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Saturday, March 03, 2001

Townfolk deplore media fuss

Petersburg 'a very safe little town'

By **David Eck**
Enquirer Contributor

PETERSBURG - Sitting around a worn wooden booth in the back of Tanner Station, this town's main store and local gathering spot, several of the 400 residents who make up this Boone County hamlet talked about the "commotion" down on the river.

About three blocks away, Boone County authorities continued to search the Ohio River on Friday for a body. Television news trucks were parked nearby, their transmission towers raised. Reporters scurried about, grabbing whatever scraps of new information they can find.

"This isn't Petersburg," said Scott Martin, who manages Tanner Station. "Once they find the body, it'll all go away."

The closest town to Petersburg is Aurora, Ind., across the river via Aurora Ferry.

Members of the Boone County Water Rescue Team ended their search — for an as-yet unidentified body they think is in the river — about 4:30 p.m. Friday after coming up empty-handed. The search, part of what police are calling a death investigation, began Wednesday night.

On Thursday, authorities charged Petersburg resident Richard Lambert, 22, with tampering with physical evidence, a felony, and abuse of a corpse.

Court records show that Mr. Lambert has had many convictions in Boone County, including several traffic violations, public intoxication, driving under the influence and assault.

Residents say Mr. Lambert has lived here for less than a year. The used car salesman's yellow house is up on a hill coming into town.

They say Mr. Lambert, who hung out at Tanner Station and drank with some of the regulars, sometimes had a hard



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time fitting in.

“He was just a little bit too intense,” said Dennis Abdon, who has lived here for 38 years. “I didn’t care for him. He had a big chip on his shoulder, it seems like.”

Mr. Martin described Mr. Lambert as “rude,” but said he got along with him.

“I deal with the public all day long, so I can tolerate people,” Mr. Martin said. “He liked to drink beer.”

Some residents and nearby workers said the incident is bringing the town unwanted publicity.

“This down here is just a hole, and I don’t believe anybody knew it was down here until this,” said Sean Carter, who works in Petersburg.

The town is made up of about a dozen streets along the Ohio River in northern Boone County.

“It’s a very safe little town,” Mr. Abdon said. “We take care of our own.”

But the last three days have also set Petersburg abuzz and made some folks uneasy.

“We don’t deal with things like this,” Mr. Abdon said. “It’s had a serious impact on the community. People are worried about things like this.”

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May. 26, 2001

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