

SUSPECT CLAIMS MICH. VICTIM

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

Homicide investigators are checking purported mass murderer and **Michigan** native Donald Leroy Evans' **claim** that he killed a man near Hartford, Mich., in 1979 or 1980.

Evans **claims** he dumped the body nearby, on the banks of the Paw Paw River in Van Buren County. He said the **victim** was in his 20s.

The information came as investigators, mindful of past manipulations by purported mass killers, moved methodically Wednesday to verify **claims** by Evans, in custody in Biloxi, Miss., that he has murdered 60 people in at least 17 states.

"He's done some things for sure, but whether it's 50 to 60 like he says, it's going to take a lot of checking," said a person close to the investigation in Mississippi. "So far we have three we feel are confirmed -- the little girl from here and the two in Florida. . . . Everything else has to be checked out."

Hartford is near Evans' hometown of Watervliet, in southwestern **Michigan** .

Van Buren County Sheriff Cal Rosema said he had not heard from Mississippi police, but said his department would check Evans' **claim** .

The FBI will announce today the formation of a task force involving the agency and Mississippi law enforcement departments.

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.

Evans also provided detailed information that matched facts known about 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 his story 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, Mich., 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, believing that God is speaking to them, he said. Others are psychopathic, who seek attention and enjoy 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 3-0 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 Routh'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.

In Milwaukee, Jeffrey Dahmer recently has confessed to killing 17 people, including two men from **Michigan** .

Caption: Photo KRTN

: Donald Evans Investigators remove the body of Beatrice Louise Routh, 10, from woods Sunday in Picayune, Miss. Donald Leroy Evans says he abducted the girl Aug. 1 from a Gulfport, Miss., beach and killed her.

Memo: SEE ALSO METRO EDITION Page 1A

Edition: METRO FINAL CHASER

Section: NWS

Page: 1A

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