

A CONMAN/HD CON MAN-INFORMANT FOUND SHOT TO DEATH

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By Dennis Hannon

Of the Post-Dispatch Staff

Jackie G. Turner, a convicted confidence man who had been cooperating in an investigation into racketeering, was shot to death Monday.

Turner, 35, was found lying on Illinois Route 111, about a block from the Pontoon Beach police headquarters.

Turner had suffered multiple bullet wounds, probably from a handgun, according to Randy Rushing, assistant zone commander for the Collinsville office of the Illinois Division of Criminal Investigation.

Turner was taken to St. Elizabeth Medical Center in Granite City, where he was pronounced dead shortly after arrival.

Turner lived in the 1500 block of Cass Avenue, where he was last seen Monday morning, Rushing said. Police are uncertain if Turner left home alone.

Authorities from both Missouri and Illinois met on the case this morning in St. Louis County, where some of Turner's previous victims lived. They considered the theory that some of the persons who had been bilked by Turner may have sought revenge.

St. Louis Circuit Attorney George Peach said today that Turner had been cooperating with prosecutors in an investigation into racketeering. Peach said he was unsure whether Turner's decision to provide evidence was connected with the killing.

Officials also said he was cooperating in the pending investigation of the activities of a n area lawyer.

Investigators from the Illinois Department of Criminal Investigation are still trying to determine whether Turner was shot at the scene or if he was shot elsewhere and dumped along the side of the road. Authorities in St. Louis and St. Louis County have not ruled out the possibility that Turner was shot in their jurisdiction and taken to Illinois.

'Turner's activity was not restricted to jurisdictional lines, 'said Sam Bertolet, assistant circuit attorney in St. Louis. 'We're working on the possibility that he was shot in the city. '

Records show that Turner was convicted last year and this year of writing bad checks in St. Louis, and in 1978 of felony theft in Houston. He also was wanted in Texas on charges of parole violation in the theft cases.

Turner also had faced numerous felony theft charges in St. Louis and St. Louis County involving bogus training schools and fraudulent investments.

In February, Turner was charged with four counts of felony theft in St. Louis County after three men told police that they had been bilked of a total of \$28,000 in a phony computer company Turner operated on New Ballas Road in Creve Coeur. The men told police that they had been attracted by newspaper ads seeking partners in the company.

In May 1982, a fraud victim told police that he had invested \$16,500 in a bogus computer store Turner operated in Webster Groves. This investor also told police that he had answered a newspaper ad.

Turner also had been charged with fraudulently advertising for investors in franchises for video-game distributorships. In that scheme, victims were offered franchises along with training in how to operate such businesses for investments of \$7,000, police said.

Turner would meet potential victims outside legitimate computer firms, then take them to lunch, investigators said. After collecting their money, he told the people to report for training at an address that turned out to be a garage, police said.

The most striking example of Turner's fondness for printed advertisements -- and of his audacity -- were his personal ads asking for 'legal and financial help 'getting out of jail in 1982.

Unable to meet his \$17,000 bond on charges of deceptive business practices and attempted theft, Turner placed ads referring to himself as a 'compulsive gambler 'who had gone wrong 'via family tragedy. 'The address given for donors was that of the City Workhouse: 7600 Hall Street.

Turner was a heavy gambler whose family lived on state welfare payments while he squandered thousands of dollars at the Fairmount Race Track, his estranged wife and former girlfriend said.

Police said Turner's various confidence schemes in the past three years had raised as much as \$80,000.

He also was charged but not convicted in 1978 of writing \$30,000 worth of bad checks. A south St. Louis furniture store, where Turner had been manager of the computer sales department, reported last year that he had forged \$20,000 worth of checks on store accounts, according to police detectives.

A computer programming tape -- reportedly worth \$50,000 -- belonging to that same store was found in the home of Turner's former wife, police said.

Asked how Turner managed to persuade so many people to trust him with so much money, Detective Ronald Young said Turner was 'a master of the incomplete sentence. '

The Illinois Division of Criminal Investigation is pursuing numerous leads concerning the identity of Turner's killer, Rushing said.

Virginia Hick and Phyllis Brasch Librach of the Post-Dispatch staff contributed information for this story.

Turner