

DEATH ROW SERIAL MOLESTER CONNECTED TO CEDU

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California Department of Justice (DOJ) investigators are researching the possibility that serial child molester and child murderer, James Lee Crummel, 65 of San Quentin State Prison, had years of free, unsupervised access to the students at the now defunct CEDU School in Running Springs.

The CEDU schools in Running Springs were founded by Mel Wasserman in 1967 and promoted itself as an emotional growth-boarding school for troubled youths. Monthly costs to board a student reportedly ran as high as \$3,500 dollar a month. The school closed its doors in 2005 amidst allegations of financial improprieties, allegations of sexual and physical abuse of the students, by other students and staff members and citations issued by the State of California for various violations. At a non-compliance conference, CEDU officials reportedly admitted that the rights of students under their care were systematically violated.

The current investigation is focused on the activities of Doctor Burnell Forgey and his reported assistant, Crummel.

Crummel, whose criminal history of violence against children dates back to the early 1960s, is on death row for a 2004 Riverside County murder conviction of 13-year-old James "Jamey" Trotter of Costa Mesa. Trotter disappeared over 25 years ago and his remains were discovered by a hiker in 1990 in a remote area off the Ortega Highway, but were not identified until 1996.

The hiker that discovered the remains and notified authorities was James Lee Crummel who lived on the same street as Trotter when Trotter disappeared. Investigators later discovered that Trotter would have to pass by Crummel's residence several times a day.

In that trial, the jurors found Crummel guilty of first-degree murder, and that the murder occurred while Crummel was committing lewd acts with a child, thereby making Crummel eligible for the death penalty.

After joining the Army in the early 60's, the 17-year-old Crummel was convicted of molesting two boys and a girl in Missouri, taking them into a remote wooded area where he tied the 11 and 13 year old boys to a tree and sexually assaulted them. Crummel was convicted of the crime and sentenced to prison. He was released in 1967.

In June or July of 1967, Crummel kidnapped nine-year-old Fred Clawson, who lived on the same street as Crummel, and took him into the Arizona desert where he sexually assaulted, then strangled him.

In April of 1967, before he was connected to Clawson's murder, Crummel had been tried and convicted of kidnapping and molesting a boy in Los Angeles County.

Nine months later, Crummel and his roommate moved to Wisconsin where Crummel took a 14-year-old boy into the woods, repeatedly beat him bloody with a tree branch and left him for dead in a ravine. The boy managed to crawl out of the woods the following morning.

In July of 1981, 6-year-old Jeffrey Vargo was reported missing from his Anaheim Hills home. Vargo's body was found twenty miles away at construction site. Investigators reported that Vargo had been molested and strangled. To this day, Crummel remains the prime suspect in the murder.

In 1982, Crummel was invited to a neighborhood Halloween party. Crummel reportedly arrived wearing an alien costume and had glitter on his face. During the festivities, the host

became concerned when he had not seen his nine-year-old son for some time. The father found Crummel molesting his son in the boy's bedroom. The irate father and other partygoers applied a liberal dose of "street justice" then called the police. The police report indicated that glitter was collected as evidence from the area around the boy's genitals.

In 1995, Crummel, who was living in Big Bear City, had been charged with fifteen counts of child molestation. Most of the charges had to be dismissed during the trial when the State of California Supreme Court changed the statute of limitations, and the window of prosecution had passed.

That same year, former nine-year-old Crestline resident Jack (JD) Phillips disappeared while watching a parade in Big Bear. Crummel just happened to live on the same street as Phillips at the time. Phillips is still listed as missing.

At the time of his last arrest, Crummel was living with Dr. Burnell Forgey, a psychiatrist with a practice in Costa Mesa, in Forgey's Newport Beach condominium. In addition to his private practice, Forgey counseled troubled teens at group homes around Southern California.

Crummel was described as "a faithful servant, chauffeur, maintenance, and right-hand- man" to Forgey, now deceased.

In 1997, California State Investigators were notified that Crummel was accompanying Forgey when he would travel to the youth homes. State officials said Forgey described Crummel to group home staff as his assistant, but Forgey never informed the staff that Crummel was a registered sex offender and pedophile.

In 1998, Forgey confessed that he had engaged in oral sex with a 16-year-old patient while Crummel sodomized the minor. Forgey also admitted that he gave Crummel free access to his adolescent patients' files, took Crummel with him on his rounds to group homes and would leave him alone with young patients during his visits from 1990 to 1994.

Both men were convicted of child molestation and received jail sentences.

After Forgey confessed to taking Crummel with him to youth homes, State of California officials began examining records of psychiatrists used by group homes around Southern California. During the still-in-progress investigation, it was discovered that Forgey also practiced at CEDU in Running Springs.

In an exclusive interview with *The Alpenhorn News*, DOJ Missing Person Investigator Bill Gleason confirmed that Forgey was a contracted psychiatrist at CEDU, and it appears that Crummel also accompanied him when he visited CEDU.

It might have been a strange coincidence, Gleason said, but the number of runaway juveniles reported from CEDU always seemed to have increased just after Forgey had sessions at the CEDU campus.

Gleason said what the DOJ is examining now is the connection between Crummel being on the CEDU campus and the disappearance of then 17-year-old John Christopher Inman on January 16, 1993 and Blake Wade Pursley, aged 14, on June 26, 1994.

A third student, Daniel Ted Yuen, aged 16 at that time, disappeared from CEDU on February 8, 2004, but is not considered a possible victim of Crummel due to the date of disappearance, and subsequent reported sightings of Yuen.

Gleason said DOJ investigators would like to hear from former CEDU staff members and students that may have had contact with Forgey or Crummel. Gleason may be conacted through the California Department of Justice, Missing Person Unit at (916) 227-3290.