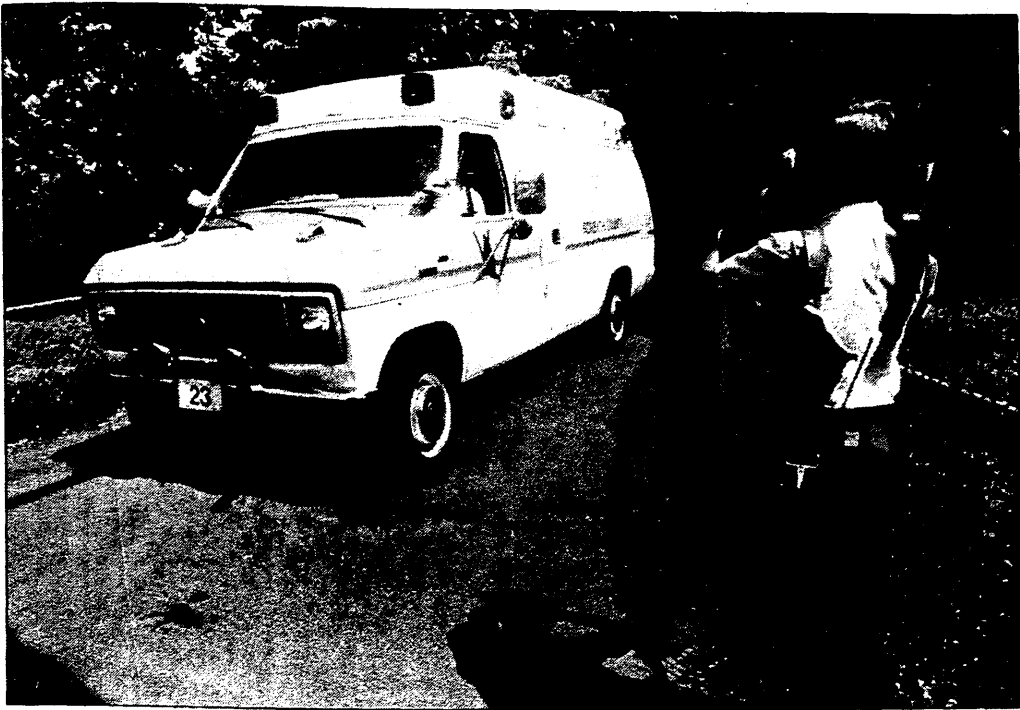




The three bodies were removed from the Old Town house shortly before noon on Monday, May 20. Investigators knew the news media would be clamoring for information and pressure for a quick solution would be heavy.

Fritz was cool and confident and showed no nervousness

(From A8)

an earful. She filled them in on Susie's estrangement from her family over Fritz, Susie's relationship with Fritz and Fritz's strange behavior.

On Friday morning, May 24, Gentry and SBI agent J.W. Bryant drove to Reidsville to talk with Annie Hill Klenner, Fritz's mother.

Annie Hill talked about Susie and the breakup of her marriage. "Doctor," as Annie Hill called her husband, had helped Susie and the boys. Now Fritz was doing the same. Some people thought there was more to it than that, but her mind wasn't in the gutter and she didn't think so.

She knew that Fritz did live some with Susie. He was very protective of her and the boys. He'd trained the dogs to protect them, too. Susie had been attacked one night on her way to the trash dump, but her dogs had driven off the assailants.

Annie Hill said that Susie turned to her after having trouble with her mother, and now Susie visited her instead of her mother.

Fritz was very close to his father, she said. He went to the University of Mississippi, never got into medical school, but he worked in his father's office. He did lead people to believe that he was at Duke Medical School for a couple of years, she acknowledged, but he finally admitted to his family that he wasn't.

Fritz was a good boy, she said. Once he'd been timid and humble, but he'd really come out recently because of his new work. He was employed by some secret governmental agency that had sent him off for special training with guns and explosives.

She told about a bomb that had been left at the house, intended to kill Fritz, but he had disarmed it before it went off. She told about Fritz and Susie making a courier run with a satchel of money but returning with it because nobody appeared to pick it up.

Recently, she said, SBI agents had stopped Fritz and searched his Blazer. It had cost \$3,000 to repair the damage they'd done.

Gentry and Bryant exchanged wondering glances.

About the previous weekend, Annie Hill said that on Friday Fritz had gone camping in the Virginia mountains with a friend, Ian Perkins. He told Ian to meet him at 6 p.m. in the state park at the top of Roanoke Mountain, about 90 miles north of Reidsville. But Fritz was late getting away. He left shortly after Susie and the boys arrived at her house for dinner. Susie had been to see her lawyer in Reidsville that afternoon.

