

# Smiths were slain as they slept

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Lyman R. Smith, 43, and his wife Charlene, 33, Ventura, were evidently attacked while they slept, killed quickly in their beds and then tied up, according to information from police investigators and other sources. (Obituary C4)

Sources close to the case quoted police as saying the violent deaths of the prominent attorney and his attractive wife were so sudden "they didn't know what hit them."

Ventura Police Capt. Paul Lydick said a fire log found in the bedroom appears to have been the murder weapon. The log was reportedly found on the bed.

Twelve-year-old Gary Smith found his father and stepmother dead Sunday in the bedroom of their Ventura hillside home.

"The victims had retired for the night," Lydick said, "and died as a result of a single blunt force injury to the head of each of them."

The captain said he wouldn't characterize the slayings as execution style. Other sources close to the case supported that by quoting officers as saying that though the couple were tied up when found, they had been bound after they died.

"It's too early to tell if it's a random act of violence," Lydick said. But, he said, "homicide is very rarely a random act."

Ending a three-day silence, in which little or no information about the investigation was released, Lydick said, "There's a lot of rumors going around from sources that are inaccurate, and that generates a lot of problems."

He said both bodies were bound and covered with bed sheets.

"Neither of the victims appeared to be sexually molested and their bodies were not mutilated," said Lydick.

"There was no evidence found of forced entry to the residence or any indication of a robbery or burglary."

Smith and his wife were believed to have been killed sometime Thursday night or Friday morning.

shaken and puzzled by the deaths Tuesday.

"Just the not knowing is dreadful," said one close friend of the family, who asked not to be named. "You have this overwhelming feeling that somebody ought to be in jail and you wonder how close they (police) are to an arrest."

Emotional shock waves that have yet to dissipate were generated by the news of the killings.

Many of those contacted reflected on the fact that Smith was a leading candidate for appointment by the governor to one of two vacancies on the Superior Court. A partner in the Romney, Smith & Drescher law firm, headquartered in Santa Paula, Smith was also a prominent figure in the county's Democratic Party leadership and was involved in a wide range of civic affairs.

Little has been said, however, about his wife, whom friends have

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described as a bubbly and popular person.

"She was a fantastic person. There wasn't anybody who didn't fall in love with Charlene immediately," said longtime friend Claire Lewis, wife of Superior Court Judge Marvin Lewis. The Lewises live near the Smith home in the Clearpoint area.

"She could walk into a room and everyone would know she was there because of her presence, her personality," said Mrs. Lewis.

One person who has suffered a particularly severe loss is Jill-Karen Morrill of Thousand Oaks, a longtime friend of Mrs. Smith.

"We were (like) sisters to one another for the last 20 years and our names were synonymous," said Mrs. Morrill. "No one thought of me without thinking of her and no one thought of her without thinking of me."

The Smiths — both in second marriages — had no children together, and Mrs. Morrill said that Charlene Smith had "incredible fondness and deepest love for my two children. They were the children she never had. Tiffany-Ann, 9½, and Brett-Adam, 4½," she said. "They were just like Lyman and Charlene's own kids."

Born Charlene Herzenberg on April 17, 1946, the future Mrs. Lyman Smith was a Ventura County native.

She was also an only child. Her parents died when she was an infant, so she was raised by her grandmother, Gladys Herzenberg.

Mrs. Smith grew up in Camarillo, attending elementary schools and graduating from Adolfo Camarillo High School with a major in business in 1964.

After one year at Ventura College, she went to work as a legal secretary for the Camarillo law firm of Taylor, Stone and Storch.

In the next several years she would work as a legal secretary for at least three firms, working finally at Smith's firm in Santa Paula in 1967.

She was married in late 1969 to Michael Doyle, a young automobile club employee who later entered the sheriff's academy and became a deputy.

That marriage ended in May of 1972.

She and Smith were married in 1975.

Mrs. Smith left employment with Smith's firm to work in the Municipal Court offices in Camarillo, Oxnard and Simi Valley. She quit that job in August 1979.

During the remaining five months of her life, Mrs. Smith was self-employed. For a time, she ran "The Gold Cellar," a gold business in which she sold gold jewelry.

Most recently she looked forward to decorating the interior of some condominiums her husband had helped finance.

Mrs. Smith's grandmother, her only known surviving relative, died in 1977.