

4 of 999 DOCUMENTS

The Washington Post

October 30, 1994, Sunday, Final Edition

Officials Express Fears for Safety Of Missing Boys; S. Carolina Search Expands For Fleeing Carjacking Suspect

Barbara Vobejda, Washington Post Staff Writer

SECTION: FIRST SECTION; PAGE A3

LENGTH: 615 words

Authorities in the small textile town of Union, S.C., which has been the focus of national attention since two small boys were reported missing Tuesday night, continued their search yesterday. But law enforcement officials and family members expressed growing fear for the boys' safety and frustration with the lack of progress in locating them.

Their mother, Susan Smith, told police that a man with a gun jumped into her car through the unlocked passenger door as she was stopped at a traffic light. The gunman ordered her to drive a few miles, then forced Smith out of the car and ignored her pleas to let her take her sons, 3-year-old Michael and 14-month-old Alexander.

The carjacker drove off with the boys strapped in their safety seats, leaving Smith, 23, screaming desperately on a deserted road, she told police.

In the days since, hundreds of volunteers and law enforcement officers have searched the area, handed out fliers and tried to follow up on a steady stream of tips from across the country. But as the town prepared for a prayer vigil at the Buffalo Baptist Church yesterday, officials said there was no new information to lead them to the missing boys.

"It's just one of those toe-stumpers," said Lt. Mike Brown, a spokesman for the South Carolina State Law Enforcement Division. "We're running down leads, but we're not getting anywhere."

"Nothing has been happening," said Margaret Gregory, a relative of the family who is answering the phone at the home of Susan Smith's parents. Smith and her husband, David, from whom she separated in August, "are holding up the best they can," Gregory said.

The Greenville News reported yesterday that Susan Smith did not pass a polygraph test given to her by police on Thursday. The Charlotte Observer quoted sources saying the results of her test were inconclusive and that investigators hope to retest her.

The Charlotte paper also reported that the boys' father, an assistant manager at a local grocery store, passed the lie-detector test.

The Union County sheriff's department, which is coordinating the search, said there was no reason to believe that Susan Smith's account and description of the kidnapper was not legitimate.

"We're treating it as it happened: a kidnapping and abduction," said Capt. Roger Gregory. "We're not ruling out anyone, but we don't have a real suspect."

He would not comment on the results of the polygraph but said it was standard to give such tests in this type of case. Sheriff Howard Wells told reporters Friday that Susan Smith was questioned about inconsistencies in her account.

Police have issued a nationwide alert for the boys and the Smith car, a burgundy 1990 Mazda Protege.

While police have been inundated with tips, none has proven helpful so far. A convenience store robbery in Salisbury, N.C., by a man matching the description of the kidnapper proved to be unrelated when police arrested a suspect they said was not

associated with the missing boys.

More than 100 police officers and volunteers fanned out in a search Friday from the site where Susan Smith said the kidnapper left her, but they said they found nothing. She and the boy's father have issued tearful pleas for the kidnapper to return their children unharmed.

In the meantime, the town of about 10,000 people is organizing several separate efforts to help, from gathering pledges for reward money to hanging more than 400 yellow ribbons up and down the streets.

"Everybody is very, very concerned, simply because it's been so long," said Bill Graham, owner of Graham's Flowers. "We have our share of crime like everybody else. But carjacking: I don't recall there being another one."

LOAD-DATE: October 30, 1994

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

SERIES: Occasional

GRAPHIC: PHOTO, DAVID AND SUSAN SMITH ARRIVE AT THE UNION COUNTY, S.C., SHERIFF'S OFFICE LAST WEEK AFTER A CARJACKER TOOK SUSAN SMITH'S CAR AT GUNPOINT, BUT WOULD NOT ALLOW HER TO REMOVE HER SONS BEFORE DRIVING OFF. REUTER; PHOTO, AP

TYPE: NATIONAL NEWS

Copyright 1994 The Washington Post

8 of 999 DOCUMENTS

St. Louis Post-Dispatch (Missouri)

November 5, 1994, SATURDAY, FIVE STAR Edition

THE CARJACKING THAT WASN'T**SECTION:** EDITORIAL; Pg. 14B**LENGTH:** 261 words

The confession of Susan Smith may answer the question about what really happened to her two children, 3-year-old Michael and 14-month-old Alexander. But the admission that she killed her children raises a far more perplexing question: Why?

Ever since Medea, the crime of a mother murdering her children has evoked a special horror. Mothers are idealized as the givers of life, of nurturance, of unconditional and self-sacrificing love. And, of course, most mothers are devoted to their children and demonstrate that devotion daily.

It's impossible to fathom why a mother would resort to the unimaginable, irrational act of killing her children. The explanations offered - Paula Sims' postpartum depression or Susan Smith's apparent desire to be with a man who didn't want her children - are always woefully, painfully inadequate. More rational alternatives always exist, so it's a mystery why a Susan Smith would take the most drastic and destructive route.

No one may ever know what drove Susan Smith, but other questions can and should be answered. First and foremost, why did the police, who had divers search the waters of John D. Long Lake, miss the car? Were the waters really that murky?

When did the police first suspect Mrs. Smith? Did they suspect her all along? From the start, her story sounded suspicious; certain elements didn't add up. Are authorities certain that she acted alone?

When all these questions are answered, justice may be served. But the greatest mystery - the ins and outs of a human heart - will remain unsolved.

