

# Slain coed's car fou

*Crime, District*

NOV 18 1977

NOV 18 1977

By PAT CORCORAN  
Missourian Staff Writer

McCLURE, Ill. — The probe into the shooting death of a SEMO State University coed took on state dimensions today when authorities discovered the victim's car on the Wal-Mart store parking lot on South Kingshighway in Cape Girardeau.

The body of Sheila Ellen Cole, 21 years old, was found at a roadside rest stop on Illinois Route 3, just south of McClure shortly after 7 a.m. Thursday. Reports of the slaying were not issued by Illinois State Police District 13 headquarters in Du Quoin until about noon Thursday.

Investigators stated that the shooting apparently occurred about 10 p.m. Wednesday. The victim was shot twice at close range with a .38-caliber revolver inside the women's restroom.

Alexander County Deputy Sheriff Robert L. Orick said Miss Cole was first shot in the front of the head. The bullet lodged in the restroom's wooden wall.

Then, after the body slumped over face forward, Miss Cole was shot again in the back of the head, authorities said.

Deputy Orick said he went past the rest area on routine patrol around 10 p.m. Wednesday and noticed a Volkswagen sedan parked there but because of the area's frequent use, attached no significance to it.

Authorities searched Thursday for Miss

Cole's car, a light blue Chevrolet Nova. It was found about 10 a.m. today on the Wal-Mart lot. Miss Cole had told friends at about 6 p.m. Wednesday that she was going to that store to do some shopping.

Cpl. John B. Brown, Cape Girardeau police, said today that the car's discovery brings city police into the investigation. "We're in it, but I couldn't say how long we're in it," he said.

An employee of Wal-Mart reported today that the car was not in the lot when she came to work at 8:30 a.m. today. The car, when found later, was about half-way between the store and Kingshighway. The employee said there was no car that far out in the lot when she arrived.

Cpl. Brown said the case has some unusual aspects. When asked if police were operating under the assumption that the victim was kidnapped from the parking lot, hauled to Illinois and shot, he replied that it is too big an assumption to make at this time.

City police are investigating to see if there were any previous sightings of the car in the lot before its discovery.

Illinois investigators have theorized that the victim was driven to the crime scene by someone she knew. There were apparently no signs of a struggle, and her clothing was not disarranged.

Deputy Orick said she was wearing a light jacket and the hands were still thrust into the



Sheila Ellen Cole

jacket's front pockets.

The deputy also noted a set of tire tracks which angle off the highway, through grass and in front of the restrooms. The tracks then continue onto a gravel road which borders the rest area. The tire treads left an impression in a bare muddy spot. Her purse was found nearby, stuffed in a trash can.

Miss Cole was described as a quiet, w

# and on store lot here

liked young woman. She was the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Harold Cole, 8937 Crest Oak, Crestwood. A senior at SEMO, majoring in zoology and minoring in chemistry, she lived at 39 South Sprigg in Cape Girardeau.

Cpl. Brown said the bullets recovered from Miss Cole's body will be checked for ballistics comparison with .38-caliber slugs taken from the bodies of Mrs. Floyd K. Parsh and her daughter, Brenda, who were slain in Cape Girardeau three months ago.

