

Blood-Stained Taxicab Found; Driver Missing

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A United Cab Co. taxi was found abandoned on India Street in Tampa yesterday, its driver missing and with traces of blood on the outside of the vehicle.

The missing driver was identified as Bland S. Stewart, 48, who reportedly quit his job with Yellow Cab Co. when drivers went on strike recently. Yesterday was his first day on the job with United, officials stated.



Bland S. Stewart
... missing driver

POLICE OFFICERS who found Stewart's taxi had been searching for a cab that had been stolen early yesterday by a gunman who had robbed the driver.

The driver of the stolen cab, Repinaldo Rico Posada, 54, reported that at 5 a.m. yesterday he was held at gunpoint, robbed and forced to drive to Clearwater before he managed to escape and the robber fled with the taxi, police said.

Last night, detectives continued to search for Stewart and said they "strongly believed" that foul play was involved in his disappearance. Police said they have "good reason" to believe both incidents involving United cabs yesterday are related.

"At this time we have no indication that these incidents are connected in any way to the union strike problems, but we're not ruling out any possibility," police spokesmen said.

A union spokesman, William Lytwinnick, voiced another

view, though, and said he felt Stewart's disappearance may "somehow be linked to the activities of non-striking drivers and other individuals."

LYTWINICK SAID that although Stewart may have left the Yellow Cab Co., to find "temporary employment" he remained a loyal picket.

Officer E. A. Singletary said that Posada was robbed by a man whom he picked up at the Greyhound Bus Station at 5 a.m. and was taking to Port Tampa.

The bandit ordered the driver to go west on Gandy Boulevard and, while crossing the Gandy Bridge, robbed Posada of \$26 and his jewelry.

Posada told police that while driving the man to Clearwater, he was ordered on several occasions to pull over onto dirt roads; but Posada said he refused to do so.

While traveling on State Road 580, just east of U.S. Highway 19, Posada said, he pulled into a trailer court and

jumped from the car. The vehicle later was found abandoned in Clearwater, police said.

POLICE SAID that Stewart also is believed to have picked up a passenger at the same bus station at about 3 a.m. yesterday. He has not been heard from since, they said.

Between the time Posada reported the robbery and theft of his cab and when it was located, an alert was broadcast to Tampa Bay, are authorities.

While searching for Posada's cab, officers Robert Geoffion and Dennis DeGroot reported finding Stewart's cab on the 1000 block of India, four blocks from United Cab headquarters.

Later, Stewart's personal car was found parked near the cab company, and both vehicles were towed to the police garage.

IN ADDITION to the spots of blood found on the hood of the cab, police said, minor damage to the front of the vehicle indicated that "someone fell or was pushed against the cab in an abnormal manner." There was not enough damage to indicate the car had been involved in a traffic accident, police added.

Stewart now is listed as missing until evidence indicates otherwise, police said. Officials urge anyone who has information concerning Stewart's disappearance — which will be kept confidential, they said — to contact Tampa Police.