

1 Hour Time Frame for Double Murder

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Johnson County Tennessee authorities think they're looking for someone who knew the routine of a Mountain City couple, found dead—murdered in their home early Tuesday—with their 6-month old child found unharmed in his mother's arms. The horrific scene was discovered mid morning Tuesday when a man who had previously lived in the neighborhood came by the James Davis Lane home for his mail, but Johnson County Sheriff Mike Reece said yesterday that they're looking at an hours' time frame—about 5:30 to 6:30am Tuesday—for the double homicide to have occurred. The dead are identified as Billy Clay Payne Jr., 36, and his girlfriend Billie Jean Hayworth, 23—each shot in the head, according to the sheriff, with Payne also having his throat cut. Sheriff Mike Reece said their 6-month-old baby was found in his dead mother's arms—unhurt. The time frame is derived from the time the last person to see the couple alive on Tuesday—Payne's father, Billy Payne Sr.—leaving for work in Boone at about 5:30 a.m., and 6:30am when someone came to pick up Payne Jr. for his ride to work. That knock at the door had no answer. Payne was found still in bed by investigators, Hayworth dead in the baby's room. Reece said there did not appear to be any struggle and there did not appear to be a forced entry, and no weapons were found. No one in the neighborhood saw or heard anything in the five hours between the mother being seen and the discovery of the double homicide. Anyone with information on this case is asked to call the sheriff's department at 727-7761.