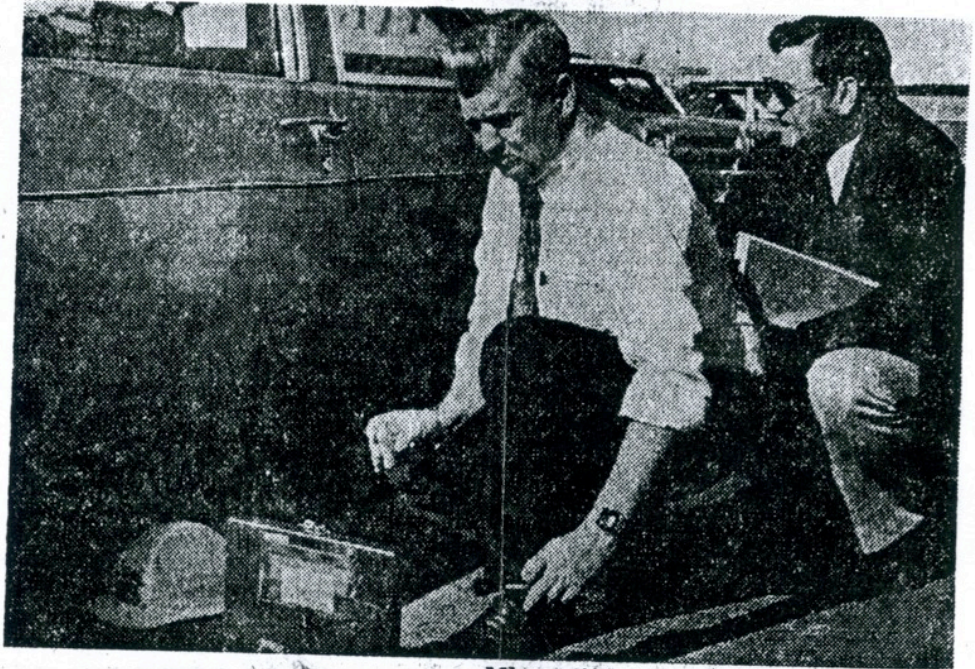
The body was found in the restroom by a passerby and reported to the Alexander County Sheriff's Department Thursday morning. The investigation is being conducted partly by Detective Connell F. ("Fred") Smith Jr., of the Illinois Division of Investigation. Detective Smith could not be contacted for comment this morning.

An autopsy into the death is pending.

Authorities have ruled out sexual attack and robbery as motives because of the victim's condition and because \$21 in travelers checks were recovered in the purse.

Official reports state that Miss Cole may have had one or two roommates sharing her apartment, located directly across the street from the Cape Girardeau police headquarters.

There were unofficial reports that persons living near the rest area reported hearing what sounded like gun shots at about 10 p.m. Wednesday.



Missourian Photograph by Phil Nash

## Checking for prints

NOV 18 1977

Ptlm. Ronald Thomas, Cape Girardeau police evidence technician, and Det. Gary Ashman, Illinois Division of Investigation,

check the car of slain victim Miss Sheila E. Cole, 39 South Sprigg, for clues.

# FBI joins in slaying probe

NOV 20 1977

By PAT CORCORAN  
Missourian Staff Writer

The two-state probe into the shooting death of Miss Sheila Ellen Cole expanded over the weekend as the Federal Bureau of Investigation joined into the hunt.

However, authorities Saturday were left without any specific motive and have no suspects. Investigators are seeking a link between Miss

Cole's murder and the shooting deaths of Mrs. Floyd K. Parsh of Cape Girardeau and her daughter, Miss Breanda Parsh, here in August.

Mrs. Parsh and Miss Parsh were both killed by .38-caliber pistol wounds in the head. Miss Cole was shot twice in the head with a .38-caliber pistol. Her body was found Thursday at a rest area on Illinois Route

3, south of McClure.

Illinois Division of Investigation (IDI) detectives began the weekend by conducting preliminary interviews with all the known acquaintances of the victim, a 21-year-old SEMO State University senior. Miss Cole's home was in Crestwood, a St. Louis suburb.

In an attempt to pinpoint her movements on Wednesday,

the night of her death, detectives said she left her apartment at 39 South Sprigg at about 7:30 p.m. after telling one of her roommates that she was going shopping at Wal-Mart Discount City and Schnucks-Walgreen, both on South Kingshighway.

Purchases made by Miss Cole about 8 p.m. at Wal-Mart were found in the trunk of her car. The car was discovered

on the Wal-Mart parking lot at about 10 a.m. Friday. The last entry in her checkbook, recovered with her purse at the rest area on Route 3, reflected the Wal-Mart purchases.

