

Wise murder case — a tangled web . . .

(Continued from A-1)

years on such accusations as disturbing the peace, malicious mischief, bigamy, aggravated assault, rape and drunk driving, according to records. In all those cases, however, the charges were either dismissed or he was fined.

As for the girls, both were most recently seen early this year in Grass Valley, about 50 miles northeast of Sacramento. Tiffani was seen in a store there in

sunday special

February with Lee Casner, 37, another of the suspects in the case. He is charged with accessory to murder and kidnapping and felony child concealment.

However, investigators who went there that month found no trace of the children — once again a step or two behind the movement of the girls.

Those who reported seeing the girls said they generally looked in good health, which was especially heartening in Brandi's case because she suffers from cystic fibrosis and needs medicine to digest food properly. Without it, she would die. Somebody has obviously taken care of her medically, police believe.

Those who investigators believe probably know the whereabouts of the children, Casner, Juanita and Michael Iwakiri, Summers and his sister, Karen Carino — all of whom have been charged in the case — either deny any knowledge of the children or say that although they may have seen the children during the past three years, they don't know where they are now.

In addition, police believe that some members of Casner's family in Cedar Ridge, just outside Grass Valley, who have been questioned but not charged — including his sister-in-law, Vivian Casner — know more than they are saying and could come up with the girls if they had to. Police also believe Casner's brother, Robert "Jim," probably knows where the girls are.

Vivian Casner was granted immunity from prosecution when she testified at Michael Iwakiri's preliminary hearing in San Bernardino earlier this month. Iwakiri, 31, of Boise, Idaho, is charged with perjury and accessory to murder and kidnapping.

His wife, Juanita, 27, is Vivian's sister. Juanita has been charged in Idaho with what would be the equivalent in California of felony child concealment. Investigators believe she babysat the girls off and on between April 1977 and June 1979 at her Boise home.

What has baffled police, as they've arrested one person after another, is why so many people are possibly involved, what connections they have with each other, and more importantly, why they are apparently involved with Summers. (See accompanying diagram.)

Police say the crime goes beyond the scope of just a kidnapping; that it is probably a conspiracy. But if it is, what is the motive, are still more people involved, why won't those charged talk, and why can't police get the girls back?

Investigators, saying they would rather have witnesses than suspects, have told most of those arrested and charged that they can go free if they will say where the children are. But the offer has been met with denials or silence.

The Casners and the Iwakiris, police say, are very family-oriented. Why would they risk disruption of their lives and embarrassment for their children?

Because of those reasons, police believe the stakes must be very high, that the children are for some reason so valuable to those involved that they would lie, possibly to protect each other. Or, police say, perhaps they are protecting Summers. If so, what could be so important that those charged would face long terms in prison for their silence? Investigators have no answers.

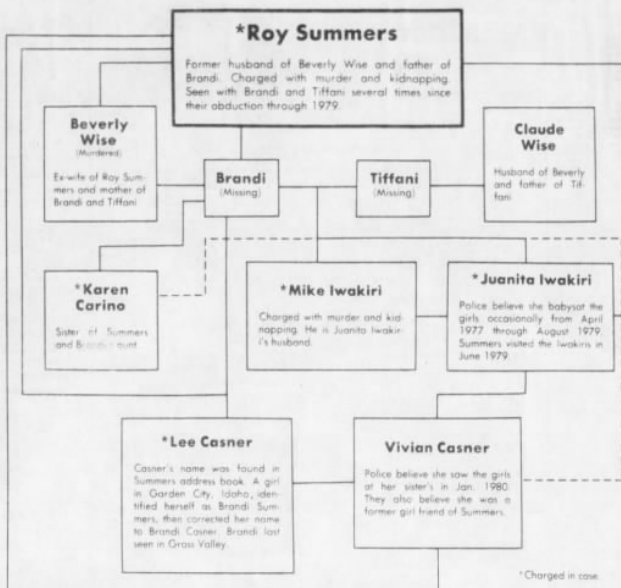
"My intent is to reduce the value of the kids to zero (to whoever has them)," homicide Lt. Don Levan recently told a reporter. "We hope to make it no longer profitable to have the kids so they'll want to exchange them for something more valuable, like freedom from prosecution."

The September meeting, which reopened the investigation, was called because "there always were questions about the case from the very beginning," Levan said recently. "It was an unsolved case that bothered everybody. There was never a satisfactory determination of the status of the children."

Added Detective Don Meyer who, along with Detective John McDonald, has worked the case since it was reopened: "I've been chomping at the bit for 2½ years to get at this thing. Most of the department feels this way, too."

"I feel like they're our kids. It has been a personal thing. Everybody feels that way. I just don't work on this case eight hours a day. I live it 24 hours a day, seven days a week. I'm not going to be satisfied until we get those girls. That's the goal. God help all these people involved if something happens to the kids."

As is customary in a renewed effort, the case was



All of the persons arrested in the Wise case apparently have some tie to the principal suspect, Roy Summers, either directly or through others. The broken lines indicate a more peripheral connection.

assigned to two detectives who had not worked it previously.

Upon re-examining information compiled during the initial investigation, "it became apparent that Summers had never been satisfactorily eliminated," Levan said. "We evaluated the case information and laid out an approach to eliminate him altogether or make him (get him identified as the suspect). We weren't going to stop until this was done."

The original investigation took police in all directions which, Levan said, "really helped us a lot with the renewed effort" because they initially

investigators eliminated a lot of possibilities."

One person eliminated as a suspect was Claude Wise, now 29, the dead woman's husband, the father of Tiffani and stepfather of Brandi. An Air Force sergeant who was stationed at Norton Air Force Base, Wise moved to Fairfield, Calif., soon after the kidnapping. Police questioned him several times about the crimes and he passed two polygraph tests. Police also reviewed evidence picked up at the crime scene. One important item was a map bearing specific markings.

