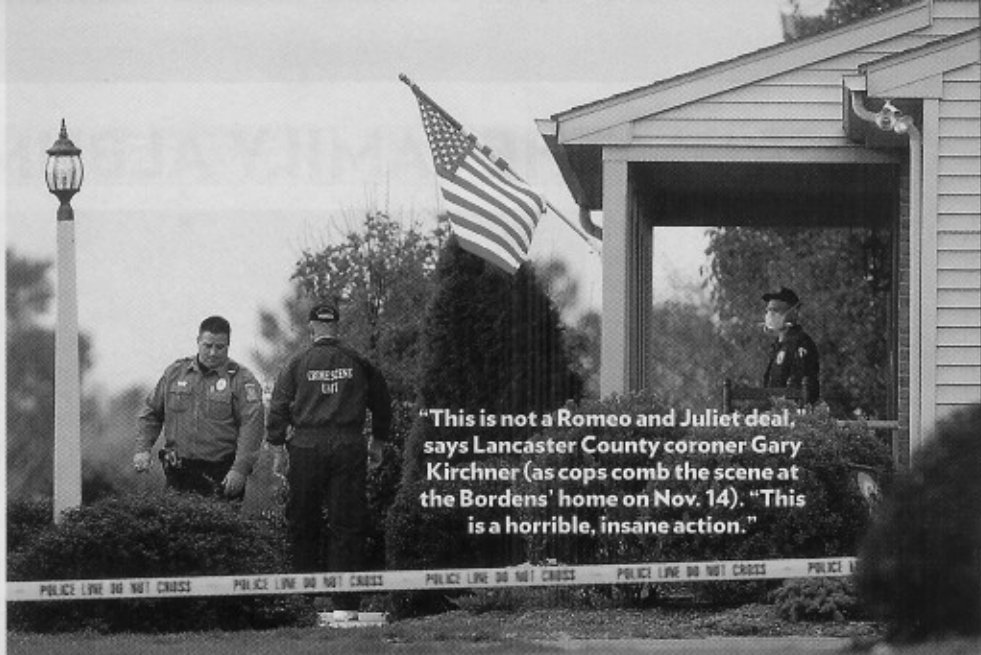


She had come to bury her parents, but 14-year-old Kara Beth Borden surely knew that she herself would be the object of much scrutiny. Less than a week after Mike and Cathy Borden, 50, were murdered in their home in Lititz, Pa., allegedly by Kara's boyfriend, David Ludwig, 18, the wispy-blond teenager wandered barefoot in a peasant skirt at the Good Shepherd Chapel in near-by Lancaster on Nov. 19 embracing friends and family at the funeral. For all the heartache of the occasion, Kara remained composed—even smiling. "She could be angry in a couple of weeks," says her friend Dalton Bauder, 13. "Now I think she's kind of avoiding it."

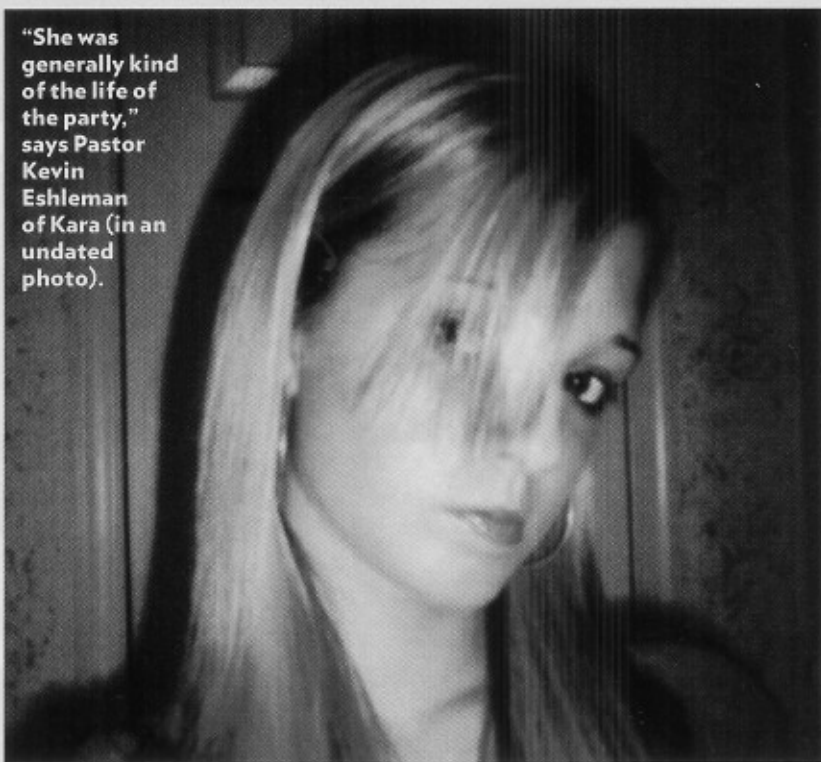
But there was no laying to rest the troubling questions that continued to swirl around the case. Was Kara an innocent victim? Or were the two homeschooled, church-going teens complicit in the crime? Though police had initially said they were treating Kara as a victim, on Nov. 21 they abruptly dropped the kidnapping charges against Ludwig, saying that she had gone willingly with him. But Robert Beyer, the attorney for Kara, said he did not expect charges to be filed against her, suggesting that a young girl who has seen her parents murdered should not be held to blame. "I'm not going to argue" with the prosecutor, says Beyer. "She's still a victim. We're on the same side."

