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## River is searched for evidence

Slain woman's car is sought

By Paul A. Long  
Post staff reporter

Boone County investigators searched the murky depths of the Ohio River Thursday looking for evidence in a 20-year murder case.

They may have found what they were looking for -- and then some.

Sheriff's Department spokesman Jack Banks said three cars were potentially discovered buried under mounds of silt and debris at the bottom of the river near the Anderson Ferry. And that is close enough to where William Major reportedly told investigators he pushed his wife's 1972 Pinto in the water after he shot her to death in 1981.

The mounds were found using sonar equipment, said Commonwealth Attorney Linda Tally Smith. The Boone County Water Rescue Department, using heavy construction equipment, is working on uncovering what may be there with the hope of bringing it to the surface.

"We've got a plan to lift them up," Banks said. "Or at least one of them -- if it's the right one."

Banks said investigators don't know if the work will provide any additional evidence. But they have wanted to look in the area for more than a year, he said, and have been waiting for the right time and the right weather, he said.

They began the work Tuesday and expect to be back again today if the weather holds up, Smith said.

Major is charged with the murder of Helen Marleen Major, who was last seen Oct. 10, 1980, at the trailer home she shared with Major, their two children and another man in Verona. Her body has never been located, but a hunter found her skull -- its identity later verified by DNA tests -- on Nov. 30, 1981, about a mile from the trailer.

Although he was always considered a suspect, Major was not arrested until 2001.

After his wife disappeared, Major took his two young children and moved back to his native Rhode Island. While living there, he was charged with sexually abusing his children and spent 10 years in prison.

In early 2001, police received a call from Major's father, who said his son told him he killed his wife. James Major, who lives in Nova Scotia, Canada, agreed to cooperate with police, and again talked to his son about the killing. Police taped the conversation, and say they obtained enough evidence to arrest the son.

On the way back to Kentucky, investigators said, Major told them he killed his wife after she pulled a gun on him and threatened to leave him.

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Major said he grabbed the gun and pulled the trigger of the six-shot revolver nine times, killing his wife, according to previous court testimony. Major then dumped his wife's body in a sinkhole on a farm on Munk Road in Verona, tossed the .38-caliber Smith & Wesson into a nearby pond, and pushed her 1972 Pinto into the Ohio River, an investigator testified.

While police found her skull, they have never found the rest of her body, the gun or her car.

Major is scheduled to stand trial May 28. He faces a possible life sentence if he is convicted.

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