Then, either by force, or of her own free will, she left her car on the parking lot and left with a person or persons yet unknown, investigators said. The key remained in her light

blue Chevrolet Nova's ignition. NOV 20 1977

CAR LEFT BEHIND  
Investigators said they are reasonably certain the car remained in the parking lot from the time she left it until the time of its discovery. This determination was made partly through tests, and by noting that the car's windshield wipers were still in the

(See Slaying, page 7)

# SLAYING

(Continued from Page 1977)  
"on" position. It rained early Wednesday night.

Giving further credence to their belief is the report of a Cape Girardeau policeman on the third shift Wednesday night who noticed that the car was in the lot. The policeman, investigators said, did not work Thursday night and his sighting was not brought to investigators' attention until Friday.

Among the leads detectives are pursuing is the sighting of a Volkswagen sedan in the rest area by Alexander County Deputy Sheriff Robert L. Orick at 10 p.m. Wednesday, the estimated time of the slaying. Investigators also have some tracks from a car and a foot print left in the soft, muddy soil of the rest area.

Several crime laboratories have received evidence generated thus far by the investigation. Material taken at the rest area was sent to the Illinois Bureau of Identification crime laboratory in DeSoto. Material found in and around the car, and the automobile itself, were sent to the SEMO Regional Crime Laboratory in Cape Girardeau. Bullets recovered from

the body will be sent to the FBI or another federal agency's laboratory in Washington D.C., for testing.

Special agents from the FBI's Cape Girardeau district office have entered into the investigation because of the interstate transportation involved in this crime, investigators explained.

Presently, the IDI has two detectives working fulltime on the case. Cape Girardeau police have at least one detective assisting in the investigation.

Miss Cole was the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Harold Cole, 8937 Crest Oak, Crestwood. Both parents came to Cape Girardeau on Friday.

In addition to her parents, Miss Cole is survived by a brother, David Cole, Kirkwood; a sister, Mrs. Muralee Owens, Kirkwood; paternal grandmother, Mrs. Ethel Cole, Union, maternal grandmother, Mrs. Jerrine Wood, Flat River.

Friends may call at the Alexander Crestwood Funeral Home until 10 a.m. Monday. Funeral service will be in the Emmaus Baptist Church in Courtois at 1 Monday afternoon.

# Police ask citizens' help in murder case

NOV 21 1977

*Crime, District*

By PAT CORCORAN  
Missourian Staff Writer

The Cape Girardeau FBI office issued a plea today for anyone who was on the Wal-Mart Discount City parking lot or at a McClure, Ill., rest area Wednesday night to come forward to aid in the investigation in the slaying of Sheila Ellen Cole.

The FBI is assisting the Illinois Division of Investigation in the probe of the 21-year-old SEMO State University senior's shooting death at the rest area south of McClure on Illinois 3 Wednesday night.

A special agent at the FBI office said the agency is pursuing the case under the federal kidnapping statutes in conjunction with the IDI, which is investigating it as a homicide.

"We are hoping that anyone who was on the Wal-Mart lot between 8 and 9 p.m. Wednesday will come forward and assist in the investigation."

might be able to shed new light on the circumstances surrounding Miss Cole's departure from the discount store's parking lot.

Cape Girardeau Police Chief Henry H. Gerecke said today that his department is providing assistance to Illinois state and federal investigators.

Authorities have stated they will compare ballistics on the slugs recovered from Miss Cole's body with the .38-caliber bullets recovered from the bodies of Mrs. Floyd K. Parsh and her daughter, Brenda, who were slain in Cape Girardeau in August.

Mrs. and Miss Parsh were killed with a .38-caliber Charter Arms snub-nosed revolver, according to tests performed by a federal agency.

Investigators have declined to speculate on

sure if the victim was forced from the parking lot nor if the killer was known by the victim.

Miss Cole's body was discovered around 7:30 a.m. Thursday in the women's restroom at the poorly lighted rest area. She had been shot twice in the head at close range with a .38-caliber handgun.

Her light blue Chevrolet Nova was discovered Friday on the Wal-Mart parking lot. The key was in the ignition and the purchases she had made in the store were locked in the trunk.

