

Escaped Mental Patient

Police Track Suspect In Massacre At Chino

By Jon Ferguson
Intelligencer Journal Staff

Police have charged a 27-year-old man who escaped from a Pittsburgh mental institution with the brutal murders of four people at a Chino, Calif., horse ranch last Sunday. A former Lititz woman was one of the victims.

Kevin Cooper, who was charged Thursday with four counts of murder and one count of attempted murder, has not been apprehended. Det. Chico Rosales, of the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department, said Cooper was last seen in Tijuana, Mexico early Thursday evening.

Cooper, who police believe acted alone, was also spotted during the "last day or so" driving the victims' stolen car in various locations in Southern California, including San Diego, Rosales said during a telephone interview. The vehicle has not been recovered.

The detective said policemen from San Bernadino and San Diego, FBI agents and Mexican authorities are currently conducting an extensive search of Southern California and Mexico with the aid of helicopters in hopes of capturing Cooper.

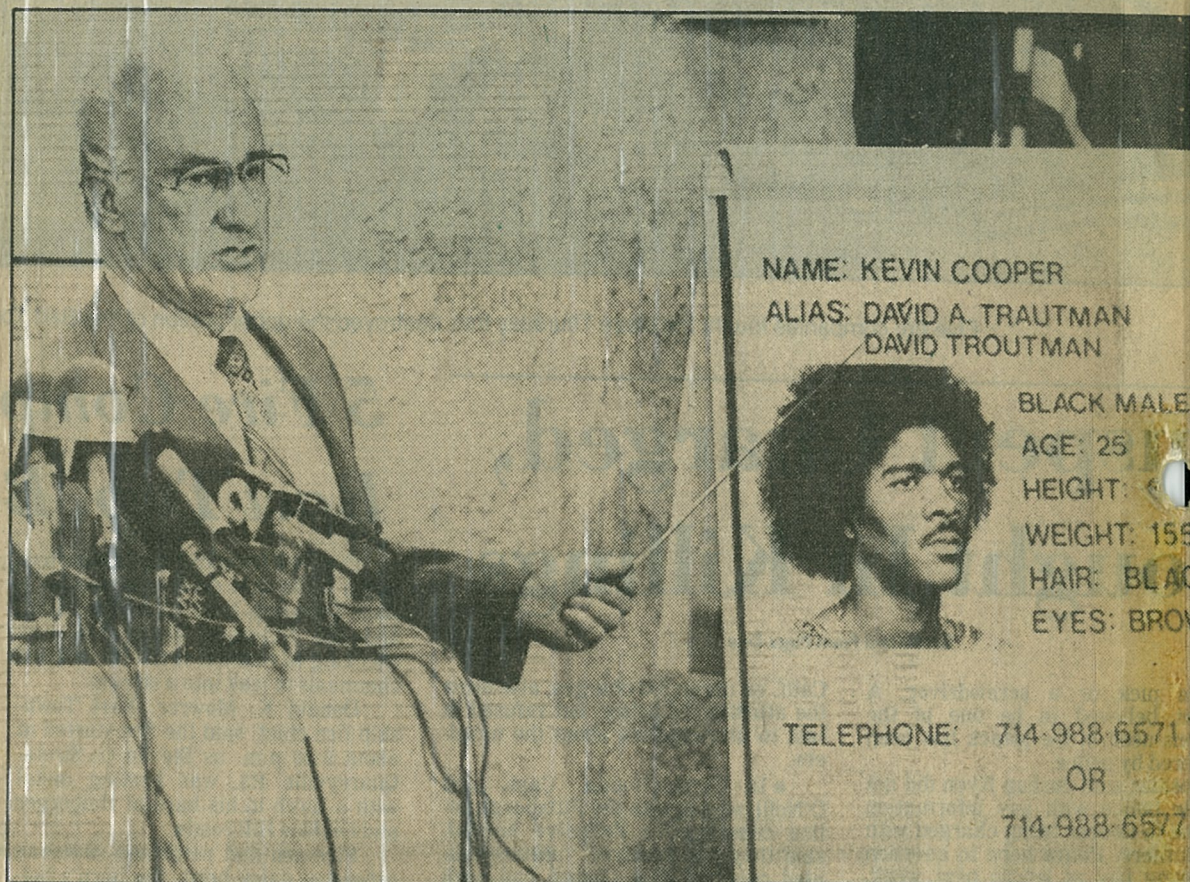
"We're down there right now," Rosales said. "We're confident. We're very optimistic that there will be an arrest soon."

Rosales said physical evidence, including fingerprints, were found at the scene of the murders and at a vacant house near the victims' home.

He said the "good, solid" evidence tied Cooper to the crime.

Cooper is accused of killing Peggy Ann Ryen, 41, a former Lititz resident, her husband, F. Douglas, 41, their daughter, Jessica, 10, and Christopher Hughes, 11, a neighbor who was spending the night with them. Their eight-year-old son, Joshua, survived the massacre and is under guard and in stable condition at a hospital. The boy's throat was slashed, his collar bone and ribs were broken and he had been beaten around the head. The bodies were found in the Ryen's ranch-style Chico Hills home. Arabian horses were raised by family.

■ The bodies of the victims were slashed and stabbed in the arms, legs and chest and all received more than 20 wounds. Police believe the murder weapons were a hatchet, a knife and



Sheriff Floyd Tidwell points to a chart identifying Kevin Cooper as the suspect wanted in the

murders of the Ryen family of Chino, Calif. Also on the chart are police telephone numbers.

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