

THE TRIANGLE

The Monthly Newspaper from Gay & Lesbian Community Services of Central Florida, Inc.
Serving Orlando's Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Community

Local Entertainer Murdered

He loved his home, his friends, the family he created: a gathering of those he loved and who loved him. I suppose it could be said that he entertained everyone for he traveled much of the world in his career as an entertainer.

He shared the stage as a song and dance man with the greats: Lucille Ball, Martha Raye, Alice Faye, Ray Bolger, Danny Kaye and Don Ameche. He was comfortable and popular with all the big names whose stars carried them across two or three generations.

He was last seen by his friends on Sunday, June 9 and when he was gone overnight concern rapidly grew. Dennis was a homebody who loved his home and rarely traveled any distance or for any length of time without his family of friends knowing of his plans. As the hours went into another day, these friends began the usual path of inquiries to the police and hospitals. There was no news. Dennis seemed to have vanished.

It was a call from the police in Port Orange that first alerted his roommate, Bill Browning, that something was amiss. Dennis' car had been found seemingly abandoned and it appeared that efforts had been made to conceal it. That call came at about 4:00 p.m. on Tuesday, June 11, two days after having last been seen.

A second phone call from the police to advise Browning that the car was to be

impounded because Dennis had not been seen nor hear from. Browning's concern changed to anxiety.

The third phone call was the tragic news that Dennis' naked body had been found in the trunk of his car. The estimate at that time was that he had been dead at least 10 hours before the car was discovered.



When he died, probably on June 11, he was only 47 years old, a victim of murder. His car, in which his body had been found was in Port Orange, miles from his home. His family of friends was left asking: "Why? When? Was he murdered in his home

and his body stuffed in the trunk of his car as it sat concealed in the attached garage, or at some desolate location over at the coast?

Clues - yes there are clues: While he was last seen Sunday afternoon or evening, the first photograph at an ATM of a man sitting in Dennis' car making a cash withdrawal on South Orange Blossom Trail. At 9:51 on the evening of the last day Dennis had been seen. His ATM card has been used also in Winter Park, Casselberry, Daytona Shores, Port Orange, and Ft. Lauderdale. People who may have seen Dennis out socially spoke with police, and volunteered the

name Stephan. Does it have a meaning in this crime? Is that the person he was having a conversation with in one of the local clubs? Is this Stephan actually the very last person to see Dennis alive?

Dennis Atkinson was a graduate of the Boston Conservatory and from the core of his being was an entertainer - a man dedicated to the business of spreading joy and good feeling and happiness. His beginning in Central Florida was at *Circus World*, and his resume includes *Walt Disney World* and *Sea World* and *Universal Studios*. He did promotional tours across Europe for *Universal*, and was constantly entertaining personal friends and most people he met. That was his enthusiastic personality and his love of telling jokes.

Sitting in Dennis' home with Browning and Tom Miller, a friend since high school in Michigan, I heard the sadness and plaudits and the questions that follow such a tragedy. The man had no enemies; it was impossible to bring him to anger. He would simply excuse himself and walk away from unpleasantness. Generous to a fault - when he heard a friend was in need of assistance or even financial help - he simply appeared and filled the void. He loved to laugh and wanted his friends to share in his good nature.

Even though Dennis was in a profession that is by its nature, demonstrative, he was

an unassuming person. With all of his success Dennis was never a braggart so his family of friends do not know how to let all of his friends know of the tragedy.

There will be a memorial service held at The Mark II theatre and Bill and Tom are hoping many will learn of the memorial service that will be held for Dennis through this article. Services will be in The Mark II

Theatre on Edgewater Drive on July 16 from 7:30 to 9:30PM.

Detective Glen Gause of the Orlando Police Department is optimistic that the killer will be caught but a fear is that others will die at the hands of this man before being apprehended. He left Dennis in the trunk of his car in Port Orange but managed to travel to Ft. Lauderdale to use Dennis' ATM card one more time before the credit



was stopped. In that instance the suspect was photographed in yet another car with a passenger at his side.

Is there another victim; has another murder occurred? The police need your help - and you need theirs. Study the pictures in this article and if you recognize or know anything about the suspect, please notify the police.

Local "Concord Park United Methodist Church" Welcomes Gay and Lesbian Community

Concord Park United Methodist Church, located on West Concord Street, across from the Orlando Arena, has a new minister and a gay-friendly attitude. This small downtown

ter in an effort to reach out to the Central Florida gay and lesbian community. He was extremely friendly and genuine in his desire to be more inclusive of us and has provided information about the many op-

available, complete with trained supervision. An Adult Sunday School class meets at 11:00 am Sunday mornings, and the womyn of the church meet monthly for spiritual and social renewal. Church pro-

well as donating to various mission programs of their denomination.

The Concord Park United Methodist Church offers an additional choice for those in our community and it is truly heart