An autopsy confirmed that the coed had not been sexually assaulted, nor was anything believed missing from her purse which was found stuffed in a trash can near the body.

Authorities are still puzzled over a motive in the shooting. Police described the victim as a quiet, well-liked girl. She majored in zoology and minored in chemistry at the university.

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# Gun probe fruitless

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NOV 22 1977

By PAT CORCORAN  
Missourian Staff Writer

Illinois authorities today had the sewage pits at a McClure rest stop pumped out in an unsuccessful attempt to find the gun used in the slaying of Sheila Ellen Cole. Detectives from the Illinois

Division of Investigation noted the chance of finding the .38-caliber handgun at the bottom of the pit was slim. However, Det. Gary Ashman explained, "It is just something we have to check out. Experience has taught us you can't second-guess these people (killers)."

Arthur Sharp and Joe Cunningham, whose septic tank cleaning service regularly empties the waste pits at the rest area for the Illinois Department of Transportation were called to pump out the waste matter. After the pits under both the men's and women's rest rooms were emptied, the debris at the bottom was probed with long-handled shovels and claw arms to make sure no handgun had been thrown in after the 21-year-old SEMO State University senior from Crestwood was slain at about 10 p.m. Wednesday.

With no apparent motive in the slaying, investigators said that locating the handgun, and tracing it through serial numbers may be the only link to the coed's killer.

Two slugs recovered from

the young woman's body have been sent to Washington for testing in federal ballistic laboratory. This tests will tell authorities the make and model of the gun.

While Det. Ashman was on hand to oversee the pumping operation, Det. Connell F. ("Fred") Smith Jr., who is heading the IDI's homicide investigation, continued interviews of the slaying victim's acquaintances in Cape Girardeau. NOV 22 1977

Det. Ashman repeated the call issued by the Cape Girardeau district FBI office for any person who may have been on the Wal-Mart Discount City parking lot Wednesday night around 8 or 9 p.m. when Miss Cole was believed abducted or around the rest area when the shooting occurred. All information will be treated

confidentially, Det. Ashman stressed. Some persons have already volunteered information, he said.

"People must realize that we have to have something to work on, we're not miracle workers who can pull a suspect out of thin air, the detective said.

In the case of a mentally deranged slayer, the normal investigative pattern of looking for a motive is broken.

The FBI has joined the IDI's investigation on the assumption that the victim was kidnapped in Cape Girardeau and transported across state lines before the slaying occurred.

