

OHTA R-P 10/29/70

Hints and guesses — a timetable of events

The possibility that the murderer or murderers of Dr. Victor Ohta, his wife and two sons and secretary remained at the Ohtas Soquel home for several hours has been raised by authorities investigating the slayings.

A theoretical timetable, based on a few facts and a few presumptions, makes it seem likely that the killer was at the Ohta home before 3 p.m. Monday. The bodies of the five persons were discovered in the swimming pool at the home after firemen had responded to an alarm shortly after 8 p.m. Monday.

Authorities reported that Mrs. Ohta was always prompt in picking her two sons up after school every day. She was at one school by 2:45 p.m. each afternoon to pick up the first son to get out of classes.

But one of the sons phoned his father's office at about 4:30 Monday afternoon to report that he was still at school and that his

mother had not yet shown up. The doctor told his receptionist he was at a loss to understand why his wife had not picked up the boy and then dispatched his secretary, Mrs. Dorothy Cadwallader, 38, to pick up the boy.

Just five minutes after Mrs. Cadwallader had left Dr. Ohta's other son phoned his father at his Santa Cruz office and also said he was still at school and that his mother had failed to show up. Again the doctor remarked to his receptionist that he couldn't understand what had happened to his wife.

The doctor finished with a patient and went to pick up this son at school. Before heading home to Soquel the doctor and his son stopped at the doctor's mother's house for a few minutes.

Authorities say they think the doctor and his son probably arrived home shortly before 6 p.m. They surmise that Mrs. Cadwallader and the other son

had arrived at the Rodeo Gulch house earlier.

Asked whether Mrs. Ohta's failure to pick up her sons at school indicates that the woman might already have been held captive one investigator replied: "It would make it seem like that to me."

But a confusing fact in the timetable is that Mrs. Ohta made a deposit in a bank at 2:15 p.m. Monday, only a half hour before she was to have picked up one of her sons. Authorities speculate that she either returned home planning for a brief stop to pick up something that she had forgotten or that she was abducted after making the bank deposit and ordered to return to the family home.

The Ohtas' gardener, has told investigators he was at the home from 7:30 a.m. until noon and that he returned later in the day and worked on the grounds until 3:30 p.m. He has told authorities that he did not see Mrs. Ohta leave the

home and there is a report that he knocked on the door at about 3 p.m. and received no answer.

Dr. Ohta's watch had stopped at 6:32 and investigators say this probably means that he was dumped into the pool about that time.

Preliminary autopsy reports indicated all five victims died between 6 and 8 p.m. but it was not immediately known whether they all died at the same time or whether they were killed as they arrived at the house. There was a report that none of the victims had any powder burns on his body.

Dr. Ohta was shot with a .38 caliber weapon three times. The others were shot with a .22 caliber weapon. Some investigators speculated that this fact, combined with the absence of powder burns, could indicate that the doctor was shot from a moderate distance.

It is not known how long the killer or killers stayed at the Ohta home after the gruesome slayings had been committed.

One investigator did say that the killer "had cleaned up after himself" because no shell casings were found at the scene.

The fire which gutted the Ohta home was reported shortly after 8 p.m. but authorities say the fire could have been set as much as two hours before it was discovered. One investigator said the bodies might have been placed in the pool so they would not be immediately found, giving the slayer more time to make his escape.

The weird note found on the windshield of one of the two cars blocking both entrances to the Ohta's driveway could have been written after the killings and before the fire was discovered. Investigators recovered a typewriter from the house and are comparing it with the note.