

POLICE WARY AT CLAIMS OF KILLINGS SUSPECT IN BILOXI BOASTS OF 60 VICTIMS

Detroit Free Press (MI) - Thursday, August 15, 1991

Author: JOE SWICKARD Free Press Staff Writer, e Press wire services

Homicide investigators, mindful **of** earlier manipulations by purported mass killers, were moving methodically and cautiously Wednesday to verify **claims** by Donald Leroy Evans that he has murdered 60 people in **at** least 17 states.

Evans, in custody in Biloxi, Miss., has told investigators that he killed **at** least one person in Michigan, but has not provided a location or total number **of killings** supposedly committed here.

A task force is being organized "to follow up on investigative leads in other states," said Jenny Smith, spokeswoman for the U.S. Attorney's Office in Jackson, Miss.

Evans, 34, **of** Galveston, Texas, is being held in the kidnap-slaying **of** a 10-year-old homeless girl, Beatrice Louise Routh. Officials said Evans admitted abducting the girl from a Gulfport, Miss., beach on Aug 1.

He allegedly raped and strangled her in Covington, La., and then dumped her body in southern Mississippi.

In addition to the child's **killing**, Evans provided detailed information that matched 1985 **killings** in Ft. Lauderdale and Daytona Beach, Fla., according to his lawyer, Fred Lusk.

The two **killings** "basically match in detail what Evans told investigators," Lusk said.

Lusk also said Evans "stated that he lived by the sword and wants to die by the sword by state execution," Lusk said.

Evans has claimed he also has killed people in Alabama, Arizona, California, Colorado, Idaho, Illinois, Kentucky, the Carolinas, Pennsylvania, South Dakota, Texas, Washington, Wyoming and possibly Georgia, Lusk said.

The murders allegedly began about 1977 and continued into 1987, when he was convicted **of** rape in Texas. He was paroled this spring, after serving four years **of** the 15-year sentence.

If Evans' **claim of** 60 slayings is true, he would be America's worst known serial killer.

But authorities are more skeptical **of** astonishing confessions, given their embarrassment after drifter Henry Lee Lucas suckered investigators with escalating **claims of** slayings. He boasted **of killing** 360 victims in an odyssey **of** murder before he was debunked several years ago.

"We learned from Henry Lee Lucas how easily we can be fooled," said Robert Ressler, a retired FBI agent who helped develop the bureau's psychological systematic study and analysis of serial and sexual killers.

"The situation now is to apply the lessons we learned. We have programs in place and this is the time to use them. Computer analysis can be done to weed the cases and isolate the possibles."

Lucas eventually said the confessions were hoaxes designed to forestall his execution for murder in Texas. The only **killing** to which he now admits is the beating death of his mother, Viola, in Tecumseh, Michigan in 1960.

Ressler said officials must be mindful that suspects will fabricate fantastic confessions.

"Let's face it, it's one **way** to break the boredom," he said. "It's better to be overrun with the media and detectives from all over the country than to die of boredom in a jailhouse."

Some false confessors are driven by psychosis, he said, with suspects believing that God is speaking to them. Others are psychopathic, he said, seeking attention and enjoying manipulating society.

Lusk acknowledged that Evans "may be a con artist and if he is, he has conned the world into coming to Biloxi. But right now, the score is three-to-nothing Donald."

Evans was arrested Aug. 5 in Louisiana when sheriff's deputies spotted a stolen car he was driving, **police** said. He is being held without bail on a federal kidnapping charge. He has not been charged with the girl's slaying because authorities said they had yet to determine jurisdiction.

Evans' alleged victims included men, but most were women, Lusk said, and many were sexually assaulted. Many victims were prostitutes, he said. Some men were killed so Evans could get to their wives or girlfriends, Lusk said.

Among the most prolific murderers in U.S. history are Donald Harvey, a former nurse's aide. He is serving a life sentence after pleading guilty to 37 murders in Kentucky and Ohio.

John Wayne Gacy Jr. is on death row in Illinois for murdering 33 young men and boys from 1972 to 1978.

Caption: Photo

: Donald Evans

Memo: SEE ALSO METRO FINAL EDITION CHASER 1A

Edition: METRO EDITION

Section: NWS

Page: 1A

Index Terms: HOMICIDE ; MURDER ; MICHIGAN ; QUOTE

Record Number: 9101310770

Copyright (c) 1991 Detroit Free Press