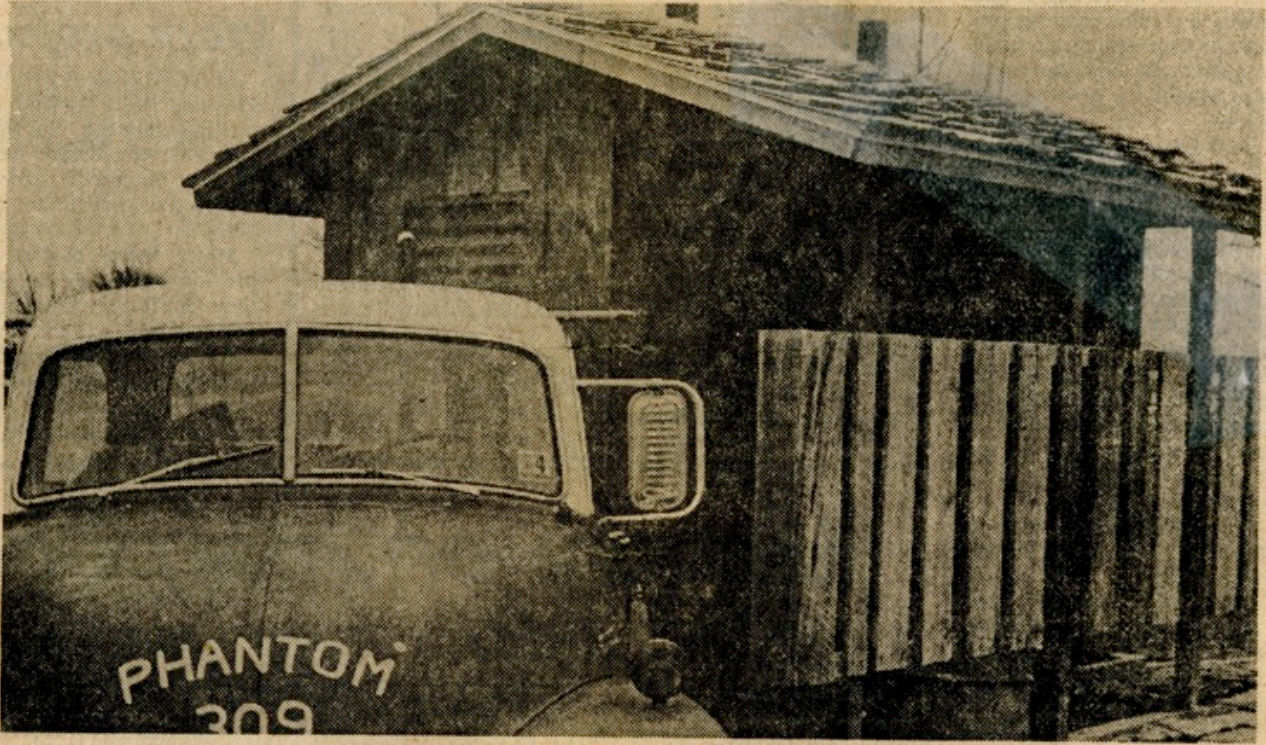
The rest area is located on Illinois Highway 3, just south of McClure. The victim was found early Thursday morning lying in the women's rest room. She had been shot twice in the head at close range.

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NOV 2 2 1977

### Search for murder gun

NOV 2 2 1977

This was the scene at the McClure rest area this morning as Illinois authorities had the waste pits beneath the rest rooms pumped out in an

unsuccessful attempt to recover the gun used to kill a SEMO State University coed.

## No gender ruled out in murder

NOV 2 3 1977

By PAT CORCORAN  
Missourian Staff Writer

Investigators probing the death of Sheila Ellen Cole said they have not ruled out the possibility that the killer may have been a woman.

As the week-old probe into the 21-year-old SEMO State University senior's shooting death continues, authorities note that no firm evidence has been discovered to indicate if the assailant is male or female. NOV 2 3 1977

Miss Cole's body was discovered in a highway rest area on Illinois Route 3, just south of McClure early Thursday morning. NOV 2 3 1977

Coroner's tests established that the Crestwood native had been killed about 10 Wednesday night. She had been shot twice in the head with a .38-caliber hand gun.

An attempt Tuesday to retrieve the slaying weapon by pumping out the waste pits

under the rest area's toilets proved fruitless. NOV 2 3 1977

Detectives from the Illinois Division of Investigation (IDI) were to continue conducting interviews in the Cape Girardeau area today of the girl's acquaintances. The IDI and the Federal Bureau of Investigation are conducting a joint investigation into the coed's slaying.

## Rumor in Cole slaying

NOV 2 5 1977

Authorities today discounted the rumors circulating that they have arrested or at least identified a suspect in the killing of Sheila Ellen Cole.

Authorities said the widespread rumors concerning a suspect may be due to the public concern over the 21-year-old SEMO State University senior's slaying and any link it

might have with the unsolved killing Mrs. Floyd E. Parsh and her daughter Brenda. NOV 2 5 1977

Rumors that police had arrested a suspect or had identified a suspect have been spread throughout the area since Tuesday afternoon.

Investigators repeated their call for anyone who

may have been on the Wal-Mart Discount City parking lot or around the McClure, Ill, rest area on the night of Nov. 16 to come forward. They may contact either the Cape Girardeau police department, the Federal Bureau of Investigation district office here or the Illinois State Police 13A substation in Cairo to volunteer information. NOV 2 5 1977

# Inquest reveals victim

DEC 1 1977

By PAT CORCORAN  
Missourian Staff Writer

CAIRO, Ill. — The father and roommates of slain coed Sheila Ellen Cole testified Wednesday night at a coroner's inquest that it was completely unlike her to leave her car unlocked or place purchases she had made in the trunk.

