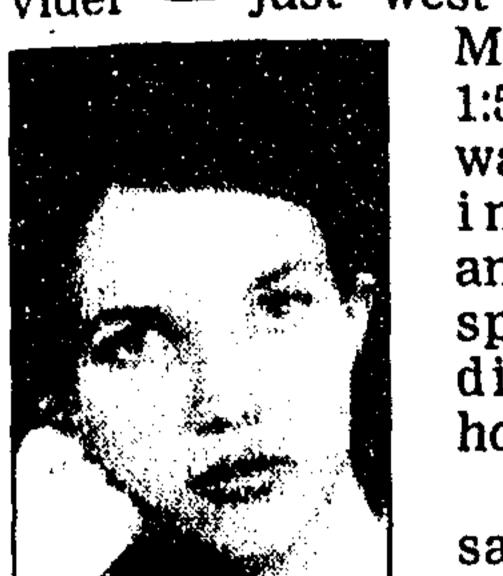
lan Wyhe: 'The whole family is in agreement — we believe she was murdered'

From page 1A

lut emphasized it did not beleve the death was accidental. An autopsy showed no signs drugs or alcohol in Van Wyhe's body, Clemonds said. Members of Van Wyhe's famiwho attended the inquest said he jury's ruling simply confirmed what they already believed — that the death was no

accident. "The whole family is in agreement. We believe she was murdered," said Van Wyhe's aunt, Evelyn Nikkel of Pella, Iowa.

A trucker found Van Wyhe ---who worked as a child-care provider - just west of Kahoka.



Laura -Van Wyhe Died after being found along

way.

Mo., about 1:50 a.m. She was alive, but incoherent | and unable to speak. She three hours later.

Clemonds said he believes Van Wyhe's injuries occurred elsewhere.

Missouri highway were no marks in the gravel to indicate she'd pulled herself to the edge of the high-

Clemonds said there was no vehicle debris, such as headlight pieces or chrome fragments, to indicate Van Wyhe had been struck there. Paint chips found embedded in Van Wyhe's clothing haven't been matched to a vehicle, he said.

Clemonds said he hopes DNA tests on hair, fibers and blood will bring investigators closer to an arrest.

In remarks to The Gazette after the inquest, Clemonds took note of what he called "suspicious things throughout this deal from the beginning."

. For example, he said, Van Wyhe's 14-month-old son, Samson Knight, was found naked at the Kahoka residence of Tony and Sarah Bergman, where Van Wyhe had gone after a birthday party in her honor earlier in the evening in Bonaparte, Iowa.

The family of Donald Knight, Van Wyhe's ex-boyfriend and Samson's father, lives in Bonaparte, which is about a halfhour drive from Kahoka.

Clemonds said Van Wyhe had baby food on a paper plate, a baby bottle and a blanket with her when she was found. A tote bag containing personal items bélonging to her and her son also was found in a nearby tree.

That Van Wyhe had so many items with her, said Clemonds, suggests she had intended to leave in a hurry.

""When she left (the Bergman residence), she wasn't going for a nice stroll," he said. "She wouldn't have taken the bottle, the bag, or the paper plate with the food in it. Or she would have taken the baby. She had êverything to leave (town). Why would she leave the baby?"

Clemonds said a cocklebur branch was lying next to Van Wyhe's body and that cockleburs were stuck to her body. He said there was a cocklebur bush in the cornfield across the highway from where she was found, indicating a struggle may have occurred there.

The Bergmans live about onetenth mile east and two-tenths

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mile north of the cornfield, Clematching Van Wyhe's shoes also was found in the cornfield, he wearing shoes when she was

black jacket Van Wyhe was wearing. It wasn't scuffed or when she was injured.

to Tony Bergman. A pocket a parade.

knife, found open in the jacket monds said. One footprint pocket, also belonged to Tony Bergman, he said.

Clemonds said his investigasaid, though Van Wyhe was not tion revealed that Van Wyhe and her son rode with the Bergmans from Bonaparte to their Also puzzling, he said, is the home in Kahoka. Sarah Bergman is Donald Knight's sister.

"We've been told this was a blood-soaked, as the rest of her friendly, amiable ride, that Lauclothing, leading Clemonds to ra went of her own free will," wonder if she was wearing it Clemonds said. He said the Bergmans told him they planned Clemonds said he has cont to drive Van Wyhe back to firmed the black jacket belonged Bonaparte the next morning for

⁶There was very little blood at the scene, but she suffered massive blood loss. ??

Trooper Bruce Clemonds

diaper bag behind in Bonaparte, Wyhe, also has refused to take a he said.

