

Families of Slain Couple offer \$25,000 to Find Killer

By Gary Jarlson

Los Angeles Times, 19 September 1980, pg. OC A1

Making an appeal on "a personal, as well as societal level," the families of a Laguna Niguel couple murdered last month offered a \$25,000 reward Thursday in an effort to find out who killed them.

Keith Harrington, 24, a fourth-year medical student and his 27-year-old wife, a pediatrics nurse, were beaten to death in their Niguel Shores home the night of Aug. 20.

Investigators have not established a motive for the killings, nor has the weapon, described as a blunt instrument, ever been found.

"We basically need help," Bruce Harrington, eldest of the three surviving brothers, told a press conference at the Orange County Sheriff's Department.

"Our appeal from a personal level is to people of the community, to those who know something they maybe haven't connected with the crime," Harrington said. "Perhaps someone saw something thrown from a car, or he may have seen somebody driving away.

"Our appeal on a societal level is that what happened to Keith and Patty can happen randomly to anyone else."

The reward, which has been deposited in a savings account, will be paid for information leading to the arrest and conviction of the killer or killers. All information will be handled in strict confidence, Harrington said.

In addition to Bruce Harrington, family members at the press conference included the dead woman's parents, Francis and Rita Briscoe, Keith Harrington's two other brothers Ron and Douglas, and their father Roger Harrington.

It was Roger Harrington who discovered the bodies. The couple had been living in a house he owned while Keith completed his medical studies at UC Irvine.

There were no signs of forced entry and nothing appeared to have been taken, sheriff's deputies have said.

"That there is no apparent motive is the saddest and most frustrating factor in their deaths," Bruce Harrington said. "This was a senseless and apparently non-motivated crime.

"There would be a degree of comfort if we could say this was a robbery or that they had enemies. But they were warm and compassionate people; there is nothing in their background that can help us," he said.

Interviews with friends, business associates and schoolmates have not produced any information, Harrington said.

Niguel Shores has a front gate operated by security personnel, but they reported nothing unusual the night of the murders.

However, Harrington pointed out, someone on foot would have little trouble gaining access to the houses in the community.

Since the murders, Harrington said, neighbors of the couple have taken additional precautions, including buying dogs.

Something like this (the murders) is not supposed to occur in a community like this. But it has," Harrington said.