

## **DRIFTER IS SUSPECT IN SERIAL KILLINGS POLICE, FBI SEARCH RELATIVES' HOME**

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A Detroit **drifter** is the prime **suspect in** the **serial killings** of nine women, police said Friday.

Highland Park Police and FBI agents searched the east side home of the man's family Friday afternoon.

The man was arrested about three weeks ago and questioned by FBI agents but was released without charges. After his release, police trailed him for at least a week.

Authorities said Friday they still lack sufficient evidence to charge him with any of the **killings** .

Several prostitutes told police the man has paid for their services and **in** some cases tried to choke them, but they escaped. Police did not have enough evidence to arrest him **in** those cases, authorities said.

A law enforcement official said the search **in** the home was for items that might have belonged to the victims, specifically articles of women's clothing.

Some items were taken from the house, but detectives refused to specify what they were. One investigator said it appeared that nothing incriminating had been found.

The **suspect** , who police said **is in** his 30s, was not arrested Friday. His name **is** being withheld by the Free Press because he has not been charged with a crime.

Police described him as a destitute man who frequently stays at area missions and shelters for homeless people and **is** believed to be mentally ill.

Police said they searched the house, **in** the 2100 block of Cody on Detroit's east side, because the man returns there regularly and gets his laundry done on those visits. His parents live there.

A tall chain-link fence surrounds the house, which has well- sculpted gardens on three sides. A woman who responded to a knock at the door Friday night said the **suspect** was not at home and refused further comment.

Officials refused to say whether they lifted any fingerprints from the house. Police officers are believed to be trying to match a partial fingerprint found near the body of the most recent victim on June 15.

Terry Eddington, 35, a resident care aide at Northville Regional Psychiatric Hospital and a neighbor of the **suspect** 's family, said the man has been a patient at the hospital within the last three years.

Eddington, who went to Cleveland Junior High School with the man, said the two used to run into each other at the hospital and chat about people they'd known **in** school.

Deborah Eddington, 36, Terry's sister, said the **suspect is** "a very nice guy all the time."

She said she saw the man on Woodward Avenue **in** Highland Park on Friday afternoon.

"We had a nice, normal conversation. He asked me if I was working, I said yes. I asked him if he was working. He said no.

"I can't think about this," Deborah Eddington said as she looked at news media gathered outside the Cody Street house. "I find it hard to believe. It's just so strange."

Since December, the bodies of nine women have been found within a few blocks of a 1.4-mile stretch of Woodward Avenue **in** Highland Park and Detroit.

All were black and had been strangled; most were found naked or only partially clothed. Police say most, if not all, were crack-addicted prostitutes.

All of the bodies were so badly decomposed when found that it was difficult to tell whether they had been sexually assaulted, officials say. All were found **in** or near abandoned buildings.

Two FBI agents assumed a key role **in** the investigation **in** the last two weeks, according to State Police Detective David Minzey, one of the state's two experts on **serial** killers.

Minzey said this week that based on the way the victims died, it's clear that the killer has knowledge of a deadly choke hold once used by police, the military, and **in** mental institutions.

"We've probably got somebody from a mental institution," Minzey said Wednesday. "If this person was **in** a mental institution, he could have observed this type of hold being used."

"This killer **is** very power-oriented; the **killings** are extremely controlled . . . he's doing this for power, not for sex."

**In** addition to Highland Park police and the FBI, Detroit and Michigan State police and Wayne County Sheriff's Department are all involved **in** the investigation.

Detectives have established two hot lines for tips on the murders. Call sheriff's deputies at 224-2222 anytime, or Highland Park police at 252-0139, 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

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Caption: Map

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