The existence of the map was never adequately

explained during the initial investigation, Levan said.

This time, detectives eventually traced it to one of Summers' ex-wives, Luella Marie Tullis, also known to use the last name "Bower." She told investigators that when she left Summers in March 1977 he had it in his possession.

Every other lead has been by "word of mouth," Levan said. "Then you need to evaluate that word."

Ironically, Levan said that once Summers was chosen as the main target of the renewed investigation, the thrust was to prove his innocence.

But "the more we investigated, the harder it became to prove that. We found more and more evidence pointing to his guilt," Levan said.

That technique was one of many new or unusual ones investigators used in the case. Ordinarily, police take a suspect and try to prove his guilt.

In checking Summers' alibi — that he was in Utah when the crimes were committed — detectives determined that the story "wasn't as firm as it had appeared on the surface," Levan said.

"We were prepared in Utah to walk right in on him (in September). We were surprised to find he was divorced and gone. We didn't know where he was and we had no idea where to look."

So, detectives went to Northern California and "zeroed in on Livermore and Pleasanton," Levan said.

In 1977 Summers had lived in Livermore while married to Luella, the fifth of his seven known wives. Detectives checked his background — neighborhoods he frequented, people he knew. All that time, investigators were on the lookout for the children.

Summers' sister, Karen Carino, now of Springfield, Va., had lived in Pleasanton until the end of 1977. Several of Carino's former neighbors in Pleasanton recognized photos of the girls that police showed them. The neighbors told officers they remembered the girls as having visited Carino shortly after the kidnapping.

The neighbors also recalled that Summers was there with the children about that time. Based on that and other information gathered in Utah, Carino was charged last November and Summers in December.

(As it turned out, Summers was in custody in Oregon at that time on an assault charge. He was convicted earlier this year of a misdemeanor assault charge against his seventh wife, Connie. During the attack last fall, Connie suffered a severely broken right arm. Doctors have since told her the arm will probably have to be amputated.)

The San Bernardino County District Attorney's office has yet to extradite Carino, who has not been jailed from Virginia.

As the investigation continued, Levan said, "it became apparent (he Summers) had the kids under his control. He must have been other places with them and they stayed with him. So we started interviewing his wives to put together a profile."

"With every wife we would come upon some information that led to the children. Using that trail, we began to pick up more sightings of the children and who they were with. That led to the Casners."

Last September, Brandi had identified herself as "Brandi Summers" at a church in Garden City, Idaho, then corrected herself and said she was

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Another slim victory . . .

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delegates to 639 for Kennedy. A total of 1,066 are needed for the nomination.

The Michigan voting was watched for signs of political fallout from the ill-fated mission to rescue the U.S. hostages in Iran.

In Washington, Stephen Smith, Kennedy's brother-in-law and campaign manager, issued a statement saying, "We're very pleased with the results, especially under the circumstances."

An aide said Smith was referring to the restricted participation in the caucuses, to Kennedy's shortened campaign schedule in the state and to "an initial surge of support for the president" in light of the aborted hostage rescue mission in Iran.

Kennedy's aides have maintained that the Massachusetts senator would defeat Carter soundly in a primary election in Michigan.

Tim Kraft, spokesman for the Carter-Mondale Presidential Committee, said the outcome was "a good day's work."

Kraft said the Kennedy campaign needed a win and had to settle for the slim victory. Meanwhile, he added, "We just keep piling up those delegates."

Kraft said Kennedy needs three out of four remaining delegates to be chosen to have a mathematical chance of overtaking Carter.

Asked how the aborted Iranian rescue mission may have affected the outcome of Saturday's caucuses, he replied, "That's impossible to tell, really. You can't tell what effect that had. We haven't heard any of the discussion at the caucuses."

Kraft said the Carter people "knew it was going to be close, almost a toss-up situation," even before the ill-fated rescue mission.

Kennedy was seeking his second victory of the week in a major northern industrial state. State party officials said about 40 percent of the approximately 41,000 eligible Democrats were turning out for the caucuses.

While Iran dominated the news during the 24 hours prior to the caucuses, the economy also was a

major issue in this state, hard hit by widespread layoffs in the automobile industry.

Random interviews with participants in the caucuses throughout the state turned up no strong indications that the news from Iran was dominating the caucus balloting.

"I want Kennedy," said a voter in Flint. "It doesn't matter what happened yesterday or the day before."

A Carter supporter in Gaylord, Mich., called the ill-fated rescue mission "a very difficult decision to make," but said it didn't affect her vote "other than feeling deep sorrow" for the president.

Charles Holman of Detroit said he voted for Kennedy after deciding that inflation was the key issue.

"After Iran, I thought I might vote for Carter because I think he's doing all he can to free the hostages," he said.

Only about 41,000 persons were eligible to participate in the caucuses, and Mayor Coleman Young of Detroit, Carter's leading supporter in the state, predicted the turnout could be as low as 15,000. There are approximately 5.2 million registered voters in Michigan.

Because of the limited participation, the contest for Michigan's 141 Democratic National Convention votes has been viewed as a test between Young's organization and the United Auto Workers union, where Kennedy has the support of most top leaders including Douglas Fraser, the UAW president.

ERA drive under way

CHICAGO (AP) — AFL-CIO President Lane Kirkland opened a drive Saturday to win Illinois endorsement of the federal Equal Rights Amendment by warning legislators that labor endorsements in November election would hinge on their votes on the ERA.

"Full economic justice for women will always be a central goal of the labor movement," Kirkland said at a conference of about 2,000 national labor leaders.

A Thought For Today

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