

'Sweetheart swindler' romances, cons his victims

(AP) — A whirlwind romance that ended with the theft of thousands of dollars may have left Shannon Chandler the latest Oregon victim of a man police are calling the "sweetheart swindler."

"I felt like I'd known him all my life," said the 24-year-old waitress of the man she met serving coffee at a Eugene restaurant.

He said his name was Patrick Ashley Jace Clark, and he claimed to be a young trauma surgeon from Portland who was about to relocate to Springfield.

Two weeks later Chandler ended up in a Reno hotel suite with Clark quickly packing his bags as she screamed, "Who are you?"

She would learn over the next few days that the man who wrote her poetry and sent her roses had stolen thousands of dollars from her and her parents.

"You think you're basically intelligent, you're not gullible, you're not a pushover, and then you feel so stupid and so violated," said Chandler, a University of Oregon graduate who is awaiting results of a recent U.S. Air Force test for officer's candidate school.

Eugene and Portland-area police say

two other young women have been identified as victims of the same con man and investigators suspect there are many more.

"There's probably a victim in Nevada as we speak," said Eugene police Detective Jim Green. "That's where he left Shannon."

Police said it's likely the man who went by the name Jace Clark with Chandler, Pat Clark with a Portland woman and Ed Snyder with a Beaverton woman goes from one romantic swindle to another.

Along the way, he steals the women's blank checks, credit cards and bank machine cards to buy gifts for his victims and support his claims of wealth.

Police have released a composite sketch of the suspect, whom his victims describe as thin, about 6 feet tall, with sandy-colored hair and sometimes wearing glasses.

The man's relationship with the 20-year-old woman from Portland began shortly after he vanished two weeks into a romance with a young Beaverton divorcee, whom he'd promised to take home to Australia and marry. Instead, he

'I felt like I'd known him all my life,'

— Shannon Chandler, former University student

disappeared with her money.

He spent five days swindling several hundred dollars from his Portland victim, then met Chandler the following Monday and, as she puts it, "swept me off my feet."

Looking back on the relationship, Chandler said she remembers little things that didn't seem right. But Clark had an answer for everything, she said.

He didn't flaunt it, but Chandler said it was clear his family had money. He also talked about medicine with such authority that Chandler said she never doubted he was a doctor.

"I'm a 20-questions kind of person and I asked him 20 questions and more," she said. "He really knew his stuff."

During their first week together, Chandler wrote nearly \$300 in checks to cover their expenses after Clark told her his

wallet had been stolen. He promised to repay her in a matter of days.

He eventually deposited a check for nearly \$5,000 in her bank account but Chandler didn't know the check belonged to her father and had been forged. She believes he stole checks and credit cards from both her parents while helping her move some of her belongings from an apartment into her family's Eugene home.

On a trip to Reno that she did not know was being charged to her father, Chandler phoned her parents. She was stunned when they asked why she'd deposited one of their checks into her account.

After confronting Clark, he told her a story of personal problems as he packed and left, never to return.

Chandler flew home that night and began coping with a financial nightmare.

Although the credit card companies are forgiving several thousand dollars in debt, Chandler said the bank is holding her responsible for about \$3,500.

Her advice to women is to investigate the stories of men they've just met. "If I'd checked on the things he'd said, I would have found out he was lying," she said.

Justice slow for accused canines

SEATTLE (AP) — Justice, for canines as for humans, is sometimes slow in coming.

Eight dogs accused of viciousness are housed at Seattle's Animal Control shelter in Ballard, awaiting sentencing. If they are found guilty, they will be killed.

Their cases must be tried before a jury or a judge. Stays of execution are issued and revoked, as prosecutors, public defenders and private attorneys battle over their fates.

The process can take months or even years, as it often does on human death row.

On a recent day, the denizens of death row included a pair of Great Danes accused of attacking children, sheep and joggers; two black Lhasa apsos accused of biting, and a Rottweiler accused of attacking a 7-year-old girl on her way to school.

But the most talked-about inmates are Buzz and Girdy, a pit bull and a pit-bull mix that have been behind bars for almost a year.

The dogs are accused of biting four school children and two adults in a frenzied attack in November 1992 that involved both police and animal-control officers. Petitions were signed by 286 neighbors, demanding that the dogs be removed from the Wallingford area.

Area residents testifying at the dogs' week-long trial in Municipal Court indicated the animals had been a problem for months.

