

GIRLFRIEND OF APPARENT SUICIDE VICTIM MISSING \

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Warrick County authorities are searching for a woman who has been missing since Sept. 2, about a week before her boyfriend was found dead, the victim of a self-inflicted gunshot wound, in a Posey County motel room.

Bruce Hargrave, chief deputy in the Warrick County Sheriff's Department, said police are searching for Theresa "Terry" Rideout, 36, of Chandler, Ind. Acquaintances of Ms. Rideout reported her missing on Sept. 11, the day her companion, Jack Barnett, 33, was found dead in the Four Seasons Motel in Mount Vernon, Ind.

"All we know is she is the girlfriend of an apparent suicide victim and was apparently seen for the last time on Sept 2," Hargrave said. He said police have attempted to get in touch with relatives of Ms. Rideout, but have not been able to contact them.

"We don't know a lot about this lady," Hargrave said. He said her name has been entered into a national crime information computer in an attempt to locate her.

Warrick County Sheriff Jeff Gore said that, for now, her disappearance is being investigated solely as a missing person's case.

Posey County Coroner Ted Moore has ruled that Barnett died of a self-inflicted gunshot wound. Also, after questioning motel workers, he believes Barnett had checked into the room alone.

According to Gail Chapman, a friend and former roommate of Ms. Rideout, the woman was last seen by friends and co-workers when she finished her shift at the Burger King at 900 Main St. in Evansville around 7 p.m. Sept. 2.

According to Connie Weinzapfel, a Burger King district manager, Ms. Rideout dropped off the restaurant's deposit at a Citizens National Bank branch at the end of her shift. Ms. Weinzapfel, who had hired Ms. Rideout about a month ago, said the woman did not show up for her shift at 11 a.m. Saturday, Sept. 3, and she did not call into work or answer the phone Saturday morning when Ms. Weinzapfel tried to contact her. Her paycheck for two weeks' pay has not been picked up, Ms. Weinzapfel said.

"This is very strange. It just totally shocked us," said Ms. Weinzapfel, who described Ms. Rideout as a "very responsible, intelligent woman."

"She is not the type who would not call in, who would just disappear," she said.

According to Ms. Chapman, Barnett was seen alone by several patrons of Don and Donna's Sports Bar on Sept. 6. Ms. Chapman, who works at the bar, said a bartender saw Barnett that day. She said Barnett made no mention of Ms. Rideout's whereabouts to the bar patrons or bartender.

According to Ms. Chapman, Ms. Rideout and Barnett had lived together in Chandler for about three months. She said relatives of Barnett and Ms. Rideout's friends who checked their home after Barnett's body was found say nothing appears to be missing other than Ms. Rideout's dog, River.

Her car, with which she had had mechanical troubles, is still parked at the house, Ms. Chapman said. Co-workers believe she was driving Barnett's red truck the Friday evening she left work. That truck was later found at the motel in Posey County.

"She was in a good mood Friday (Sept.2). It was like, 'See you tomorrow,' and that was it," Ms. Chapman said.

According to Ms. Chapman, Barnett and Ms. Rideout were seen together at the American Legion Kapperman Post 44 in Warrick County the Friday morning before she disappeared. They left the post about 10:30 a.m., before her shift at Burger King began at 11 a.m.

Carl Smith of Newburgh, a friend of the couple, said he and Barnett's ex- wife, Julie Waters, checked a river camp Barnett owned after Ms. Rideout was reported missing and he has been searching for her since her disappearance.

"I talked to him (Barnett) recently and he said they had plans for the future and seemed to be doing fine. I was tickled to death that she found someone like him," he said. "It just doesn't add up," he said. "Whatever happened is something that happened very suddenly."

Ms. Waters said she reported Ms. Rideout missing after she learned that her former husband was dead, but believes that her disappearance is "just coincidence."

Ms. Waters and Barnett had been divorced for about three years, she said, but maintained a cordial relationship.

She said she wanted to find Ms. Rideout to tell her about Barnett's death "before she got slapped in the face with it."

She said Barnett had not seemed despondent. "They talked about getting married," she said.

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