

Police search apartments, take DNA in slaying case

PUBLIC SAFETY

By Christoph Trappe

The Gazette

CEDAR RAPIDS — Police

searched two apartments — one on the same floor as where a murder victim was found and one a floor down — and took a DNA sample from at least one resident of Hawthorne Hills Apartments in their investigation into Dennis



Dennis First
Found dead in apartment

First's death.

They also searched First's apartment.

Cedar Rapids police served five search warrants, including one on the man who told The Gazette he saw First about one-and-a-half days before police found First's body.

First, 64, was found dead at 7:30 a.m. May 11 at his apartment at 2249 C St. SW. He had been stabbed and had bled to death in the 24 hours before his body was found. No arrests have been reported.

Curtis Padgett, who lives in

Apt. 3 at the building, said officers took his fingerprints and a DNA sample with a swab from inside his cheek. He said they also took a pair of boots and other items, which he declined to identify, from his apartment.

He said he had nothing to do with First's death.

"He was a good friend," Padgett said.

During a media briefing a few days after First was found, police said they were looking at DNA evidence in the case.

This week, five search war-

rants were filed at the clerk's office at the Linn County Courthouse. Authorities sealed the search warrants, and the public can't see why officers wanted to search the places and person they did or what they seized.

One search was of First's apartment. Three were done at two nearby apartments with Padgett's apartment searched twice. The fifth search involved Padgett himself, records show.

Padgett told The Gazette previously that he sometimes rolled cigarettes for First and

last saw him on the night of May 9.

"I was going to go knock on his door (May 11)," Padgett told The Gazette previously. "When I came out, they were carrying him away in a body bag."

Apt. No. 7 — right across the hall from First's Apt. No. 5 — was also searched. Dan Shelton, 24, lives there and said Wednesday that police didn't take anything.

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Owner says dog nearly killed in attack

By Christoph Trappe

The Gazette

MARION — Molly Scott said Chip, her 7-year-old poodle, was almost killed during an attack by a pit bull Saturday morning.

"It was a vicious attack and unprovoked," said Scott of 4345 Kenilworth Ct. SE, Cedar Rapids. "It came within an inch of killing our dog."

According to Marion police: Heidi Stephens' pit bull got out of her residence at 865 Sixth Ave. around 11:30 a.m. Saturday and attacked the poodle.

Scott and her husband were in Marion with their dog for the Marion Arts Festival.

The pit bull had Chip by the neck.

"My husband continually beat the dog in the head and tried to get its jaw open," Molly Scott said. "It was crazy."

Her husband, Brian Scott, and another person eventually got the pit bull off the poodle.

"Our dog is recuperating," Molly Scott said Wednesday morning, describing Chip's injuries as puncture wounds and saying that Chip needed five stitches and drainage to the neck.

How much in vet bills the Scotts will end up with was still unknown Wednesday.

"We do appreciate the help of local citizens and Marion police," Scott said.

Police cited Stephens — who Scott said was apologetic — with having a vicious/dangerous animal. The Cedar Valley Humane Society took the pit bull.

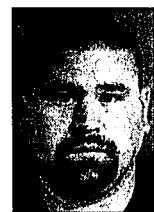
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Ex-youth baseball league leader accused of stealing

By Jennifer Hemmingsen

The Gazette

IOWA CITY — A former youth baseball league president from Iowa City was in court Wednesday morning, accused of stealing nearly \$10,000 from the Hills Ball Association.



Jason VanNevel
Turned himself in

A Johnson County Sheriff's Office complaint said Jason VanNevel, 30, of 5012 Utah Ave. SE, used \$9,719.22 of the ball club's money to pay for gas, restaurant tabs and monthly satellite television bills in 2005 and 2006.

The theft left the association broke, Hills City Council member and league coach Scott Hebl said.

"We had to do a fundraiser at the beginning of the season just so we could buy shirts for the kids," he said.

The Sheriff's Office is accusing VanNevel of second-degree theft. VanNevel turned himself in at the Johnson County Jail Wednesday morning and was released on his recognizance after an initial appearance in Johnson County District Court.

His attorney, Leon Spies of Iowa City, declined to comment. The Johnson County attorney has 45 days to file a formal charge.

VanNevel had been president of the association for several years before he stepped down in February and had children in the league, Hebl said.

Contact the writer: (319) 339-3157 or jennifer.hemmingsen@gazettecommunications.com

Iowa City foot chase yields arrest

IOWA CITY — A man wanted by several law enforcement agencies was arrested after leading police on a half-hour foot chase near downtown Wednesday.

