

Berdella wanted to show 'there are people like that'

Killer claims he's mentally ill

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By Scott Williams
Of The Examiner

JEFFERSON CITY — Admitted serial killer Robert Berdella says his spree of brutal sex-torture slayings might have been a "twisted" attempt on his part to show "there are really people like that out there."

Berdella also says he still suffers from mental illness, and a recent two-day stay in a prison psychiatric ward — which he describes in graphic detail — made him feel like "a sane person."

But his treatment at the Missouri State Penitentiary otherwise has been abusive and "prejudicial," he says, and he plans to seek a transfer to another facility, perhaps out of state.

The man who says he killed six young men in Kansas City between 1984 and 1987 discussed a variety of topics Friday during an exclusive, three-hour interview inside the state prison.

It is the only interview with Berdella to be published since January, when the Kansas City

television station KCPT-TV aired his first interview ever.

Berdella, 40, was relaxed and animated throughout Friday's discussion, often making jokes and even poking fun at himself as he expressed a range of emotions.

The only topic he would not discuss in depth was how he became capable of committing what have been described as the most gruesome criminal acts in recent Kansas City history.

But at one point when the interview turned to the murders, Berdella said he had become frustrated as a community activist who was involved in crime prevention and youth programs.

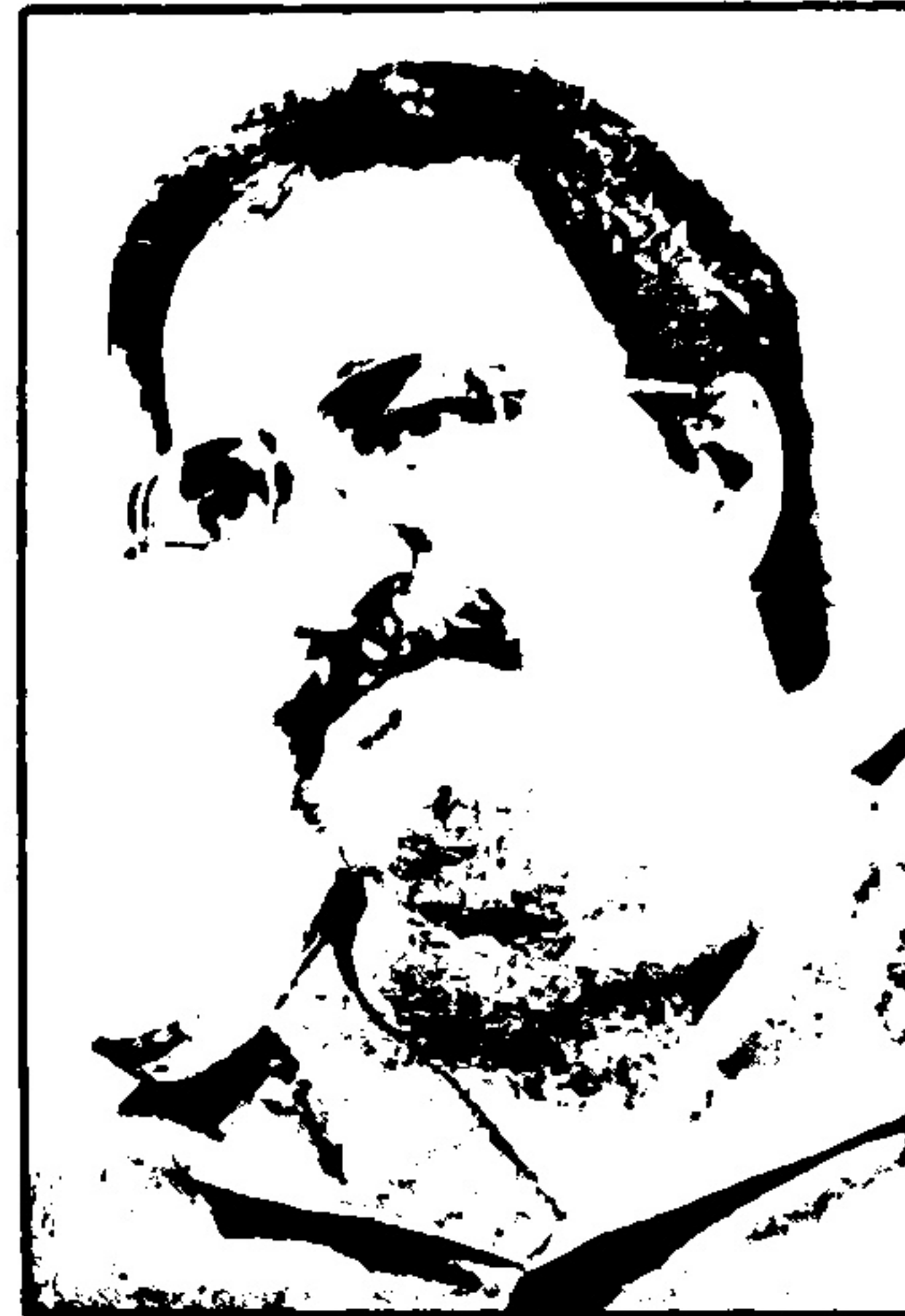
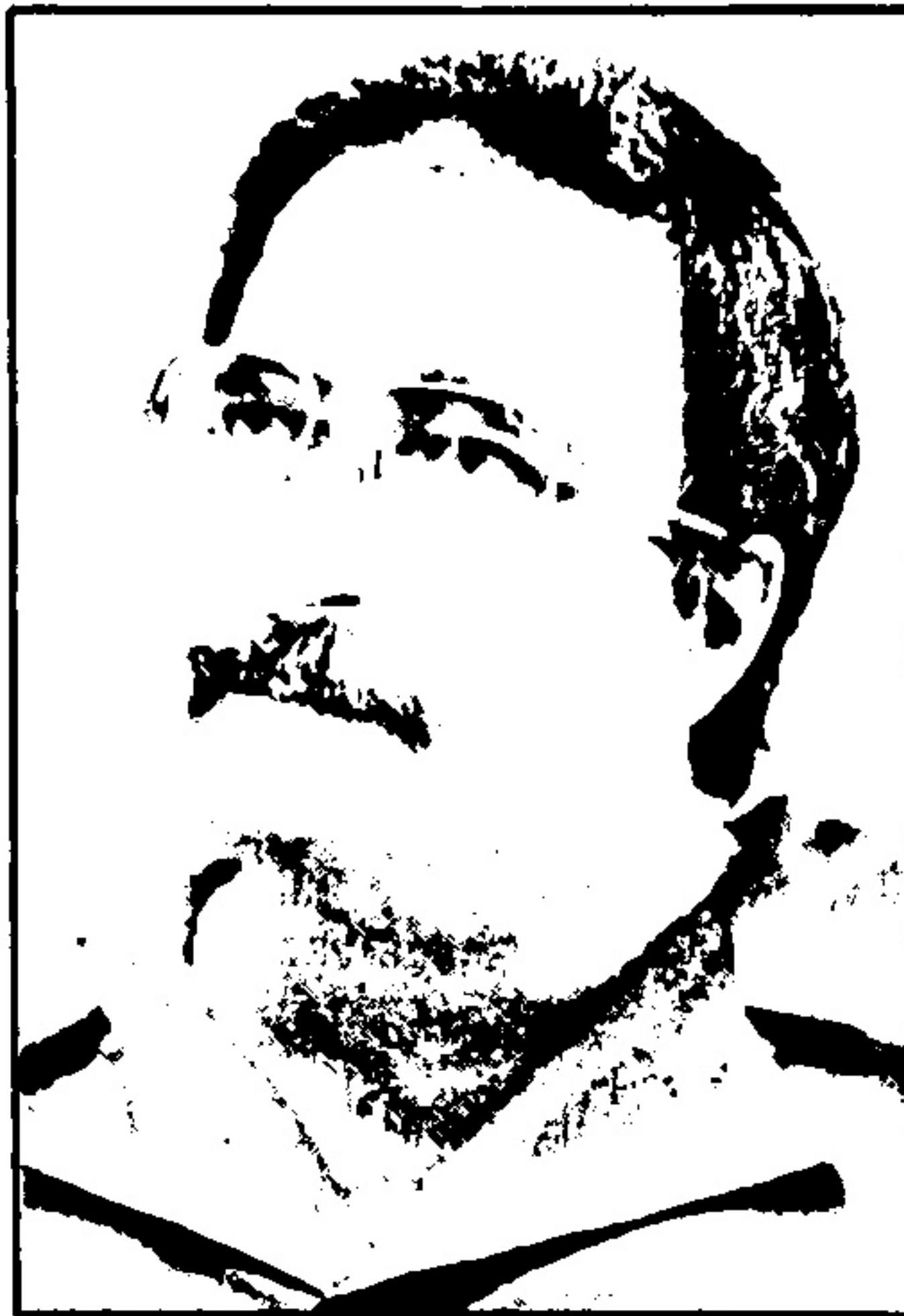
He said he felt frustration at his inability to keep young people from a lifestyle that was perpetuating "the deterioration of the human beings."

