

By DOANE HULICK
Journal-Bulletin Staff Writer

PROVIDENCE — George N. Berlinsky lived in Elmwood for 68 years, and his death there is part of the story of the disintegration of the neighborhood.

Berlinsky came home Monday and found that his apartment had been ransacked by burglars.

He saw the portraits he had painted ripped from the wall. He saw his furniture smashed and overturned. He saw the food from his refrigerator strewn on the floor.

Berlinsky walked across the street to a neighbor's house. He saw a little girl with brown eyes standing on the sidewalk. She was Belinda Strong, who is 11 years old.

"I looked at him, and I knew something was wrong," Belinda said. "I said, 'What's the matter?' He said, 'Somebody robbed my house.' I asked him if he wanted me to call the cops. He said, 'No.' He took some pills. He told me to go call the hospital."

Berlinsky, who retired three years ago as a quality control engineer for Data 100 Corporation, had a heart attack and died.

★ ★ ★

HE LIVED in a two-story house at 53 Warrington St., a block west of Broad Street. He and his wife had lived there for 27 years.

The houses in their neighborhood were mostly two- and three-deckers occupied by low- and middle-income families who tended their lawns and kept their houses painted and their property neat.

Over the years, the neighborhood took a turn for the worse.

The young moved to the suburbs, and other families who could afford to do so moved to other parts of the city. Older families stayed and poor people moved into the neighborhood. The houses took on a blighted look.

On Berlinsky's end of the street, the houses need paint and repairs. There are for-sale signs all over the neighborhood. On Lenox Avenue, three blocks away, there are lofty old Victorians that have been boarded up. There are charred shells of houses that have been torched.

And there is crime.

"They literally destroyed the man's home," said Sandy Strong, who lives at 58 Warrington St. "It's a sin. He was the nicest man you could ever expect to meet. He never hurt anyone. This is what it took — an innocent man to have a heart

attack before they locked them up." She referred to the two arrests police have made.

"My own home was broken into and ransacked the same way," said Joseph Margolis, 75, of 76 Warrington St., who was one of Berlinsky's friends. "It's too damned bad. The neighborhood has changed. I blame the city, the elected officials, the councilmen. They should take a ride through the neighborhood."

Mrs. Harry Berman of 46 Warrington St., said, "It's such a shock. It's just terrible. He was such a nice man. It was such a nice neighborhood at one time."

Berlinsky's house was broken into before. On Oct. 27, burglars took some of his personal belongings.

But the break on Monday was worse. It happened in broad daylight while Berlinsky was shopping at the market. The intruders could

not force open the dead-bolt lock that Berlinsky had put on the door after the break in October, so they broke the hinges off the door.

★ ★ ★

THE INTRUDERS entered the first-floor apartment first, but it was empty. Then they went to the second floor.

They ransacked and looted Berlinsky's apartment. They smashed furniture, ripped the pictures from the walls, broke the lamps and rifled his medicine cabinet and bureau.

Some of the pictures were Berlinsky's own work. He was an artist and had painted portraits of friends and relatives.

The burglars stuffed the loot into pillow cases, plastic bags and a suitcase. The stolen items included silverware, two radios, stereo

See VICTIM, Page B-3

Suspect in Elmwood break confesses to 25 others

By THOMAS J. MORGAN
Journal-Bulletin Staff Writer

PROVIDENCE — One of the two youths charged in the Berlinsky case confessed yesterday that he had broken into 25 other homes in the last few weeks and netted up to \$400 a week from selling stolen goods. A companion took in as much as \$1,500 a week, he told the police.

The youth who gave that information to police is 17. Call him Sheldon. He and a 16-year-old co-defendant in the Berlinsky case were brought before Family Court Judge Thomas F. Fay, who yesterday ordered them to be held without bail at the Rhode Island Training School, pending a hearing on a charge of breaking and entering.

Det. Capt. Milton R. Wilson said officers are seeking the youth who allegedly made \$1,500 a week, known only as "Nelson." A fourth youth, "Steven," supposedly an escapee from a group home for adolescents, also may be involved in some of the breaks, Wilson said.

Yesterday, Sheldon, who has a criminal record, took detectives on a tour of the South Side and Smith Hill and pointed out the houses that he and his henchmen had burglarized.

Some of the homes still had temporary plywood boards over windows and doors, Det. Sgt. Walter Bruckshaw said.

Sheldon told the investigators that he and his various accomplices preferred to break into apartments because they were less likely than houses to have alarm systems.

He said they knocked on the front doors first and, if they got no answer, proceeded to break in. He said that they stole items that were easy to sell, such as television sets, cameras, stereos and jewelry. One break was at Broad Street Pizza, where vending machines were rifled.

Nelson claimed the lion's share of the loot because he had a car that the youths used to ferry the stolen goods to customers in public housing projects, Sheldon said. He said their favorite disposal areas were the Manton and Hartford projects in Providence and Prospect Heights in Pawtucket.

The burglarized homes were on Dudley, Tobyhanna, Byfield, Warrington, Hamilton, Melrose and Sumter Streets, on Chalkstone, Adelaide, Detroit, Verndale, Ansel and Lenox Avenues and on Lakeview Drive.

11-24-72

SOMETHING WAS WRONG: Belinda Strong, the first person to learn of the events that lead to the death of neighbor, George N. Berlinsky.

Victim

Continued from Page B-1

equipment, a typewriter, several sweaters, two hair driers, two tubes of toothpaste, an electric razor and several packages of razor blades.

★ ★ ★

BERLINSKY came home shortly after 3 p.m. and found his home a mess. His wife, who works for the Providence School Department, and his son, Allan, both were away at work.

Belinda Strong called a rescue squad.

"I went out," she said. "He was pale and shaking. I thought it was because he had taken the pills."

Berlinsky, who suffered from angina, was pronounced dead at St. Joseph Hospital.

The police arrested two teenagers and charged them in connection with the break.

They also recovered Berlinsky's belongings from the cellar of a house up the street.

They charged Joyce Thibodeau, 23, of 63 Warrington St., with conspiring with the two juveniles to break and enter.

"I always liked that neighborhood," said Robert R. Berlinsky, the dead man's brother. "It was so beautiful. I drove there yesterday. I just dreaded what I saw."

BERLINSKY
George