John Houlsworth, 22, whose address was unavailable last night, was taken to the Johnson County Jail, where he was held for sheriff's departments in Iowa County and Linn County and the Larry A. Nelson Center in Cedar Rapids, and also for probation violation.

Iowa City Police Sgt. Kevin Heick said police stopped a car driven by Houlsworth after they learned he had at least one outstanding warrant. He fled on foot, leading about a dozen Iowa City officers and at least one University of Iowa Department of Public Safety officer on a chase in the area of Clinton, Davenport, Dubuque and

Market streets.

Houlsworth was arrested at 12:42 p.m. after police found him hiding behind a UI residence hall, Heick said.

Graduation 2007: C.R. Metro



Jim Slosiarek/The Gazette

GED recipient Jovan Smith kisses her daughter Tanaysza Power-Dvorak, 11 months, before the 2007 graduation ceremony for about 50 Metro High School students last night at the Crowne Plaza Five Seasons Hotel in downtown Cedar Rapids. Smith's son Jovarian Smith, 5, is at left.

Police looking for 2 robbers who took man's wallet

The Gazette

CEDAR RAPIDS — Cedar Rapids police are looking for two men who robbed a 58-year-old Cedar Rapids man Tuesday night.

Police said the two men

robbed the victim of his wallet around 9 p.m. in the 1200 block of Third Avenue SE.

A knife was mentioned in the robbery but none was displayed. There were no injuries.

Descriptions of the robbers were not available.

Anyone with information can call Crime Stoppers at 1-(800) 272-7463. Callers remain anonymous and may be eligible for a reward.

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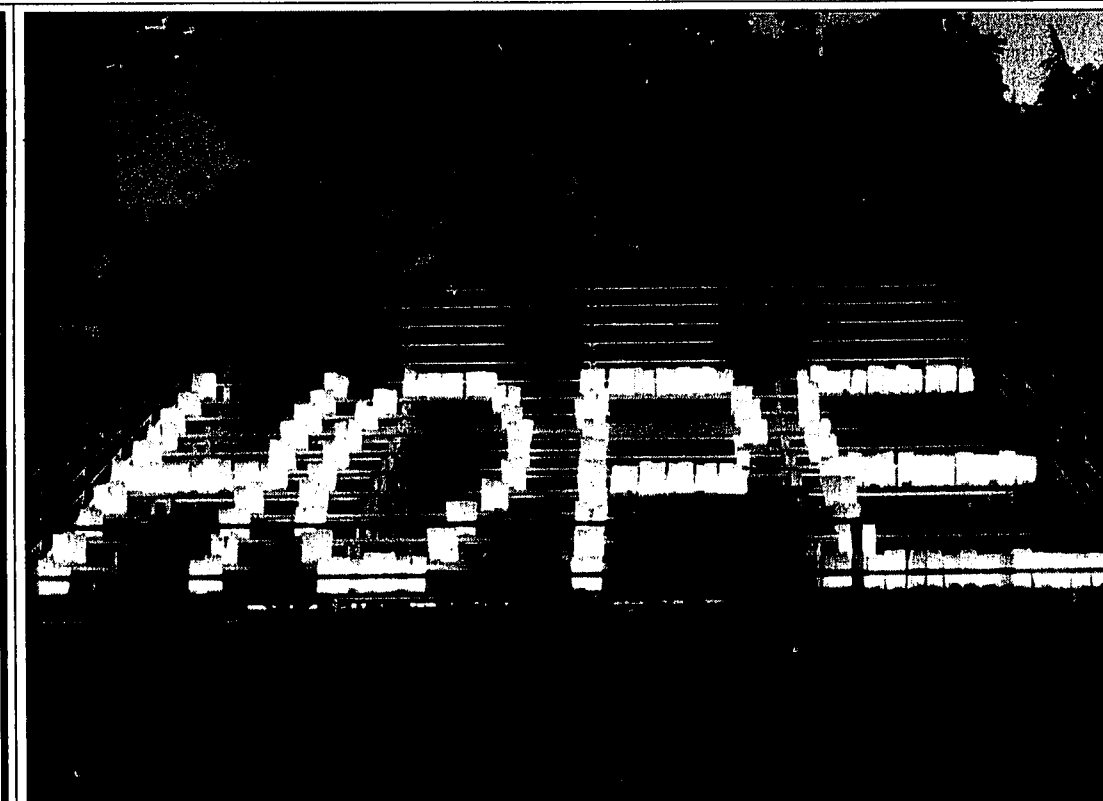
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Kirkwood Community College

For more information, call 1.800.ACS.2345

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