Later that night, she said, Ian called. He said he'd waited at the park until it closed at 9 and Fritz hadn't shown up, so he'd gone back to his room in Lexington, Va., where he was a student at Washington & Lee University. A little later, Fritz called, said he was at the mountain but couldn't find Ian. She told him he'd gone home, and Fritz said he'd drive to Lexington to get him. So she knew Fritz was camping that weekend.

Gentry asked if Annie Hill knew of any trips Fritz had made out of state the previous July. She said that he and Susie had made a business trip to Atlanta one weekend, but she couldn't remember which.

Ian Perkins' mother, Camille O'Neal, lived just down the street from Annie Hill. The detectives decided to stop on the chance Ian might be there.

"This doesn't have anything to do with the Newsom murders, does it?" Camille O'Neal asked after the detectives introduced themselves.

"Yes ma'am, it does," Gentry said.

"Oh, my," she said.

Ian's mother tried calling him but discovered he was at a seminar all weekend. The detectives said they would try to get up with him later.

Susie came by her brother's house that night. Across the street, Annette Hunt was helping her son, Joey, get ready for his high school prom. He was thoroughly tuxedoed. His car gleamed with polish. His mother had even scrubbed the whitewalls. Annette went to get Susie to show off Joey in all his splendor.

"You're overdoing this thing, you know," Susie said to Annette with a little smile.

"Someday, you'll be doing the same thing for your sons," Annette said.

"No," Susie said, shaking her head somberly.

A night hike to the peak

The next week, at 11:05 a.m. Tuesday, May 28, Gentry and SBI agent Sturgill showed up unannounced at Susie's apartment. She came to the door wearing slacks and blouse, drying her shoulder-length hair with a towel. The detectives asked to see Fritz, and she went to get him. He came out of the bedroom bleary-eyed and yawning, wearing a one-piece, olive flight suit, socks but no shoes.

The detectives asked him to come down to the SBI office on Swing Road for an interview. He agreed, went to dress and came back wearing khaki pants and a sport shirt. He had a cased knife on his belt, and he stuck a small flashlight into his rear pocket.

At the office, Gentry asked about Fritz's work and

At 10:43 Tuesday, Detective Allen Gentry returned Tom Lynch's call. Tom told him about the murders of his mother and sister. Gentry wouldn't forget the date of those murders, July 22. That was his birthday. Tom said he believed the two sets of murders were connected and suggested what the link might be: Fritz Klenner, Susie's cousin.



Gentry

Fritz was a weird guy, Tom said, and his former wife had a strange relationship with him. That was the first time Gentry heard Fritz's name.

training as a physician. Fritz got indignant and answered curtly. He'd trained as a physician, he said, but he had no degree. He had worked with his father as an assistant.

"I don't see that topic is relevant," he said.

The detectives went on to what was relevant — his activities for the weekend of May 18.

Fritz told about getting to Roanoke Mountain late, not being able to find Ian, calling his mother. He drove to Lexington, got there about midnight, picked up Ian, drove to the Peaks of Otter campground on the Blue Ridge Parkway and arrived about dawn.

The campground has self-registration. He and Ian signed in for lot B-3. In fact, he still had the stub from the registration envelope in his wallet, and he produced it.

He and Ian had slept until about 2 p.m. Saturday, fixed lunch and gathered some wood. They'd planned a night hike to the peak along a four-mile trail. They left about 8 p.m. On the way it rained, and they stopped and built a fire. They got back to camp well after midnight, rested for a while, cooked breakfast, broke camp about noon and returned to Ian's rooming house in Lexington.

Fritz said he took a shower, called his mother and Susie, then drove to Natural Bridge where he met Susie and the boys. They had dinner at the cafeteria, took a little hike, then drove to Greensboro, arriving about midnight. The big chow took off after a cat as soon as they got there, and he spent most of the night looking for him.

After Rob called and told Susie about the deaths, she was stunned, he said. Susie and her mother had problems, he said, but he, Susie and Rob were always close.

He knew Delores Lynch. He'd met her at Susie's wedding and seen her at the custody hearing in 1982. He knew Tom and got along well with him because, like Tom, he'd been divorced himself. He knew that Tom wanted to double his visitation rights.

Fritz also went on to tell about somebody tampering with Susie's Audi Fox before she traded it and about her finding the boys' toy animals with their throats cut. He'd put a deadbolt lock on her door, and the maintenance people had lost the key.

As he talked about keys, he pulled out his own key ring, and both detectives noticed a handcuff key on it. To them, only two kinds of people had handcuff keys: cops and bad guys. Fritz, they knew, was no cop.

