



Ed Rath/World-Herald

### Omaha's First Addition to the New Year

Meet Alix MacKenzie Gunn, first baby born in an Omaha hospital in 1983. The 6-pound, 14-ounce daughter of Jeff and Joni Gunn, 6611 S. 137th St., was born at 12:02 a.m. Saturday at Methodist Hospital. The Gunns also have a 14-month-old son, Kyle.

### Authorities Frustrated

## Three 1982 Slayings In Bluffs Still Unsolved

By Gary Newman  
COUNCIL BLUFFS BUREAU

Three of the four homicides that occurred in Council Bluffs during 1982 remain unsolved.

Officials of a police department used to catching killers and a county attorney's office used to getting convictions say the 3-1 record is a source of frustration.

The victims of two of the unsolved killings were Omahans. The other had been in the Bluffs about four days. Out-of-town homicide victims put local police at a disadvantage, authorities say, because leads and suspects are often harder to track down.

The year was one-fourth over when Omaha prostitute Linda Mayfield was fatally stabbed in the parking lot of the Starlite Motel, 3320 W. Broadway.

Miss Mayfield, 21 and the mother of two children, had an Omaha arrest record that included nine charges of soliciting prostitution.

#### Cries for Help

It was about 2:15 a.m. April 9 when motel clerk Jeff Nielsen was awakened by cries for help from Miss Mayfield's companion, Lori Ann Watkins.

Nielsen was later to say that at 2 a.m. the West Broadway area "is really jumping." Nebraska bars had closed an hour earlier, sending late tippers across the Interstate 480 bridge.

Nielsen reported he saw only the two women in his parking lot, with Miss Mayfield already sprawled on the asphalt. She died shortly after an ambulance took her to Mercy Hospital.

Miss Watkins was held as a material witness for several days as Omaha and Bluffs police joined to question known associates of the dead woman and to attempt to trace her movements in the final few hours of her life.

There were indications she was picked up on a downtown Omaha street within an hour before her death, but other than that, progress in the case was minimal.

Bluffs Police Captain Eldon Jones said nothing has been added to the Mayfield file in perhaps four months. He added that he feels this slaying is the most solvable of the three yet unsolved. "We've still got high hopes for this one," Jones said.

He doesn't have that same opinion of the year's second unsolved slaying. It occurred June 25 in a room at the Best Western Frontier Inn Motor Lodge, near the northeast corner of the Interstate 29-80 and South 24th Street interchange.

#### New Job

Lee Rotatori, 32, of Nunica, Mich., was learning her new job as food service director at Edmundson Hospital.

With college degrees in dietary services and nutrition, she was moving up in the Chicago firm of Service-Master, which has food service contracts with hospitals and other institutions.

She was in the Bluffs for a day in early June, apparently liked what she saw and came back June 21 after accepting the Edmundson post.

On a Friday, five days after she started at the hospital, some of her new co-workers invited her to go boating on Lake Manawa.

She left lakeside about dusk and picked up a sandwich at the Manawa McDonald's restaurant along the South Expressway. Then she went back to the motel.

Police say they could find no one who saw the woman enter her room, which was near the doors leading to the motel's meeting rooms and pool area.

Shortly after noon the next day, a motel employee entered the room to clean it and found the woman's body on the bed. She had been stabbed.

Investigators said the woman apparently bought food for one at the restaurant and had eaten it after returning to the room.

Police also said no weapon was found.

Dr. Samuel Rosa, county medical examiner, said the woman died of a single knife wound "administered from the front" and that she could have been dead for up to 12 hours before the body was found.

The doctor also said the death may have been "sexually motivated," but police declined to discuss that.

#### Asks Secrecy

Joe Hrvol, chief homicide prosecutor on county attorney Dave Richter's staff, and Capt. Jones said details of the crime are best kept secret so that, if and when someone offers new information or a suspect is found and questioned, the results can be checked against facts not publicly known.

A \$2,000 reward for information leading to conviction is still being offered by the hospital and Service-Master, and Jones said that an anonymous source might yet add another \$1,000.

Jones said because Mrs. Rotatori came here from Michigan and because of the death scene's nearness to Interstates 80 and 29, his detectives had made more calls, visits and communications to other states than on any homicide in his memory.

Investigation of the Rotatori slaying was still in full swing July 11 when Omahan John P. Adams Jr. was killed in the middle of West Broadway, a single pistol bullet in his head.

