

Leon Blankenfeld

b. Oct 22, 1960 d. Aug. 28, 1996

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Harvard, Ill., teen is charged in homicide of former Grinnellian

The Kane County State's Attorney's Office in Illinois has charged Christopher Martin, 19, of Harvard, Ill., with two counts of first-degree murder in connection with the death of a former Grinnell man.

Authorities on Wednesday found the body of Leon Blankenfeld, 35, of Lakeville, Minn., a Grinnell native, in a cornfield near Huntley, a community located 45 miles northwest of Chicago.

"Right now, it looks like a kidnapping, robbery and murder," said Huntley, Ill., police Chief Randy Walters.

The chief said that Martin led authorities to Blankenfeld's body: **Stab, slashing wounds**

Kane County Medical Examiner Chet Morris, who performed an autopsy on the body Wednesday night, said Blankenfeld died from multiple stab and slashing wounds, mainly to the head and neck.

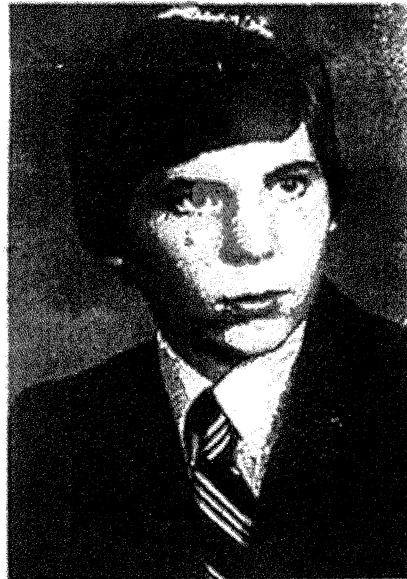
Authorities gave this preliminary account of events leading to the former Grinnellian's death, according to The Associated Press:

Blankenfeld had driven to Illinois last Friday to visit a friend. They later drove to Chicago, then returned to the farm on Monday of last week.

Martin was at the farm and asked Blankenfeld for a ride home to Harvard, and Blankenfeld agreed. When Blankenfeld failed to return to the farm, his friend, whose name was not released, notified authorities.

ATM transactions traced

Huntley police and the Illinois State Police traced credit-card and ATM-card transactions to a Hoffman Estates, Ill., motel, Hoffman



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Estates is a Chicago suburb. Authorities confronted Martin, who implicated himself and then took authorities to the body.

Blankenfeld worked as a senior process engineer with the 3M company's health-care group in Maplewood, Minn., where he designed and developed manufacturing processes.

He was a 1979 graduate of Grinnell High School who later received a bachelor's degree in chemical engineering and a doctorate from the University of Iowa. He also had attended the University of Northern Iowa.

He was the son of Ernest and JoAnne Blankenfeld of Grinnell.

Funeral services were scheduled for 10:30 a.m. Tuesday at the Smith Funeral Home here.