One witness, Robert Pashek, said he had been on his way to pick up his granddaughter at school when he saw a boy running across the street.

"Two dogs were after him," Pashek said. "He squeezed between the bumpers of two cars and the dogs couldn't get him."

"Then the dogs came after me, snarling. I had an umbrella and I held it out in front of me so they would snap at that rather than me," he said.

The dogs' owners believe in their innocence. Margarethe Gosselin, Buzz's owner, said he

'Then the dogs came after me, snarling. I had an umbrella and I held it out in front of me so they would snap at that rather than me.'

— Robert Pashek, witness

and Girdy were framed.

"The dogs are rad; they're awesome dogs," she said. "They were provoked from the beginning by a group of kids. One of the kids came into the yard."

"They're not vicious — it's just crazy," said Gosselin.

She estimated that she and Girdy's owner, Mike Fischer, had so far spent about \$12,000 to defend the animals. The shelter has spent another \$4,500 to keep and feed the dogs, and prosecutors have spent hours working the case.

Gosselin and Fischer were acquitted of the charge of owning vicious animals. Jurors said there was not enough evidence that they knew the dogs were vicious.

But jurors made clear they thought the dogs were menacing and the animals were ordered kept in custody. Gosselin and Fischer appealed the ruling and the case was bumped to Superior Court for trial next summer.

If the dogs are determined to be vicious at that proceeding, they will be killed — "no ifs, ands or buts," said shelter supervisor Mary Felix-Klenk.

By the time the trial starts in July, Buzz and Girdy will have been locked up for 20 months.

"By law, we're required to hold them," Felix-Klenk said. "But from a personal point of view, I think holding them that long is the meanest thing you can do to them."

Man molests corpses

EVERETT, Wash. (AP) — A man who broke into a funeral home and sexually molested bodies has been sentenced to 10 years in prison.

Ronald Shawn Ryan, 23, of Edmonds, deserved to be punished to the full extent of the law because of the "nature of the crime, the abhorrence of it," Snohomish County Superior Court Judge John Wilson said Monday.

Ryan was accused in two January break-ins at a south Snohomish County funeral home. After a bench trial in August, he was convicted of malicious mischief and two counts of second-degree burglary, one of which was determined to be sexually motivated.

Police found items stolen from the funeral home in Ryan's home. He confessed to the break-ins, but denied the crimes were for his sexual gratification, court papers show.

Ryan's sentence was nearly twice the standard punishment called for under state sentencing guidelines for second-degree burglary.

It is appropriate because his behavior "shocks the conscience of this court and the community," the judge said.

Wilson added that state legislators need to again make necrophilia, sex with the dead, a criminal act. It was decriminalized in the mid-1970s when legislators tossed out state sodomy laws.

Richard Tassano, Ryan's public defender, said he expects Ryan to appeal the sentence.

Family sues funeral home

MEDFORD (AP) — The family of a 14-year-old girl who was raped and murdered two years ago is suing a Medford funeral home, claiming its negligence allowed the corpse to be molested.

The girl's father said learning of the molestation six months after his daughter's death was like tearing open the wound of his grief.

"It's damn near impossible to stop dwelling on it," he said. "It's always there, the atrocity of it."

The lawsuit seeks \$250,000 from Service Corporation Oregon, the owner of Conger-Morris Funeral Home in Medford.

The general manager and attorney for the funeral home said they haven't seen the lawsuit, and had no immediate comment.

The girl's body was taken to the funeral home following her slaying in Medford in November 1991.

Police brought corpse abuse charges against a mortician last summer after a photo processing company turned over film showing a hand molesting the corpse.

Bradford Simas, 33, was fined \$250 after pleading no contest to a lesser charge. He's in prison on an unrelated drug conviction.



Macintosh Rentals and Services

A computer lounge alternative.

Hourly rentals of color Macs in comfortable setting. Reservations, competitive rates and free coffee. Compact Macs delivered to you. Troubleshooting & training. 15% discount to students. \$15.00 Mac tune-up special.

683-8945

"30 years of Quality Service"

Mercedes • BMW • Volkswagen
Audi • Datsun • Toyota



GERMAN AUTO SERVICE, INC.

342-2912

2025 Franklin Blvd.

Eugene, Oregon, 97402

LOCKER RENTALS

- \$5 Key Deposit
- \$4 Per Term



EMU Recreation Center
Ground Floor, EMU
346-3711