Berdella referred to a neighborhood in Kansas City that he said was frequented by prostitutes and drug dealers and was causing a spread of the deadly AIDS virus.

He described the area of 10th and McGee streets as an "ongoing sore."

"I don't know if Western mentality really has an avenue of concepts, of words or values that allow them to understand the rage that started to take place in me," he said.

"The best overall view I might be



The Examiner / Jim Dietz

During the wide-ranging interview, Berdella's hands were cuffed behind his back.

able to give you is that, at one point, my mentality became so frustrated in trying to deal with these people, or to deal with people in relationship to the streets, and not having them accept my warning about the type of people that were out there.

"And I guess in a way, maybe I twisted mentality and reality to show people that there are really people like that out there."

Late last year, Berdella pleaded

guilty to killing six men whom police and prosecutors say were subjected to severe sexual abuse and torture before their deaths.

The former owner of a flea market shop in the Westport area of Kansas City called Bob's Bizarre Bazaar, Berdella was arrested last April after a man who had been held captive four days escaped from Berdella's house wearing only a dog collar.

In the KCPT interview, Berdella said he had come to view his victims as inhuman "play toys." On Friday, he was asked why he would "break" his toys.

"I think at that point, the allegory goes way beyond toys," he said. "It's just how you dishumanize or create somebody from being humanized in your eyes."

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Killer's humanity the real nightmare

JEFFERSON CITY — The prison guard led me through several locked checkpoints. Each time, a heavy, metal gate clanged shut behind me.

But that didn't make me nervous.

I was escorted to an interview room that was not much larger — or cleaner — than the average public restroom stall.

That didn't make me uncomfortable.

Soon, I was sitting across a checkerboard-sized table from the admitted killer of a half-dozen men who died unspeakably horrible deaths.

Robert Berdella came to the interview with a file of papers tucked under his arm. I asked the guard to remove the handcuffs, but the guard refused. I'm still not sure I was disappointed.

We sat so close that his knee occasionally bumped mine under the

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