



## Fischer Murder Unsolved One Year Ago Police Frustrated, Keller Claims Harro

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News Editor

Wednesday, Feb. 25 passed with relative calm in Maquoketa.

But a year ago today, Thursday, Maquoketa was shaken with the revelation that a fellow Timber Citian had been struck down by a brutal murder.

Mrs. Hulda Fischer, 84, died in her modest frame home on North Fifth St. at approximately noon on Feb. 25 as the result of multiple stab wounds in the abdomen.

While the investigation has continued for the past 12 months, the identity of a suspect or suspects has yet to come from investigating officers.

Maquoketa chief of police Buddy Olson says that a day has not passed since the murder, that he has not thought about the event or been involved in the continuing investigation of the homicide.

For the law enforcement team, this has been a year of frustration, as leads peter out or are found to be unproductive.

However, Olson says that the department is still following up on leads and he revealed that still another person would be submitting to a polygraph test (the so-called lie detector) on Wednesday, Feb. 25.

He declined to reveal the name of the

subject submitting to that examination in Clinton.

Tim McDonald was the Bureau of Criminal Investigation officer in charge of the investigation. The case remains an active responsibility of his and he has made numerous trips to Maquoketa during the past 12 months to further the investigation.

"Usually in a homicide investigation, determining who is involved is perhaps the easiest part. However, getting enough information to go to trial is the problem," McDonald related.

"It does us no good to make an arrest without some assurance that we will be able to make a conviction," he added.

McDonald said that this situation means that without an arrest a killer is still on the streets, "We believe there is no reason to believe that there is a maniac around."

McDonald revealed that specialized authorities have been contacted and that they have prepared a psychological composite of the murderer.

However, McDonald refused to reveal the content of that composite.

Mrs. Fischer's death was discovered at approximately 7:50 p.m. on Tuesday, Feb. 25, 1975 in the attractive one-story home in which she had lived by herself for the past nine

years and for seven years before that with her husband, John L. Fischer.

Jackson County Medical Examiner, Dr. J. A. Broman, was called to the scene to certify the death and reported that the apparent cause of death resulted from multiple stab wounds in the chest and abdomen. The last known communication with Mrs. Fischer was when she visited in the next door home of Hattie Petersen on the previous afternoon.

It was Mrs. Petersen who was responsible for discovery of the body.

She and Mrs. Fischer had been close friends and had visited back and forth in one another's homes since both moved to their Fifth St. homes in 1958.

On the night of the discovery of the body, Mrs. Petersen received a telephone call from Mrs. Nolan (Leah) Zugschwerdt who expressed concern about Mrs. Fischer. Mrs. Zugschwerdt had planned to drive Mrs. Fischer to an Order of Eastern Star meeting. She received no response when she stopped at the home and had gone on to the meeting.

Mrs. Petersen went next door and found the front rooms of the house dark. After ringing the doorbell repeatedly she became alarmed.

She returned to her home and called the Masonic Temple to check to see if Mrs. Fischer had arrived. Upon learning that she

had not, she called her nephew, Ronald Keller, owner-operator of the Antique Room, which is located just around the corner on Grove Street to the west from the Petersen home.

Keller had possessed a key to the Fischer home for some time and occasionally looked in on Mrs. Fischer to check on her well-being.

When they arrived they noticed tracks in the snow leading from the rear entrance of the home, tracks which suggested that Mrs. Fischer had already left her home.

As Keller looked through the home, Mrs. Petersen waited by a kitchen door. While she was waiting she opened a basement door and saw what seemed to be Mrs. Fischer's leg near the bottom of the stairs.

Keller was summoned and he and his assistant Tom Goodwin descended the stairs where they discovered that Mrs. Fischer was indeed dead.

Police were summoned.

While the year has been frustrating for the law enforcement community, Keller believes it has been unnerving.

In an interview with the Sentinel Tuesday, Feb. 24 he leveled charges of harrasment against the local police department and specifically chief Olson.

"We've had the police at our house every



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## After harrassment

day and night for months after the murder. They used to park the squad car out front but they don't bother out in front as much lately, although it continues to some extent," Keller said.

Chief Olson responded, Wednesday that he did not believe that the squad cars were in the neighborhood much more than they would be on normal cruising.

"But its natural that we would keep that neighborhood under surveillance after having a murder there. I don't believe that there was any undue harrassment to any individual I don't think anyone should feel that way," Olson stated.

Keller stated that he had felt that the police department had ignored his offers of assistance in the investigation.

He pointed out that he had offered to set himself up as a clay pigeon in an attempt to lure the murderer back to the scene.

His plan was to send his assistant, Goodwin, to his home in Muscatine, have the word passed that he (Keller) had seen the murderer leave the Fischer home and then plant a police officer in the Keller home, with ex-

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pectations that the murderer would return in an attempt to silence him.

"I begged Buddy to let me do it but he refused," Keller said.

Olson responded to the description of that offer that he didn't know anything about the offer.

Keller added that he had given the police numerous leads of people that might have had bad feelings toward Mrs. Fischer and stated that the police had ignored them all.

Olson said, "We have followed up on all leads. In fact we are giving a polygraph test Wednesday, to one of the people Ronnie suggested to us."

Keller refused to reveal the names of the people he had given to the police.

One person he did mention was Mrs. Helen Petersen. Mrs. Petersen is chief Olson's mother-in-law and was the neighbor to the west of the Keller's.

"She was the only person in the neighborhood I could think of that didn't get along with Hulda. And Helen moved out of the neighborhood the night of the murder," Keller related.

"As far as we know she has not been questioned," he added.

In response to this criticism Olson said that his mother-in-law had indeed been questioned and in fact that she had taken a polygraph test. That test had been negative, he said.

Keller said that after 12 months of investigation and what he terms harrassment, he has nothing to show but a big lawyer's fee and a loss of business.

He said that he received a number of requests from Olson to submit to a polygraph test, and had taken one during initial investigation, but had been advised by his attorney to refuse.

Keller has very bitter feelings toward the

Maquoketa police department.

"I told Tom and Hattie that if they should ever see anyone prowling around this shop that they should not call the police. I'd rather be robbed than have the police in here again," he emphasized.

The Maquoketa antique dealer says that he suspects that the murderer is someone who knew Mrs. Fischer very well and who was very familiar with her habits also.

The time of death was set at around noon. During that time Keller, Goodwin, Mrs. Hattie Petersen and housekeeper Marvis Krueder were having lunch at Hattie Petersen's home.

"The murderer apparently entered Hulda's house at that time. When we returned to work he was trapped, because the windows at the back of the shop, where we do most of our work, look out on Hulda's back door and we would have seen anyone leaving," Keller commented.

Keller said he knew that whoever killed Mrs. Fischer entered from the front door and left by the back door.

"She always put a rug under the front door to keep the draft out. That rug was in place when we went in," he explained.

Maquoketa, 12 months after the third murder in the city in this century, has basically returned to normal. However, the murder and speculation about the murderer often are subjects of discussion around coffee shop tables and at parties. Life goes on, people choose strategies for living with the shadow of a violent crime which has yet to be resolved.

But for the law enforcement community, the lack of resolution is a gnawing concern that they face daily.

For Ron Keller and Tom Goodwin, their feelings are summed up in Keller's statement, "I always had respect for law enforcement, but after this episode - no," he sighed.



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