

# Reward Offered In Shooting Death Of Ridgeland Merchant

## Orangeburg Bureau

RIDGELAND — Jasper County Sheriff Clifford Brantley announced Tuesday a \$2,500 reward has been offered for information leading to the arrest and conviction of the person who killed a Ridgeland merchant earlier this month.

Thomas H. Peeples, 62, who owned a department store here made daily door-to-door sales from a van in rural areas of Jasper and Beaufort Counties was killed from an apparent ambush Aug. 6 while eating lunch in his van on a rural road near Hardeeville.

Sheriff Brantley said Tuesday the probe into Peeples' death has turned up no leads or evidence, but investigators are convinced the killer is a local resident who was aware of Peeples' daily routine.

"Somebody in that area knows who killed Mr. Peeples, there's no doubt about it, and I'm hoping this reward money will bring us the information we need," the sheriff said.

Brantley said the \$2,500 reward was posted by the State Law Enforcement Division, the Jasper County Council, and the towns of Ridgeland and Hardeeville.

Peeples was killed by a single shot from a high powered rifle as he was eating a chicken sandwich in his van on a tree-lined rural road, about two miles west of Hardeeville.

Investigators believe the killer fired the shot from the woods about 20 yards from the van, then robbed Peeples of about \$400, and fled in a car that had been left about 200 yards away on a secondary road.

Peeples was well-known in the rural section of Jasper and Beaufort Counties.

from a tractor-trailer Sunday at the hospital, J.R. Swisher of the Colum- fell.  
Savannah Morning News - Tues. 7 Aug. 1979

# Ridgeland Merchant Robbed and Killed

TOMMIE MORACE Peeples, son of Benjamin & Catherine (Fitts) Peeples

RIDGELAND, S.C. — Tommie Peeples, a 62-year-old Ridgeland, S.C., merchant was shot to death and robbed near Hardeeville, S.C., Monday, according to the Jasper County, S.C., Sheriff's Department.

Peeples was the owner of Peeples' Department Store in Ridgeland and operated retail outlets in Beaufort, S.C., and Hardeeville.

Jasper County Sheriff Clifford Brantley said Peeples had been in the Beaufort and Hardeeville area Monday morning making deliveries and collections. The sheriff said the merchant customarily ate his lunch at a park on a secondary road off South Carolina Highway 321 near Hardeeville.

Brantley said the victim was apparently eating a sandwich in his car at the spot Monday around noon when he was shot once with a high-powered rifle. A Hardeeville man noticed the victim in his car around 1 p.m. and called police.

Authorities using bloodhounds traced a path from the victim's car through a wooded area to a point

near S.C. 321. Authorities found tire tracks where the footprints ended, the sheriff said.

The sheriff said Peeples made several collections Monday morning and said the victim's money pouch was missing.

The sheriff's department and other local and state authorities are investigating the incident.

A native of Ridgeland, Peeples was a first lieutenant in the U.S. Air Force in World War II and the Korean War. He was a deacon and Sunday School teacher at Ridgeland Baptist Church.

Surviving are his wife, Mrs. Sadie Ruth Mole Peeples, of Ridgeland; a daughter, Miss Melanie Peeples of Ridgeland; four sons, Bennie Peeples of Columbus, Robert Peeples of Summerville, S.C., Thomas Peeples of Hilton Head Island, S.C., and Paul Peeples of Ridgeland; two brothers, C.R. Peeples and W.L. Peeples, both of Green Cove Springs, Fla.; and four grandchildren.

Saul's Funeral Home of Ridgeland is in charge.