

After A Teenager's Trials, Amy Had Begun Putting Her Life In Order

BY SUSAN USHER

A mischievous, bubbly China doll with big, "blueberry" eyes, a child-like innocence, a compassionate heart and her father's dry wit. That's the way her family will always remember Amy Caroline Frink, the 18-year-old Shallotte teenager who was brutally slain last month. Amy's body was found June 24 in the Brooksville, S.C., section just south of the state line near Hickman's Crossroads, several miles and a state away from where her 1988 silver Subaru was recovered that same day. North Carolina and South Carolina law enforcement agencies are continuing to investigate.

Who was Amy Frink?

"I saw darkness—I had a life of no meaning," she had written only a few months before her violent death. "I was depressed, but now I'm happy and the light came my way one day when I decided to pray. An angel flew over and set me ablaze. I fly now. I have wings. I'm so happy in this kingdom of ease. If only I had said to myself in my boredom times, 'there's nothing left to do but smile smile smile!'"

"Peace man." All the fears, joys and soul-searching of a young woman found expression in a steady flow of journal entries, poems and letters. Like the other women in her family,

Amy was a writer.

People of faith, Barry and Birdie Frink are confident their Amy has found that peace. Now the Shallotte couple are seeking peace and some sense of closure in their own lives as they reflect on both the unanswered questions surrounding Amy's violent death, and on her short, but sometimes turbulent life.

"I'm just waiting for the phone to ring and someone to tell me they've made an arrest," said Barry. "That is what is keeping me going."

It is the hope of Birdie Frink, Amy's mother, that one teenager's life might be turned around, or one soul saved because of their family's experiences.

At 18, Amy Caroline Frink was a 102-pound complex bundle of vulnerable child and questioning woman, full of life and energy, doubts and insecurities, emotional highs and lows. No saint, but rather a teenager who made and paid for her share of mistakes and sometimes feared she had disappointed the parents she loved so dearly.

"A good young'un; mischievous, but good," recalled her mother a week after Amy's funeral, smiling through hovering tears.

Like many parents, Barry and Birdie Frink have had differences of opinion about lifestyles with their daughters over the years. But through the ups and downs in their

relationships, one thing has never faltered: Their steadfast love for each other, parents and children.

Born prematurely, the youngest of their three daughters, Amy was always tiny, delicate and so fair-skinned she could never have the (See FAMILY, Page 2-A)

AMY FRINK, shown here before her graduation in May from Southeastern Community College's Adult High School Diploma Program, had been "in some pretty rough spots," but in past months had begun getting her life together and making plans.



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Beauties And 'Brellas
Undaunted by a little liquid sunshine, these crowned heads kept their smiles through Monday's N.C. Fourth of July festival parade and other Independence Day activities in Southport. At left is Miss Black Pearl, Claressa Brown; at right is Miss North Carolina, Dana Stephenson of Garner, who made her first official appearance at the festival since her recent coronation. More festival photos are inside this issue.

\$6,000 REWARD OFFERED Murdered Teen Beaten, Stabbed, Run Over: Police

BY ERIC CARLSON
Amy Caroline Frink died a painful, lingering death at the hands of a killer who remains on the loose, probably in Brunswick or Horry County, S.C.

Evidence "strongly suggests" that the Shallotte teenager was sexually assaulted by the person or persons who killed her in the early morning hours of June 23, investigators said Tuesday.

They say Frink, 18, was definitely beaten, stabbed repeatedly and run over with her car at least twice before she bled to death while lying beside an isolated dirt road just south of the state line.

"Our precious daughter has died a cruel, horrible and needless death," said a tearful Birdie Frink as she and her husband Barry faced a press conference in Calabash Tuesday afternoon. She took over at the microphone after Mr. Frink found himself too overcome with emotion to speak.

"I appeal to anyone who has any type of information about this to please come forward. Please come forward," she said. "I beg you from the bottom of my heart to please come forward."

Acting Horry County Police Chief Gerald Whitley announced that a reward of \$6,000 has been offered for information leading to the arrest and indictment of a suspect in the Frink murder case. The money has been made available jointly by

CrimeStoppers telephone tip lines in both states.

"We won't quit. I can promise you that," Whitley told the Frinks privately before addressing reporters.

The Brunswick County Sheriff's Department and Horry County Police have formed a joint task force to investigate the Frink murder. Assisting the two local agencies are the N.C. State Bureau of Investigation (SBI), the S.C. State Law Enforcement Division (SLED), the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Shallotte Police Department.

Detectives from Brunswick and Horry counties, working together in pairs, have conducted more than 160 interviews with Amy Frink's friends and associates, along with residents of the Pinecrest/Shingletree area where her car was found and in the Brooksville community near what is believed to be the murder site.

Although at least two names have been mentioned as suspects in the investigation, police said they were not close to making an arrest Tuesday.

Information relating to the killing has been sent to the FBI's Behavioral Sciences Laboratory in Quantico, Va., in hopes of developing a psychological profile of the murderer. Police believe they already have enough evidence for a successful prosecution, once a suspect is identified.

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Commssioners, School Board Talk Cordial, But No Decision Reached

BY SUSAN USHER

Brunswick County commissioners and school board members talked about school system budget priorities and needs for nearly 1½ hours Tuesday night at a joint meeting that was the first step in the education board's appeal of its \$9.4 million county allocation for day-to-day operation during the 1994-95 school year.