Clemonds said he is frustrated that the Bergmans won't submit to lie-detector tests. Rachel Smith, a sister to Sarah Bergman and Donald Knight and one

Van Wyhe left her purse and of the last people to see Van lie-detector test, he said.

The Bergmans have declined to talk to the media since the incident. Their attorney, Richard Roberts of Kahoka, declined to talk to a Gazette reporter at his office Friday and he did not return a telephone call.

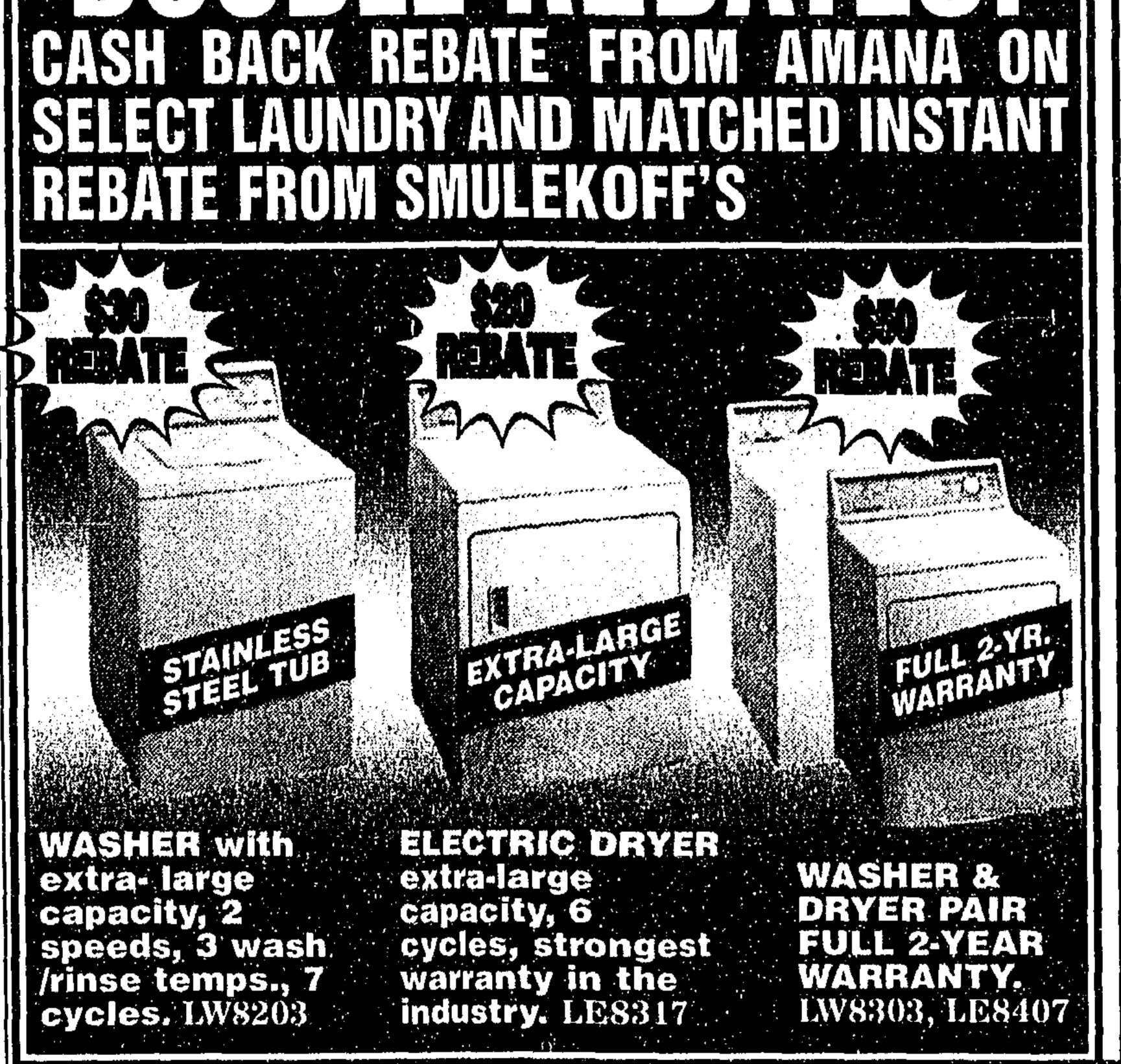
Court officials in Clark County, Mo., refused on Friday to release results of a search warrant executed on the Bergmans' mobile home.

Clemonds said he has interviewed a "cast of characters" about Van Wyhe's death but has no prime suspect.

"It's the holidays — a warm time of giving," he said. "Someone knows how Laura met her death. They should contact us so we can solve this."







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