Double slaying case may be tried

SAN BERNARDINO — A teenage boy charged with the fatal stabbing of his mother and sister will stand trial Jan. 5 if he pleads not guilty at a hearing next week.

At a detention hearing Tuesday, Charles Patterson, 15, was ordered to stay in Juvenile Hall while his case is being decided, said district attorney's spokesman Ray Pyle.

A settlement conference will be held next week at which it will be decided whether the matter should go to trial. If Patterson pleads guilty, there will be no trial, Pyle said.

A petition has been filed by the district attorney's office charging Patterson with two counts of murder.

The charred remains of Barbara Patterson, 37, and her 17-year-old daughter, Lori, were found Thursday after a fire in the family's home, 5026 Crescent St. Both had been stabbed repeatedly before the fire was set.

Patterson was arrested after his folding hunting knife was found in the house. It is believed to be the murder weapon, investigators said.

After his arrest, Patterson admitted killing the victims and setting the fire, according to police and a district attorney's spokesman.

As yet, investigators don't know what motivated the killings.

"We just don't know," said police Sgt. Chet Sunde. "Maybe a medical person could tell you, but I sure can't."

Staff photos by John Metzger

A sheriff's deputy inspects confiscated machine gun ammunition.

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Another weapons cache located in Wrightwood

By RICHARD BROOKS
Sun-Telegram Staff Writer

WRIGHTWOOD — Machine gun tripods, rifles, shotguns and tens of thousands of bullets were discovered here Tuesday in the garage of a gun dealer who neighbors say "likes to play army."

Sheriff's deputies towed a World War II half-track out of the one-car garage so they could obtain enough elbow-room to conduct the search. The vehicle was placed near a 1½-ton military pickup truck that was also found in front of the house owned by Mike Stringer of La Canada.

The munitions and a smaller stockpile — uncovered hours earlier in a Phelan home — may be connected to other caches recently found in Ontario, Pomona, Wrightwood and Lancaster, investigators said.

Federal agents and deputies from San Bernardino and Los Angeles counties say there's a strong possibility such a twin exists, judging by the items found at each location and similarities in their packaging. However, officers quickly pointed out they are not yet able to prove that theory.

Most of the munitions found Tuesday in Wrightwood were hidden in a sturdy, cinder-block bunker with a fiveslayer wooden top. The bunker is attached to the rear wall of a garage at 1987 Thrush St.

The waist-high enclosure was so well constructed it took five officers with pry bars and fire axes about 15 minutes to break into it. However, despite the builder's attempt at waterproofing the enclosure, rain apparently had seeped into the bunker and many of the weapons had rusted.

Although most of the items confiscated at Stringer's property are legal to possess, the cache included an automatic carbine, tracer ammunition and explosive fusing, investigators said. The items — especially the carbine and tracer ammunition — are illegal unless the owner has been granted closely-controlled, special permits.

Sheriff's Sgt. Bob Martin said officers had not yet talked to Stringer.

So far, the only person arrested in the puzzling case was arraigned Tuesday in Ontario, where a judge granted permission for samples of his handwriting to be taken.

Donald Wiggins, 41, of 1053 E. Main St., Ontario, is being held in county jail. He was arraigned on five counts — possession of a sawed-off shotgun, a destructive device, explosives, a machine gun, and receiving stolen property.

Over the protests of Wiggins' attorney, West Valley Municipal Court Judge David Merriam granted a prosecution request for a sample to be taken of Wiggins' handwriting. It is to be compared with handwritten notes found inside some containers that were seized in buried caches located at his home, at his business in Pomona and on a desert tract west of Lancaster.

Stringer, interviewed by telephone Tuesday evening from his Glendale gunshop, refused to discuss the Wrightwood cache. His attorney, Thomas Russell, also declined comment, except to say he would be "extremely surprised if any violations of the law are involved."

No one — including investigators and Stringer's Wrightwood neighbors — claimed to know precisely why the munitions had been stockpiled.

"He's always been a nice guy," one person said of Stringer. "Everyone likes him."

Initially, many said they could think of little reason why deputies had obtained a search warrant for the property.

However, the attitude became one of concern as deputies and federal firearm agents stacked about nine weapons and some 90 large, military boxes full of bullets near the front of the garage.

The full inventory was not available late Tuesday, but two of the boxes contained a total of 3,400 7-millimeter shells and other boxes contained thousands of M-16 and machine gun ammunition.

Also found were an electrical generator packed in a case bearing the address of the Marine Corps' Barstow supply base, two light machine gun tripods and old, German-manufactured ammunition.

"It's kind of scary to think somebody's depositing these things around here," commented tow-truck driver Dick Snider, who was summoned to pull the half-track out of the garage.

Snider said Stringer has been in the region for at least three years and "runs around the hills driving that half-track and plays army."

Neighbors said the vehicle is Stringer's pride and joy. He often drives in on public roads, they said, and occasionally enters it in local parades.

The huge machine bears California license plates.

Investigators went to Wrightwood after Sgt. Martin received six anonymous phone calls since Sunday from persons who said weapons and ammunition were in Stringer's home.

Tuesday morning, deputies visited the Phelan home of Sheila Williams, who described herself as a casual friend of Stringer, to obtain information about the gun dealer.

After some discussion, she led the officers to her basement where she pointed out 14 ammunition cans, containing nearly 5,000 rounds of machine gun, rifle and pistol ammunition. Included in that assortment were about 800 armor-piercing, 30-caliber bullets.

She said Stringer brought the ammunition to her home about a year ago because his Wrightwood home had been flooded by heavy rains. She didn't know they contained dangerous items, she said, and she allowed officers to impound the ammunition.

Federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms agents said they will try to trace the munitions origins, but said it is apt to be impossible to backtrack much of the ammunition and weapons.

Military records-keeping is often lax and the official trail of a particular weapon or consignment of ammunition often ends with its arrival at a particular military base.

An old, military half-track is towed from a Wrightwood garage shortly before the discovery of an arms cache.

3 in county take Ways, Means posts

By RICHARD S. KIMBALL
Sun-Telegram Staff Writer

San Bernardino County will have three of its legislators serving on the 21-member Assembly Ways and Means Committe during the 1977 legislative session.

Assemblyman Terry Goggin, D-San Bernardino, and Bill McVittie, D-Upland, are among the newly appointed members of the committee, Speaker Leo T. McCarthy's office announced Tuesday. Assemblyman Jerry Lewis, R-Highland, was reappointed to the panel.

The Ways and Means Committee is one of the most powerful in the legislature. It considers the budget and all other measures involving state expenditures.

Goggin received a new assignment as a member of the Criminal Justice Committee. He was reappointed to the Resources, Land Use and Energy Committee. The shift to Ways and Means takes him off the Finance Insurance and Commerce Committee.

McVittie was reappointed to the Agriculture and Judiciary committees. He will no longer be on the Revenue and Taxation Committee.

Lewis' assignments remain