



School Supt. Ron Lopez, left, talks with Sheriff's Capt. Arnie Goble at murder scene. (Photo by Jay Martinez)

SLO teacher raped, slain at Paso Robles boys school

By Pete Dunan
Staff Writer

A 51-year-old San Luis Obispo woman was raped and murdered Monday afternoon in the classroom where she taught high school courses at the California Youth Authority's El Paso de Robles School for Boys in Paso Robles.

Sheriff's deputies have no definite suspects.

The body of Marie Romero, 1186 Madonna Road, was found lying in a pool of blood by two fellow teachers at 4:45 p.m.

She had last been seen at 2:35 p.m. when she dismissed her last class of 20 students for the day.

She was due to go home at 4:30 p.m. following a preparation period for today's classes.

The body was in the corner of the room where she taught high school courses for the inmates on a substitute basis.

Mrs. Romero, employed at the facility in mid-February of this year, had a large wound on the back of her head and another wound across her forehead. Her body was partially disrobed and badly beaten.

Dr. Thomas Noguchi, chief medical examiner and coroner of Los Angeles

County, arrived at the scene shortly after midnight today to aid San Luis Obispo County sheriff's deputies in their investigation.

Noguchi, known nationally as an expert in his field, brought with him two staff members and a new piece of experimental equipment capable of lifting fingerprints from dead bodies.

Sheriff's Department spokesman Capt. Arnie Goble said, however, that attempts to get prints from Mrs. Romero's body failed. He attributed the failure in part to her age and skin texture.

Goble said although all 314 inmates at the school are considered suspects, the investigation has focused on a pair of shoes believed to have been worn by the killer. They were found in the school's gym.

The shoes, a style worn only by inmates, matched shoe prints found at the scene.

Hair believed to be that of the slayer was found on Mrs. Romero's body, but comparison tests have not yet been made.

Noguchi, at the request of the sheriff's department, advised deputies in the coroner's investigation and is having the body moved to Los Angeles today for a complete autopsy and

comparison tests.

Mrs. Romero, the mother of four school-age children, had only been in San Luis Obispo County two months.

She and three of the four children joined her husband, Patrick, who is a vocational instructor at the California Mens Colony in February.

Romero, a long-time state employee, was transferred to the San Luis Obispo prison early in 1974. He moved here this year from Stockton after finding a home for the family.

The couple's oldest son attends Delta College in Stockton, where Mrs. Romero had been an instructor at the California Youth Facility. The other three children attend San Luis Obispo public schools.

She had only taught 10 sessions at the Paso Robles facility before her death.

School Supt. Ron Lopez said Mrs. Romero's slaying is the first murder at the facility, about one mile east of Paso Robles.

He said some of the inmates, ranging in age from 16 to 22, have been confined by the court for sex offenses. He was unable to determine what percentage.

He said all regular activities at the school have been suspended pending an outcome of the murder investigation. All inmates are confined to their cottages.