LOAD-DATE: November 6, 1994**LANGUAGE:** English**TYPE:** EDITORIAL

Copyright 1994 St. Louis Post-Dispatch, Inc.

9 of 999 DOCUMENTS

The Washington Post

November 4, 1994, Friday, Final Edition

S.C. Mother Arrested in Tots' Deaths; Police Find 2 Bodies, End Nationwide Search For Missing Youngsters

Gary Lee, Washington Post Staff Writer

SECTION: FIRST SECTION; PAGE A1

LENGTH: 916 words

DATELINE: UNION, S.C., Nov. 3, 1994

Police today recovered from a local lake the bodies of two small boys missing for the past nine days and charged their mother with murder.

Union County Sheriff Howard Wells, announcing the arrest of 23-year-old Susan V. Smith, said police hauled Smith's 1990 burgundy Mazda sedan from nearby John D. Long Lake late this afternoon and found two bodies in the back seat. The discovery brought to a tragic conclusion the nationwide search for the youngsters.

Wells, who read from a brief statement and took no questions from reporters, would not confirm the contents of an arrest warrant that stated Smith had confessed to the crime. Another official said she would appear in a York County court here Friday morning. Wells said police would not formally identify the victims until an autopsy was completed.

A distraught and tearful Smith had maintained that an unknown black gunman had jumped into the Mazda while she waited at a stoplight at the edge of town on Oct. 25, ordered her to drive several miles and then forced her from her car and drove off with her sons, Michael, 3, and Alexander, 14 months. In the days since, Smith and her estranged husband, David, had made emotional appeals on national television and radio for the boys' safe return. David Smith has not been implicated.

Susan Smith's story of the carjacking and kidnapping riveted and shocked people nationwide. Hundreds of searchers combed the rural areas of this northwest corner of South Carolina while police and FBI agents analyzed thousands of reports from Georgia to Seattle, ranging from people who thought they had spotted the missing car to a hunter who reported hearing a child in a forest crying for his mother.

Police divers previously had searched the lake where the Mazda was found today. The Union Federal Savings bank launched a fund drive to pay for the search; several local businesses contributed to a reward fund; and students organized a prayer vigil for the boys.

But from the first days of the alleged abduction, investigators had also focused their attention on Susan Smith. There were unconfirmed reports that she had failed two polygraph tests and that investigators had searched her home Wednesday and removed several bags of undisclosed material as evidence.

Suspicions deepened with reports that Smith in September filed for divorce from her husband and had sought a court order restricting him from visiting the children without 48 hours' notice.

Investigators discovered a letter several days ago from a man that Susan Smith was seeing, Knight-Ridder quoted sources as saying. The letter said he wanted to be with her but didn't want the children. Investigators, who did not identify the man, said that is what cracked the case.

Smith apparently drove her sons to Long Lake and let her car roll off a boat ramp into the water where the boys -- still alive -- apparently drowned, State Law Enforcement Division spokesman Hugh Munn told Knight-Ridder.

Throughout their investigation, authorities kept open the possibility of her involvement in the abduction. On Wednesday,

when asked by reporters whether Smith was a suspect, Wells said he had not ruled out anyone.

But Wells, godfather of a relative of Susan Smith, had concentrated efforts on the search for an alleged kidnapper. On Wednesday night, police had begun a door-to-door search for anyone with information about the case.

Tonight's announcement shocked residents of this mill town of 10,000. The crowd that gathered in front of the Union County courthouse, the towering, pillared building in the town center, erupted in gasps of despair when Wells broke the news.

Some of the bystanders, who wore yellow ribbons and pictures of the two boys, broke into tears. "It hurts so bad," said Dot Frost, an elderly woman who wept during an interview on CNN. "I see those poor little boys out there playing and us believing she was a good mother. She showed it; she prayed with them. I just don't understand it."

As of late this morning, Smith stood by her story about the carjacking. "I did not have anything to do with the abduction of my children," she told CBS's "This Morning." "It's really painful to have the finger pointed at you when it's your children involved."

"Our lives have been torn apart by this tragic event," Smith said earlier this week, her estranged husband by her side. "I can't express how much they are wanted back home." David Smith asked people to pray for the boys.

News of Susan Smith's reported confession particularly angered members of the small, close-knit African American community here. Many had thought it strange that nobody recognized Smith's description of the suspect or reported anyone missing.

The unraveling of her story reminded some here of the 1989 Charles Stuart murder case in Boston, in which Stuart, a white man, told police a black man had shot dead his pregnant wife. Stuart later apparently plunged to his death from a bridge as investigators zeroed in on him as the killer.

The Smith children's great-grandmother, Sarah Singleton, who lives in a Los Angeles suburb, expressed shock at Smith's arrest.

"I just couldn't imagine that Susan would do that. She always seemed to be such a devoted mother," Singleton, the father's grandmother, tearfully told KNBC television.

As news of the discovery of the bodies came across her television screen, she broke down and wept uncontrollably.

"Two innocent children," she said. "There is no explanation for murder."

LOAD-DATE: November 4, 1994

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

SERIES: Occasional

GRAPHIC: PHOTO, MICHAEL AND ALEXANDER SMITH, MISSING SINCE OCT. 25, ARE BELIEVED DEAD. THEIR MOTHER, SUSAN V. SMITH, BELOW AT NEWS CONFERENCE, HAS BEEN ARRESTED. REUTER

TYPE: NATIONAL NEWS

Copyright 1994 The Washington Post