

## **MAN WONDERS : COULD MY DAD BE THE OAKLAND COUNTY CHILD KILLER ?**

Detroit Free Press (MI) - Wednesday, April 5, 2006

Author: FRANK WITSIL FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER. Staff writer L.L. Brasier contributed to this report. Sidebar compiled by Free Press staff.

**The** black trunk that Chip St. Clair found in his father's apartment years ago is filled with secrets.

In it are locks of brown hair and baby teeth, a birth certificate for St. Clair that appears to have been altered, newspaper clippings of Michigan's most-wanted criminals and photos of **children** that are supposed to **be** of St. Clair, but don't look like him.

**The** contents **could be** clues in one of **Oakland County** 's most notorious unsolved cases - or no more than family mementos.

Police will travel to an Indiana prison today to question St. Clair's father, Michael Grant, in connection with **the** deaths of four **children** - ages 10, 11 and 12 - three decades ago. They also plan to ask for a sample of Grant's DNA, to see whether it matches a hair found on one of **the** victims.

It is another twist in **the** decades-long mystery of **the Oakland County child** killings and in **the** harrowing relationship St. Clair has had with his father, much of which has been told in **the** Free Press and on television news programs.

Following a Free Press report in 2002, St. Clair was invited to tell his story on "Good Morning America," "Dateline NBC" and other shows.

In **the** 29 years since **the** last of **the** four **children** died, there have been many leads in **the** investigation, including one in 1999 that took investigators to Recluse, Wyo., where **the** body of David Norberg, a Warren autoworker at **the** time of **the** killings, was exhumed. His DNA did not match **the killer** 's.

Until now, authorities had identified Grant only as an Indiana prisoner who was convicted of killing a **child** , **the** son of a woman he was seeing in 1970.

But last week, State Police Sgt. Garry Gray, who has been investigating **the** case, confirmed that he planned to question Grant about **the Oakland County child** killings. He added Tuesday that they are also looking into other leads, including one involving a **man** in **the** Cleveland area.

Gray was reticent to discuss **the** case, saying only that Grant was convicted of killing a **child** and that he was living in Michigan in 1976 and 1977, when **the** four **Oakland County** victims were slain.

Grant, through corrections officials in Indiana, declined to **be** interviewed by **the** Free Press.

According to investigators, **the four children** were abducted, held for several days and killed. Their meticulously cleaned bodies were left on roadsides. **The killer** was believed to have been driving a green or blue AMC Gremlin.

**The** victims were Timothy King, 11, of Birmingham; Kristine Mihelich, 10, of Berkley; Jill Robinson, 12, of Royal Oak, and Mark Stebbins, 12, of Ferndale.

Gray said he now believes it's possible that more than one person killed **the children** .

St. Clair, regional director in Birmingham of **the** nonprofit group Justice For **Children** , said Tuesday that he is horrified to imagine his father as a **child killer** , but he can't block out what he calls suspicious coincidences.

Among them, St. Clair said, his father was physically and sexually abusive toward him and his **dad** drove a vehicle that he called **the** "Green Machine." He also said his father was meticulously neat.

As for **the** mysterious lock of hair, **children** 's teeth and **the** photos that his father said were of him, St. Clair said, "I don't know what is a part of a normal childhood mystery, and what is a deep, dark family secret."

Incarcerated in Westville Correctional Facility in northwest Indiana, Grant, 65, was born and raised in Elkhart, Ind.

In 1970, Grant began dating an Indiana woman, and on Aug. 1, as he was giving her two sons - ages 5 and 3 - a bath, **the** younger one died. Grant, in prison records, acknowledged that he hit **the child** . He was convicted of manslaughter and given a sentence of up to 21 years in prison.

But in late 1973, he escaped.

For 26 years, Grant was a fugitive, living under an alias, David St. Clair, and moving from place to place.

But Chip St. Clair said he knew nothing about his father's criminal past until 1998, when his father was arrested for domestic violence after hitting him.

St. Clair said he called his aunt in Indiana to let her know about **the** arrest, and she revealed that his father was a wanted **man** in Indiana.

St. Clair said he decided to tell authorities, who confirmed Grant was an escapee and returned him to prison. Shortly after that, St. Clair said, he found **the** mysterious trunk.

"I feel like I'm in a dark room with thousands of puzzle pieces, and I never see **the** entire picture," St. Clair said last week, as he sifted through **the** contents. "Is he **the Oakland County child killer** ? I don't know. But if he is, I would **be** relieved, if only for **the** families of **the** victims."

Contact FRANK WITSIL at 248-351-3690 or witsil@freepress.com. Staff writer L.L. Brasier contributed to this report.

(SIDEBAR)

Other leads

For nearly three decades, police have been investigating **the** slayings of four abducted **Oakland County children** whose bodies were found on roadsides in 1976 and 1977. There have been several leads, according to state and local law enforcement agencies. Here are a few:

\*One suspect, whose name has not been released, was a priest who moved to Sweden. Police said they worked with Interpol and **the** Swedish police to link **the man** to **the** killings but failed to come up with anything.

\*In 1999, **the** body of David Norberg, a Warren autoworker at **the** time of **the** killings, was exhumed in Recluse, Wyo., for DNA testing. Police wanted to know whether Norberg's DNA would link him to a pubic hair found on victim Timothy King, 11, of Birmingham. Police suspected Norberg because they said he had a history of making sexual advances toward **children** .

After his death, a silver cross inscribed with "Kristine" was found among his belongings. A relative of Kristine Mihelich, 10, of Berkley - one of **the** four slain **children** - identified **the** cross as having belonged to her.

A DNA test in 2000 indicated that **the** hair found on King was not Norberg's. Without more evidence, police **could** not conclude that Norberg was **the killer** .

\*In August 2005, **the** State Police sent DNA samples from four suspects to **the** FBI crime lab in Quantico, Va., for comparison with **the** hair found on King. Two samples were from **men the** detectives would not identify because, they said, it might compromise their case. **The** other samples were from **men** who are deceased. None of **the** samples matched **the** hair.

\*Richard Lawson, 60 - convicted March 7 of killing a taxi executive in 1989 in Livonia - was being investigated as possibly having information about **the child** killings. He was convicted of first-degree murder and offered a plea deal in which he **could** chose where he would serve his life sentence in exchange for information in **the** killings. He rejected **the** plea.

Compiled by Free Press staff

ILLUSTRATION: Photo MANDI WRIGHT Detroit Free Press

CAPTION: A picture shows Michael Grant in younger days. His son, Chip St. Clair, 30, is troubled by what he found in this trunk. Grant will **be** questioned.

MEMO: SIDEBAR ATTACHED

DISCLAIMER: THIS ELECTRONIC VERSION MAY DIFFER SLIGHTLY FROM **THE**  
PRINTED ARTICLE

Edition: METRO FINAL

Section: NWS; NEWS

Page: 1A

Index Terms: 1976; 1977; Michael Grant; Oakland County child killing; homicide; multiple;  
suspect

Record Number: dfp0000251915

Copyright (c) Detroit Free Press. All rights reserved. Reproduced with the permission of Gannett  
Co., Inc. by NewsBank, inc.