School and county officials and

an audience of approximately 60 people—many of them wearing "CHILDREN FIRST" badges, left the meeting without any final word on whether the schools' allocation will be increased.

While school officials might have preferred an immediate positive response, school board Chairman Donna Baxter said she was satisfied. "We're willing to sit back and let them have some time to consider what they've heard, to consider our request."

Board of Commissioners Chairman Don Warren adjourned the meeting at approximately 10 p.m., after a 15-minute recess during which members of the two boards conferred among themselves and with others informally.

"The board's not ready to make a decision tonight to give them more money at this time," he said. "I think the commissioners and staff will be evaluating any additional information we have received."

"I don't know," Warren replied, when asked if there is a chance of commissioners increasing the school appropriation. "We shall see. Here we go again."

The joint meeting was the first

step in a legal appeal that could lead to court-directed mediation, as resulted last year, or a hearing and settlement in Brunswick County Superior Court.

In case commissioners choose not to increase their allocation, the school board has set a meeting today (Thursday) at 6 p.m. in the CP&L Visitors Center at Southport if it is available, to decide whether to continue its appeal to the next level.

The school board has advised commissioners it doesn't believe the county's \$9.4 million current expense allocation is enough to meet current obligations and continue programs at their existing levels, much less begin meeting other needs.

In addition to continuing programs at their current levels, Johnston asked commissioners to give the school board freedom to spend \$360,000 allocated for equipment based on overall needs, rather than a set \$30,000 per school. "We have some schools that have greater needs than others," he said.

While no agreement on the budget was reached, after Tuesday's session Warren and school board officials said they were pleased with

the boards' effort to communicate and to understand each other's positions. The overall tone of the meeting was cordial, compared to the rancor apparent when the two boards met for the same purpose last July 23.

"I think we had some good conversation with the board of education tonight. Some of the answers we received were pretty positive and some were not," said Warren.

"I think we had more open discussion, a better exchange," Baxter reflected afterward. Superintendent of Schools Ralph Johnston agreed, encouraged by the commissioners' reception of his key points.

Glen Peterson, attorney for the school board, said he was "most encouraged" by the focus on needs and priorities within the school system rather than on "personalities."

"The questions commissioners asked this time were good questions, fair questions," he said.

Most questions related to personnel changes within the central office and their effect on the budget, and a proposal to pull three talented teachers from their classrooms for three-year special assignments helping (See BOARDS, Page 2-A)

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Shallotte Printer Serving Federal Term For Passing Counterfeit Bills

BY SUSAN USHER

A Shallotte man is serving a 12-month sentence in the federal penitentiary at Butner for passing counterfeit dollars of his own making.

Paul Wayne Miller, 51, a former local printer, has served one-fourth of his term. He is scheduled for release March 13, 1995, from Butner's minimum security section called "The Camp," where he works as an orderly.

Miller was never indicted, nor was he arrested prior to his appearance in U.S. District Court. Last October defense attorney Gale Adams reached an agreement with prosecutors similar to a plea bargain. A "criminal information" was entered in court in which Miller was charged by the Eastern District U.S. Attorney's Office with a single count of "possessing, passing and uttering" counterfeit federal reserve notes in \$5, \$10, \$20 and \$100 denominations, a violation of the U.S. Code.

Miller was not charged with manufacture of counter-

feit notes because it would have made little difference in judgment under standard federal sentencing guidelines, said U.S. Secret Service Agent Michael Casper of Wilmington, who investigated the case. However, Miller's printing of at least \$5,000 in four denominations of bills was considered as an aggravating factor in sentencing, adding slightly to the severity of his sentence.

"It appeared to be a one-person activity from what we can tell," said Casper. "He was just trying to get some money—buying small items and getting cash in change, then going to the next store. Typical passing-type activity."

U.S. District Judge W. Earl Britt imposed judgment Jan. 3 in federal district court in Raleigh. Miller reported to Butner March 15.

At the end of his 12-month active sentence Miller will remain under supervised release for 36 months. He has paid a \$50 special assessment, and will be paying a

\$1,700 fine in installments. The standard minimum fine of \$3,000 was reduced because of inability to pay.

Casper said the counterfeit bills were tracked to Miller after he made the mistake of trying to pass a bill at a Shallotte grocery store in January 1993. A sharp-eyed clerk there caught the fake and called Shallotte Police Department, which routinely turned the bill over to the U.S. Secret Service for investigation.

"They didn't know we were already investigating," said Casper. "Most counterfeiters don't pass bills in their own backyard."

Identical faked bills in varying denominations had begun showing up in the Charlotte area starting Dec. 14, 1992.

"He had been printing four bills to a sheet of paper," said Casper. "We figure he manufactured probably a little over \$5,000. That's the minimum amount that could have been manufactured based on the bills that were

passed and the total sheet value. He admits to destroying some and there were some scraps."

Casper said Miller had been working part-time "for an innocent individual who was totally cooperative with our investigation."

"He was employed as a printer. He had a key, so he could get in at night and had access to the equipment when no one else was there and counterfeiting supplies are relatively easy to get."

On a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 the highest, Casper rated Miller's counterfeit bills as "about a 5 or a 6—passable, but not so good a teller at Food Lion couldn't intercept it."

Starting Feb. 6, 1995, Miller will be eligible for electronic home confinement for the last 10 percent of his sentence.

Miller could have received up to 18 months imprisonment, two to three years supervised release and a fine of \$3,000 to \$30,000.