It was about 1:30 a.m. that Sunday morning and Adams, 23, and his brother Mel, 20, were heading from the final stages of a wedding anniversary celebration in Omaha to a late pool game at a Bluffs bar.

Two men on a motorcycle began harassing the brothers as they entered the interstate in Omaha, Mel Adams told police, and the confrontations continued on Broadway.

#### Tire Blown

The vehicle the brothers were in apparently blew a tire at about 25th Street and they pulled to the curb, according to Mel Adams.

He went to a pay phone to call his mother for aid, as the cyclists were still in the area.

John Adams apparently attempted to confront the cyclists, rushing into the street after the bike with a baseball bat. When Adams was a few feet from the bike a shot was fired and he crumpled.

The bike sped away.

The shooting occurred near a store parking lot containing a number of vehicles and youths, but police got only sketchy conflicting information from witnesses they could find.

The bike itself was variously described as red or orange.

Lawmen seem to feel the incident was a "traffic confrontation" that got out of hand. This would make finding the shooter more difficult because of the strong possibility he had no contact with Adams before that morning.

Because Adams apparently had a baseball bat and apparently was charging the bike, Hrvol indicated it is doubtful that a murder charge would stick in this case.

"The very best thing that person could do would be to come in and tell it all," Hrvol said.

One suspect was questioned and released, police said.

Still, police feel this case is solvable.

The only other homicide of the year happened in a bar in late May. The bar, Bucky's Place, 626 W. Broadway, has since been demolished to make way for the western end of the Washington Avenue Bypass.

Clarence E. "Sonny" Munch, 49, died after being knocked down and kicked by Richard D. Ruby, 36. Both men lived in the Bluffs.

A district court jury in October found Ruby guilty of second-degree murder.

### Bond Set for Man Charged With Rape

A charge of first-degree sexual assault was filed against James Sherrod Saturday in connection with an assault on a 25-year-old woman.

Bond for Sherrod, 31, of 2238 Ohio St., was set at 10 percent of \$25,000.

He was arrested shortly after the woman called police and alleged she was raped at the man's apartment. She said the assault occurred about 8:30 p.m. Friday.

## Panel to Hear Applicants for High Court Vacancy

Lincoln (UPI) — A judicial nominating commission plans a Jan. 20 hearing in North Platte on applicants for the Supreme Court's 6th District seat vacated with the recent death of Judge Lawrence Clinton.

The commission will send at least two names to Gov.-elect Robert Kerrey, who will decide whom to appoint to the position, which pays \$48,314 a year.

Ogallala attorney Thomas M. Shanahan, 48, said he was a candidate for the vacancy. District Judge Robert R. Moran, 56, of Alliance, mentioned most frequently as a likely successor to Clinton, said he will not seek the job.

District Judge Robert O. Hippe, 41, of Gering, said he planned to decide this week whether to apply. District Judge John D. Knapp, 56, of Kimball, also was undecided.

Another district judge mentioned as a

possible candidate — Hugh Stuart, 60, of North Platte — refused to comment about his plans.

Keith Windrum, the other district judge headquartered at North Platte, said he would not apply. Windrum recently announced his resignation from the trial bench, effective March 16, when he will be 62.

District Judges Alfred Kortum, 50, of Gering and DeWayne Wolf, 59, of Kearney have said they do not intend to apply for the high court job.

One other district judge — James R. Kelly, 67, of Broken Bow, has been mentioned as a possible candidate. He could not be reached for comment.

A spokeswoman in the Custer County District Court office said Kelly was recuperating from major heart surgery.

Besides Shanahan, five other attorneys have been mentioned as possible

Supreme Court applicants. Four of them — Robert D. Stowell, 39, of Ord; Harold W. Kay, 55, and Gary Scritsmeyer, 40, both of North Platte; and Bernard B. Smith, 66, of Lexington — have taken themselves out of the picture.

Another attorney mentioned as a potential candidate, Thomas D. Brower, 54, of Gering, said he was undecided.

### Carpool Numbers Up

Lincoln (AP) — After two years of slowed growth, the city's Carpool-Vanpool program rallied last year in recording a 12 percent net enrollment gain. The program had 3,789 carpools in 1982, compared with 3,382 in 1981 and 1,207 when it began five years ago, said Coordinator Shirley Maly.

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