

PARKER COUPLE **SLAIN** BY HILLSIDE CANNIBAL

By Heather Banks

PARKER—One week and a day after the double murder of Michael and Debbie Kellerman in Hillside, two more local residents were slain in a similar fashion.

Jason Caplan, 36, and Melissa Caplan, 37, husband and wife, were murdered in their Parker home on Friday. Mr. Caplan died at approximately 6:10 p.m., and Melissa expired at 7:00 p.m. police say.

Authorities were alerted to the scene when the couple's daughter, a minor, arrived at the residence the next morning and called 9-1-1. Her name was withheld by police.

Following the Kellerman murders, a special investigator offered his services to The Little Rock Metro News. The special investigator was on the scene with police at the Caplan home.

According to the investigator, the Caplan homicide may be the third double-murder by the same perpetrator, beginning with Steve and Betty Talbot in Manor, reported by this paper last month.

Police had no comment on the possibility of a serial killer, but a source close to the investigation confirmed evidence found at all three crimes scenes is similar.

Information observed by the new investigator, unaffiliated with law enforcement, was confirmed on background by Deputy Eric Lake of the Hillside County Sheriff's Department, who is heading the Kellerman and Caplan murder investigation.

A request was filed in Manor to combine investigations.

Authorities confirmed the small holes next to wounds discovered on Michael Kellerman

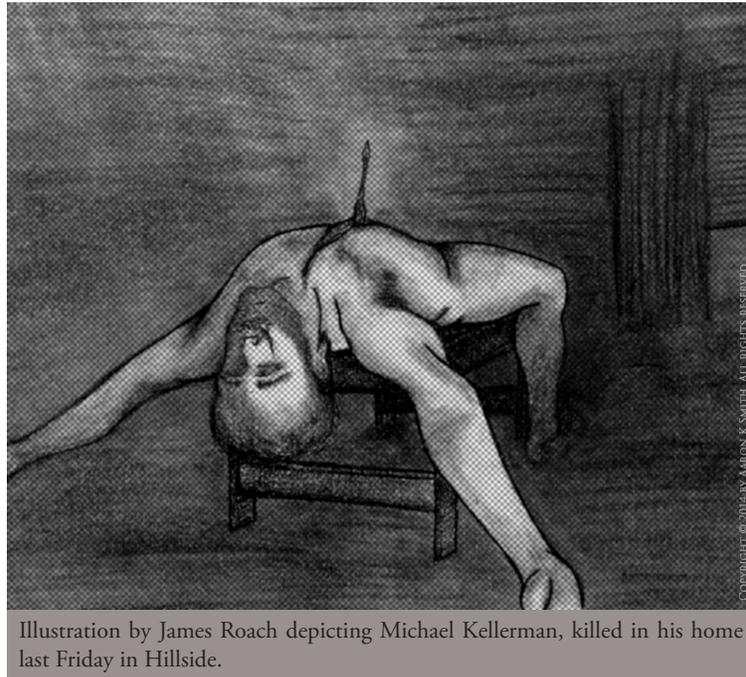


Illustration by James Roach depicting Michael Kellerman, killed in his home last Friday in Hillside.

were made with a fork found at the scene. Comparable holes were found in the body of Jason Caplan.

Dr. Maria Cruz, from the office of the Hillside County Medical Examiner, said, "Mr. Caplan was cut multiple times postmortem, and small, bite-size pieces of his body were removed. We can tell the cuts transpired after death because there is no bleeding at the wound sites, which means the heart was no longer pumping blood. Next to the cuts were tine marks from a fork found stuck in the body."

According to Dr. Cruz, the bizarre pattern of wound sites is not exclusive to the exterior of either victim.

"There are pieces of [Jason Caplan's internal] organs missing. The edges of the liver, a chunk of the heart, and the tips of both kidneys, which is similar to Michael Kellerman. The same tine marks appear next to those

severed pieces as well."

Due to the pieces chosen and holes from fork tines next to the wounds, speculation is mounting that the intruder consumed the missing pieces in an act of cannibalism.

"The wound pattern is consistent with anthropophagy, but we are waiting on forensics for a definitive answer," said Dr. Cruz.

No suspicious fingerprints were found at the scene of the Kellerman murder, but unidentified prints, possibly those of the intruder, were discovered at the Caplan home with the help of the investigator. Also discovered was a boot print.

Deputy Lake invited the investigator to the Caplan murder scene to offer insight into the crime. A neighbor, Brenda Hilbrant, 68, noticed the man and identified him as being a suspicious person in the neighborhood the night the Caplans were murdered.

"I didn't see him near the [Caplan] house, but he was just three blocks down the road around midnight last night. I don't sleep much."

Also suspicious according to police was the investigator's uncanny ability to discover evidence at the scene of the crime.

"Nobody is this good without having committed the crime himself," said a deputy on the scene.

The special investigator, James Roach, who claims he is innocent of the crimes, was taken into custody by Deputy Eric Lake.

Found in Roach's possession were drawings of other crime scenes including the image printed inset depicting Michael Kellerman, a map with the area surrounding the Caplan home circled in red, \$2180 in cash, and a foil wrapper containing meat that was being eaten by Roach at the time of his arrest.

The investigator says he was in the neighborhood scouting the area as a possible site of next strike due to geographic evidence.

Roach has not been charged.

The boot print in the Caplan's home matches the investigator's boot brand and size. A comparison of the boot prints, analysis of the meat, and assessment of the fingerprint is expected to exonerate or convict Roach.