She was, at the very least, a child who got in way over her head. According to police, Kara had told her parents she was at a sleep-over at a girlfriend's house. But when she arrived home on Sunday morning, Nov. 13, at 6 a.m. she was confronted by her parents, who suspected that she had in fact spent the night with Ludwig. Summoning Ludwig to the house, they spent the next 45 minutes or so voicing their displeasure over the relationship and telling Ludwig he could no longer see Kara. Tempers started to flare. Then, as Mike escorted Ludwig to the front door, the boy pulled out a handgun and shot him in the back of the head, as Kara's 15-year-old sister Katelyn looked on in horror. Within seconds he allegedly pumped a single bullet into Cathy's head; her body was later found still sitting in a sofa chair with a



"This is not a Romeo and Juliet deal," says Lancaster County coroner Gary Kirchner (as cops comb the scene at the Bordens' home on Nov. 14). "This is a horrible, insane action."

"She was generally kind of the life of the party," says Pastor Kevin Eshleman of Kara (in an undated photo).



AN ARGUMENT OVER 14-YEAR-OLD KARA BETH BORDEN'S ROMANCE WITH DAVID LUDWIG, 18, EXPLODES, LEAVING HER PARENTS DEAD, A PENNSYLVANIA TOWN REELING—AND A LOT OF UNANSWERED QUESTIONS

URNS DEADLY

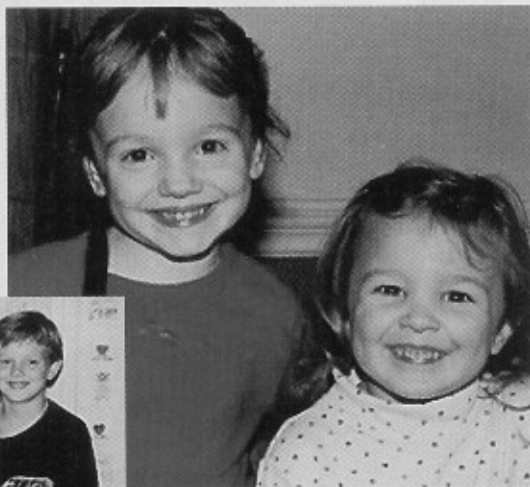
FROM THE FAMILY ALBUM



"They were the all-American family," says a neighbor of the Bordens (from left: Katelyn, Mike, David, Cathy and Kara).

Katelyn (left, with Kara) "is much like her sister, if slightly less bubbly," says Pastor Eshleman of the girls.

Since the tragedy, "it looks like they're becoming much closer," a friend says of (from left) Katelyn, Kara and Justin.



"She wanted to show that she knew the Lord"

—church elder David Sheaffer of Kara, being baptized by her father in October



blanket over her legs. The last thing that Katelyn, who had fled to the bathroom, could hear was the sound of Ludwig running through the house calling Kara's name. According to a police statement by Ludwig, she got in his car, saying she wanted to "get as far away as possible, get married and start a new life."

The shootings stunned the residents of Lititz, a prosperous community 60 miles west of Philadelphia. In their neighborhood Mike, the manager of a printing company, and Cathy, a stay-at-home mom, were mourned as uncommonly warm and outgoing people. "[Kara's] parents were amazing," says Skyler Jones, 15, one of Kara's friends. "They always made me feel at home." Those who know them best describe the Bordens—who leave behind three kids besides Kara and Katelyn: David, 11, Justin, 22, and James, 25—and the Ludwigs (who also have two young daughters) as strongly religious families who both homeschooled their children. In fact, Kara met Ludwig at a support group for homeschoolers.

Kara, who is only 5'1" and about 100 lbs., has an effusive personality, much like her parents. By all accounts she also shares their devotion to faith. (On a Web posting of her interests she listed "JESUS!!" first.) Lately, however, she had begun to turn

her attention to romance. "She'd discovered boys and vice versa," says Tom Mannon, whose daughter Stephanie is friends with Kara. "She had some boyfriends in the neighborhood, and her parents put the kibosh on that."

But Ludwig, whose father is an airline pilot and whose mother homeschooled her kids, proved to be a more resilient suitor. Like Kara, he was serious about religion. Ludwig, who had worked as a lifeguard, also had a knack for charming people. "When I first met him, I thought this guy is really, really cool," says Zac Horvath, 16, who has known Ludwig for 18 months. Kara and Ludwig got to know each other online (see box) and in person, and by summer their banter had escalated to something more intimate. "He'd park around the corner; then she'd come meet him and they'd take it from there," says neighbor Mannon.

