

Three Suicides Leave Troubling Questions

Violence: Police are looking at the possibility that Britons were planning an attack on presidential candidate Bob Dole. Victims had neo-Nazi sympathies.

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SAN FRANCISCO--Just before Jane Greenhow died, she drove up a lonely road in remote Shasta County and wrote a note to the one she loved: her Glock 10-millimeter pistol.

"I am so sorry I have to leave you now, the only one I am reluctant to leave behind," the tattooed, 23-year-old neo-Nazi sympathizer wrote to her gun. "I guess you just functioned more reliably--I jammed."

Then Greenhow, clad in black fatigues and combat boots, put the pistol in her mouth and pulled the trigger, culminating a bizarre trio of suicides of neo-Nazi cult followers last week in California and Arizona.

Authorities were investigating Tuesday whether the three deaths--all committed in similar fashion--were somehow linked to an abortive extremist plot--possibly even a plan to assassinate Republican presidential candidate Bob Dole.

But evidence gathered so far suggests that the three--all recent arrivals from Great Britain--killed themselves before acting on any conspiracy that might have brought them to America.

"If there was a plan, it didn't get pulled off," Shasta County Chief Deputy Coroner John Boyle said Tuesday.

Although writings and photographs found among the three Britons' possessions establish them as followers of an obscure neo-Nazi cult, much about their activities and aims during a six-week odyssey across the United States remains a mystery.

Shasta County authorities were hoping to locate an unidentified man believed to have traveled with them from England to answer some of the many questions.

Along with Greenhow's suicide note, investigators found an uncashed check made out to her for 6 million British pounds--equal to about \$9 million. But the check, written by one of the Arizona suicide victims, is most likely a sick reference to the 6 million Jews killed in the Holocaust. A handwritten note on the check reads: "At one pound per Jew."

Greenhow's suicide 250 miles north of San Francisco on Thursday occurred a day after her two friends killed themselves at a firing range in Mesa, Ariz.

Stefan Bateman and Ruth Fleming, both 22, were wearing the same style of black garb when they rented pistols at the range and took a few dozen practice shots Wednesday afternoon.

Then they turned the pistols on themselves--apparently counting down together so the guns would go off at the same instant, Arizona authorities said.

"Witnesses said they both fell at the same time," said Mesa Police Sgt. Earle Lloyd. "It was ruled a double suicide."

Although authorities were unsure what the three Britons were doing in the United States, at least one British newspaper has suggested that they were involved in a violent political conspiracy.

The London Daily Mail reported Tuesday that the three were implicated in a plot against Dole and that Fleming and Bateman may have stalked the candidate while he was campaigning in Colorado. The paper quoted an unidentified Arizona police official as saying that "the threat to Mr. Dole is being taken very seriously. There may be more to these deaths than meets the eye."

But in Washington, a spokesman for the U.S. Secret Service, which is charged with protecting presidential candidates, said it had no information about a threat to Dole and was not investigating the three foreigners.

"We have absolutely no information and no ongoing investigation concerning these three individuals," said Secret Service Agent Mike Tarr.

In Shasta County, Chief Deputy Coroner Boyle agreed: "There isn't one iota of information here to substantiate any allegation like that."

The Dole campaign said it was unaware of the three British travelers--until it began fielding calls from the British press. "We have not heard anything about this situation," said deputy press secretary Christina Martin.

Greenhow's own words hint that the three did not carry out any plot they might have planned. In the suicide note addressed to her Glock pistol, she wrote:

"I am so sorry we never got to consummate our relationship. I know we could have had such fun together. Alas, always too many regrets."

The suicides of Fleming, Bateman and Greenhow have been widely reported in Britain. According to the British press, the three shared a house in Andover, where former neighbors said they acted so strangely they became known as the "Addams Family."

Bateman often wore an SS uniform. Before he departed for the United States on Jan. 6, he told one neighbor the three were going to Detroit to join a neo-Nazi group, the London Times reported. Whether they ever contacted the Detroit clique--described in the London Times as a cult that "preaches white power and the cult of the holy war"--is unclear.

After they moved out of their Andover home, the new tenant found a list of things to do: "Check the guns, get rid of the car, clean the house, dye hair," British papers reported.

Family members said both women were good students until they met Bateman, a dropout who worked in a potato chip factory. Authorities suspect that the friendship of the three may have encountered difficulties as Bateman shifted his affections from Greenhow to Fleming--one possible explanation for their separation toward the end.

In Shasta County, Boyle said items among Greenhow's possessions

included photos of herself and Bateman at what appeared to be a former German concentration camp. Documents also indicated they were followers of Joy Division, a late-'70s British rock group. The group took its name from a German army unit that forced female concentration camp prisoners to engage in sex with Nazi soldiers. The band's lead singer committed suicide in 1980.

Greenhow had had a blue lightning bolt--a symbol often associated with white supremacists--tattooed on her arm since arriving in the United States, Boyle said. Among her writings were references to how different things would be if Adolf Hitler had won.

"We have established through writings and clothing that there was probably an extremist faction involved," Boyle said. "We're looking at what faction they were affiliated with. We don't know."

On Thursday, witnesses described Greenhow as despondent, apparently because she had learned of the deaths of her two friends in Arizona. One saw her talking on a pay phone and appearing very sad.

Employees at the Bay Bridge Resort and Marina on Shasta Lake, where she stayed, said she ate her meals alone and said little to others. At one point, she called her parents in England but they said she did not reach them.

After she checked out Thursday morning, she drove up a road appropriately named Conflict Point, hooked up a hose to her car's tailpipe and stuck it through the car window. Then, unwilling to wait for the poisonous exhaust to kill her, she shot herself.

In her suicide note, she compared herself to her beloved gun:

"Always so cold and removed, both designed to be able to act almost instinctively when fully operational," she wrote. "Perhaps my firing pin was under tension for too long."

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Suicide Trail

This is the route authorities believe three neo-Nazi cult followers may have taken as they traveled from Britain to their suicides in Arizona and California. In Las Vegas, the trio apparently split up, with Jane Greenhow traveling to Shasta County, 250 miles north of San Francisco, and Ruth Fleming and Stefan Bateman eventually reaching Mesa, Ariz.

Jan. 6: Arrive in Washington

Feb. 21-22: Bodies found in Mesa and Redding

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