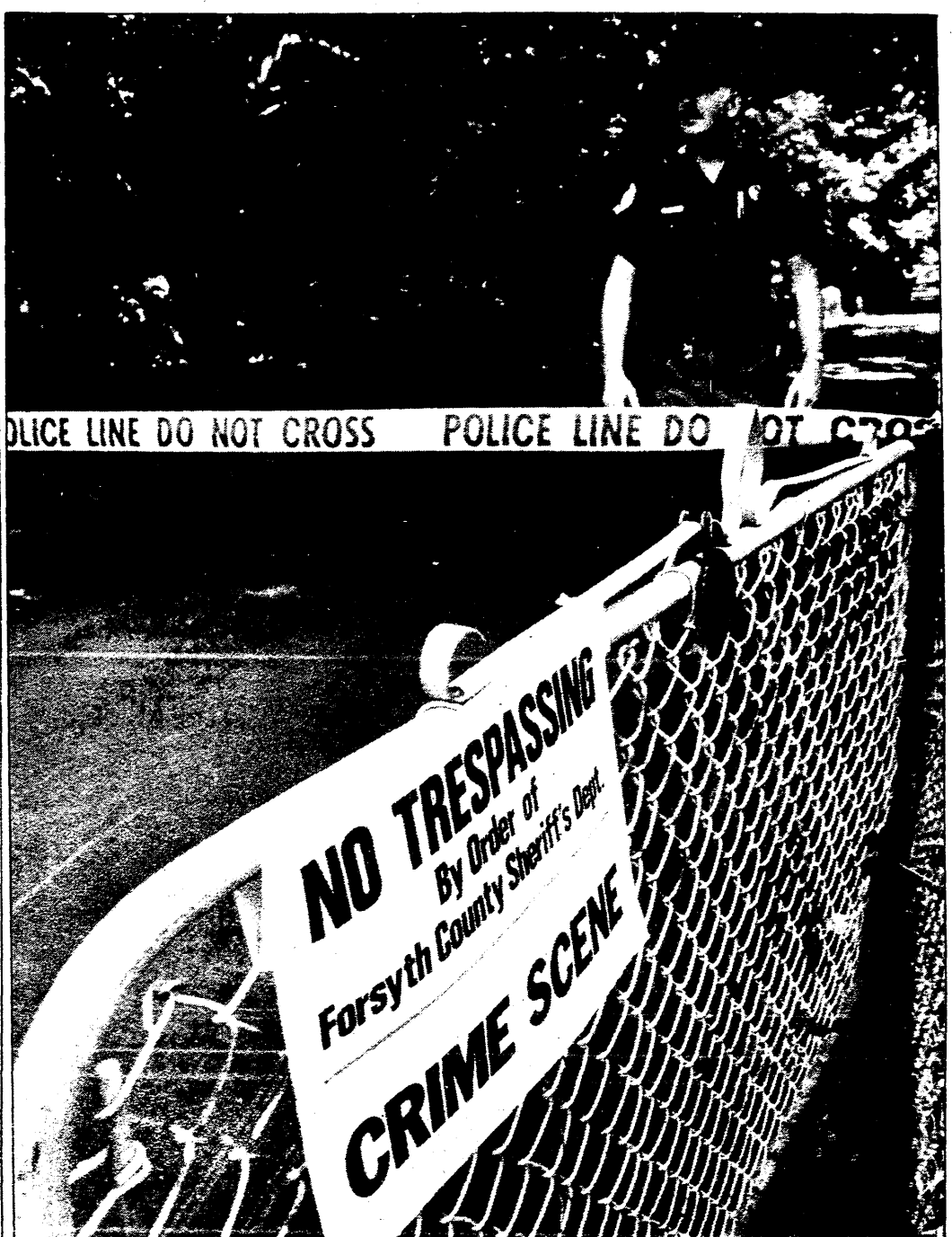
The detectives asked about military training. Fritz said he had none.

They asked about weapons. He said that he and his father had a third-class firearms license and that his father loved and collected handguns but most were gone now.

They asked about his relationship with Ian. He said that Ian had gone camping with him, that Fritz had taken him to his father's farm where he taught him compass and map reading, rappelling and rock climbing.

Fritz was very cool and confident and showed no nervousness. But as the detectives took him back to the apartment, they were confident that their investigation was on the right track.

Jerry Bledsoe, 44, is a senior writer and columnist for the News & Record. He is a two-time winner of the national Ernie Pyle Memorial Award and has won several N.C. Press Association awards. A native of Thomsville, Bledsoe worked for the Greensboro Daily News, the Louisville Times in Kentucky and The Charlotte Observer before returning to the News & Record in 1981.



Gerry Broome/News & Record



Officials worked through Sunday night to Monday after the bodies were found

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