Miss Cole, a student at SEMO State University in Cape Girardeau, was found shot to death Nov. 17 at a Highway 3 rest area near McClure.

Her car was found the next day on the Wal-Mart store lot in Cape Girardeau with the keys in the ignition and packages in the trunk.

"I'd like to make this point very strongly," her father, Harold L. Cole of Crestwood, testified. "If her keys were found in her car, then she did not

leave the car voluntarily. She always took her keys and locked the car."

He noted also that he did not believe his daughter would have put her purchases in the car trunk. "She always just opened the door and threw them in the seat."

DEC 1 1977

Connie Walker, 39 South Sprigg, one of the slain co-ed's three roommates, agreed with Mr. Cole's testimony on his late daughter's habits.

"Her car was her pride and joy. She took good care of it. She was always telling me to lock the door," Miss Walker stated.

Also testifying at the inquest were two other roommates of Miss Cole, her boyfriend, and an agent of the Illinois Division of Investigation who

is in charge of the case.

Agent Connell F. Smith Jr., investigators are still awaiting results on the two slugs recovered from the scene and sent to the FBI crime laboratory in Washington, D. C.

Investigators have said it appears the murder weapon was a .38-caliber revolver.

Testimony described the slain coed as a State senior as a quiet, studious young woman. Her boyfriend, Matthew Sopko, 19, was the first person she had ever dated, her father said.

Mr. Sopko, also a SEMO student, was with Miss Cole for about an hour and a half p.m. on Nov. 16. Authorities e

# reveals victim's habits

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Agent Connell F. Smith Jr., told the jury that  
investigators are still awaiting ballistics tests  
results on the two slugs recovered at the crime  
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Investigators have said it appeared the death  
weapon was a .38-caliber revolver.

Testimony described the 21-year-old SEMO  
State senior as a quiet, studious girl. Her  
boyfriend, Matthew Sopko, 19, was probably the  
first person she had ever dated steadily, her  
father said.

Mr. Sopko, also a SEMO student, said he was  
with Miss Cole for about an hour between 4 and 5  
p.m. on Nov. 16. Authorities estimate she was

shot about 10 p.m., the same date.

He said they had dinner together and did some  
shopping. He described her as being in good  
spirits when she left him. They had been dating  
for about 13 months, he said.

Another of the roommates Jan Gredizer said  
she was studying at the kitchen table when Miss  
Cole made a telephone call to a store asking if  
photographs she had taken were ready. She  
made the call about 7:10 or 7:15 p.m. on Nov. 16.  
Miss Cole asked her roommates if they needed  
anything from Wal-Mart or Schnucks-Walgreens  
before leaving, according to testimony.

Mr. Cole said his daughter had never had any  
financial problems, was very conservative with  
her money and worked the summers she was at  
home.

## Still no lab report

DEC 6 1977  
McCLURE — Illinois authorities are  
still awaiting the ballistics report from the  
FBI crime laboratories on the caliber and  
make of the gun which was used to kill

Sheila Ellen Cole.

DEC 6 1977  
Detectives from the Illinois Division of  
Investigation (IDI) said two slugs from  
what is believed to be a .38-caliber  
revolver were sent to the crime lab in  
Washington. The slugs were recovered  
from the women's restroom in the rest  
area just south of McClure on Illinois  
Route 3 where the 21-year-old SEMO State  
University senior's body was found Nov.  
17.

DEC 6 1977  
The slugs used in the Cole killing will  
also be checked for a ballistics match with  
the slugs recovered from Mrs. Floyd K.  
Parsh and her daughter, Miss Brenda  
Parsh, who were slain in Cape Girardeau  
in August with a .38-caliber revolver.



# Search for linking clue

DEC 30 1977

Authorities are conducting the arduous search for a common thread that would connect the lives of a mother and daughter on the one hand and a university coed on the other, all slaying victims here this year.