Kara's parents were troubled by the age difference between the teens, and at one point even cut off her access to the Internet in an effort to derail the romance. "They were trying to separate the two," says Mannon. "The parents just didn't approve of this relationship." Many of their friends also point out that for Mike and Cathy the issue of premarital chastity was extremely important. At the funeral, Rev. Rex Trogden told how a year or so ago Mike had presented older daughter Katelyn with a diamond ring to symbolize that "he would do everything within his ability to help her stay pure until she was married."

It is unclear how much the Bordens knew about Kara and Ludwig's relationship—but they likely would have been appalled by some of the details that have come out since the murders. Some friends of the couple's say that Ludwig had started sneaking into the Borden home at night to see Kara. According to a police affidavit, the pair were having a sexual relationship and kept up a steamy line of communication that included the exchange of "inappropriate images of one another" over their computers and cell phones. In

HOW THEY HOOKED UP

"Almost all my friends have them," says 16-year-old Zac Horvath of blogs—and Kara Borden and David Ludwig were no exception. The pair's sites, on Xanga and MySpace, offer a glimpse of how their relationship unfolded. In June, according to the *Intelligencer Journal* newspaper of Lancaster, Pa., Kara posted a questionnaire, inviting responses from friends. Kara asked: "Love me?" Ludwig's response: "yup i love you like a sis shorty." Kara: "Date me?" Ludwig: "haha nope lol"—meaning "laugh out loud." Clearly that changed.



Name: Kara Beth B
Country: United States
State: Pennsylvania
Metro: Lancaster
Gender: Female

Interests: JESUS!! church, my youth group, other youth groups, family friends, doggie, KIDS, babysitting, soccer, bball... having parties OH YEAH BABY, going to party... CANDY, PUSHPOPS... shopping hugging.
Expertise: uhh... babysitting!!!..



Name: David L.
Birthday: 4/28/1987
Gender: Male

Interests: Rock climbing, hanging out with friends, computers, movies, swimming... pulling stupid pranks, having soft air gun wars, and various other things.

Expertise: Computers Volleyball, movies getting into trouble:-p

Occupation: Student

searching Ludwig's laptop, investigators found images of Kara "in various stages of undress." Even more disturbing was the 18-minute video that police also lifted from the laptop. In it, Ludwig is seen with a friend, Samuel Lohr, 19, both armed with rifles and dressed in dark clothing, conducting what they call a "night patrol" in which they stand outside a house—not the Borden's—and discuss killing family members.

But Horvath says Ludwig's erratic behavior had actually started with an incident earlier this spring. Accord-

ing to Horvath, Ludwig was shaken as well—as were his friends, who were disturbed by his actions. "He kind of lost all the friends he had," says Horvath. "Nobody really knew who he was anymore."

Kara's teenage buddies, too, voiced misgivings about her seeing someone so much older. In a blog posting on Oct. 17 a friend of Kara's told her that "things are getting out of hand" with Ludwig. "Obviously you don't care nuff that David may go to jail," says the friend—a reference, presumably, to the possibility

that was nothing compared with the arsenal that cops removed from his parents' home—a total of 54 guns. According to Barry Goldman, a lawyer in Lititz who has talked to police and attorneys involved in the case, authorities also discovered a "bunker" in the Ludwig basement complete with cots, food and sandbags that suggested, he said, a "survivalist, apocalyptic mentality." (Ludwig's family declined to discuss the case.)

Ludwig is now being held without bail while prosecutors decide whether he should face the death penalty.



“They were together in everything”

—Reverend Trogden, eulogizing Cathy and Mike Borden. Above: Kara (left) and sister Katelyn at the graveside service for their parents on Nov. 19.

ing to published reports, Ludwig disappeared with his then girlfriend, who was 16, and took her without her parents' knowledge to his family's hunting cabin in Juniata County. What happened next is unclear, except that he evidently brought her back voluntarily and both the girl's family and Ludwig's decided to handle the matter privately rather than bringing in the police. The girl was so traumatized, says Horvath, "she stopped talking for about two weeks and never left the house." And,

In response to the murders Pennsylvania authorities issued a nationwide Amber alert. A motorist in Indiana spotted the red Volkswagen Jetta belonging to Ludwig, who then led police on a brief high-speed chase before he smashed into a tree in Belleville. Kara emerged from the car in tears and ran toward Ludwig, yelling, "Don't hurt him, don't hurt him!" According to a police document, Ludwig confessed to the killings and told cops they could find the murder weapon under a seat in the car. But

he could be prosecuted for statutory rape. Kara was defiant. "We are taking care of it," she says. "We know what we are going to do."

Meanwhile, a court guardian has been appointed for Kara. One family friend says that the three orphaned children will be cared for by a relative. The family, says friend Jared Gagne, 22, is standing behind Kara and especially does not believe that she had anything to do with the murders. "People who know her know that it's just not possible," says Gagne. But then again, until recently Ludwig's friends could not have pictured him facing first-degree murder charges. "They're both from nice families," says Donald Bomberger, whose daughter hung out with Kara and Ludwig. "What can you say? Sometimes people just go haywire."

By Bill Hewitt, Nicole Weisensee Egan, Tom Duffy and Michelle York in Lititz, Sean Scully in Philadelphia and Shia Kapos in Chicago