

# Prison escapee charged in Chino Hills murders

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CHINO — A prison escapee was charged yesterday with the brutal murder of four persons in a Chino Hills home early Sunday morning.

San Bernardino County Sheriff Floyd Tidwell said there is proof that Kevin Cooper, who fled the California Institution for Men's minimum-security facility eight days ago, was at the scene of the hacking and stabbing murders of Franklin Douglas Ryen, his wife Peggy Ann, their daughter Jessica, 10, and a visiting neighbor, Christopher Hughes, 10.

"At this time we believe he is the only one involved," Tidwell said at a late afternoon press conference in the Chino City Council chamber yesterday.

Tidwell said the search for Cooper, who goes by a number of aliases, has focused on the Mexican border area, and the sheriff appealed to the media for help in locating the suspect, who is believed to be driving the Ryens' 1977 white station wagon with im-

itation wood paneling, license number 2ALL731.

Tidwell said investigators' attention began to focus on Cooper Wednesday.

Cooper is described as 25 years old, black, six feet tall, weighing about 150 pounds. A picture distributed to the media showed Cooper wearing an afro hair style and with a thin moustache. Cooper has used the aliases of David Trautman, Chico Mann and Chico Gaines.

Persons with any information are asked to call the sheriff's task force at (714) 988-6577 or 988-6571.

Cooper was arrested and convicted of two burglary charges in Los Angeles early this year under the name of David A. Trautman and was assigned to the CIM minimum-security facility as a non-violent criminal.

The day of his escape, June 2,

one day after Cooper's assignment there, CIM officials learned that he was wanted in Pennsylvania as Kevin Cooper on charges of kidnap and rape and various property crimes.

An Allegheny County warrant said Cooper had escaped from Mayview State Hospital, a penal mental facility, where he was awaiting trial. The information arrived minutes after Cooper made his escape.

Meanwhile, memorial services for the Ryens were held yesterday morning at St. Paul's Lutheran Church in the city of Orange. Services for Christopher were held Wednesday in Claremont.

The other victim of the bloody rampage in the Ryens' hilltop home, Joshua Ryen, 8, was reported in good to stable condition yesterday at Loma Linda University Medical Center where he is under guard and being treated for a lacerated throat, broken collarbone, broken ribs and stab and puncture wounds.

The bodies of the victims

each bore more than 20 wounds inflicted by three types of weapons — a heavy-bladed instrument such as an ax or hatchet, a knife and a puncture weapon such as an icepick or a screwdriver.

Sheriff Tidwell said information leading to the suspect had not been obtained from the boy but from evidence at the scene. He would not identify the nature of the evidence nor say why authorities believe the suspect is in the Mexican border area.

Tidwell defined "the scene" as the area surrounding the Ryens' ranch as well as the home where the murders occurred. He said that definition would include the unlivin house on the adjoining Larry Lease ranch where detectives found blood smears and clothing thought to contain blood stains.

Tidwell said at a press conference Tuesday that those responsible for the crime were believed to have been in the house before and after the murders, which are thought to have occurred. (See MURDERS, Page B-3)



Staff photo by Greg Crowder

San Bernardino County Sheriff Floyd Tidwell, center, announces suspect in Chino murders and displays photos of him at a press

conference yesterday. At left is San Bernardino County District Attorney Dennis Kottmeier.