A possible link between the crimes was disclosed Thursday, a preliminary FBI ballistics test on .38-caliber bullets taken from the three bodies.

Mrs. Floyd Parsh and her daughter, Brenda Parsh, were found shot to death in their home here last August. Miss Sheila Ellen Cole, a SEMO State University student, was found slain in a restroom near McClure, Ill., in November.

Cape Girardeau police detectives, Illinois Division of

Investigation (IDI) and district FBI office detectives have swapped bundles of reports on their respective investigations of the slayings, authorities said.

"We are checking, cross-referencing leads, trying to determine a common thread, if one exists, between the two cases," Police Chief Henry H. Gerecke said.

Authorities had awaited an FBI ballistics report of the bullets taken from the bodies of the three women before speculating whether the killings were connected.

In a prepared statement released Thursday, after a preliminary report was received, the three law enforcement agencies said the killings might be the work of

one "psychotic" individual and warned area residents, especially women, to "exercise extreme caution."

The statement reported that while the ballistics test showed some similarities in the homicides, it gave "no positive, definite or specific indication that the same weapon was used in both cases."

DEC 30 1977

"We don't want to be alarmists, but I feel it is our duty to alert the public," Chief Gerecke said of Thursday's statement.

He noted that he told his 22-year-old daughter, visiting here during the holidays from Texas, where she attends school, not to shop alone or to offer strangers rides.

"I told her I don't want her

to go shopping by herself," Chief Gerecke said. "And not to pick up anyone."

In the search for common threads among the victims, authorities have little to go on except the fact that Miss Cole's residence was next door to a nursing home where Mr. Parsh lived for several months following the deaths of his wife and daughter.

According to Mr. Parsh, however, he had never spoken to and was not acquainted with Miss Cole, Chief Gerecke said. Both Miss Cole's apartment and the nursing home are across the street from the police station on South Sprigg.

DEC 30 1977

Detectives have found no other associations among the

(See Murders, Page 16)

with 5:18 remaining, 70-69, and made it 72-69 on Whitley's tip-in. But Darnell Valentine, who topped the Jayhawks with 20 points, hit a three-point play at 2:10 and Clint Johnson scored the final three points.

again.

Advance lost Terry Tidwell on fouls halfway through the final quarter, putting a serious dent in the press, but climbed

# MURDERS

(Continued from page 1)

victims through their backgrounds, he said. "Nothing in their backgrounds would indicate any associations," Chief Gerecke said.

DEC 30 1977  
Cape Girardeau Detective Cpl. John B. Brown, assigned to the Parsh investigation, noted that Miss Parsh and Miss Cole did not live near each other in St. Louis.

Miss Parsh, who was employed as a fashion coordinator in St. Louis until she moved to Milwaukee, Wis., several months before her death, lived in Bridgeton. Miss Cole, a senior at the university and daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Harold L. Cole, had lived in Crestwood, Cpl. Brown said.

"Nothing seems close or seems to overlap at all," the detective said of the backgrounds of the victims.

DEC 30 1977  
Chief Gerecke noted, however, that a similarity in Miss Cole's and Miss Parsh's appearances might be a connecting thread.

But theories in the slayings are numerous and none have been ruled out as the investigation continues.

Chief Gerecke said it has not been ruled out that there are two killers. "If we sat back and said one man committed both crimes, then we close off avenues we might have explored," he said. "We are simply dealing in coincidences."

DEC 30 1977  
The apparent lack of a "normal" motive in the slayings, such as robbery, rape or revenge, is one factor leading authorities to theorize one psychotic individual may be responsible for the slayings, a law enforcement official said.

DEC 30 1977  
Authorities also have considered that the slayings of Mrs. Parsh and her daughter occurred two days following the arrest of David Berkowitz in the Son of Sam slayings in New York City, he said.

"That was just about the time Son of Sam was big in the newspapers and it could be that triggered something," the official said, adding that, "If we do have a true psychotic here, he might strike again."