

Local News

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Keddie: still a mystery

Continued from page 3B

DeCrona added that profiling, which is the science of determining the personality and traits of the person who committed the offense based on crime scene evidence, just



More than two dozen buildings have been declared unsafe by the county—a sign of the neglect that followed in the wake of four killings there 20 years ago.

made it harder to solve, the enforcement found more dead ends than hope for success.

"When you profile this, it becomes even more convoluted," DeCrona said.

Six and others say there were many potential suspects, but there was no hard evidence to link them to the crimes in any real way.

The sheriff's department issued a pair of drawings of two possible suspects. The drawings appeared in the newspaper and elsewhere, but their positions did very little to solve the offenses.

The drawings were based on a statement by one of the kids in the house who was not touched by the killers. At first, the child said they had had a dream about what had occurred, but a therapist would

the killings and could not have done it, DeCrona said. Several years ago, another former Plumas County resident told officials that he or she knew who committed the offenses. In fact, the former resident's story was convincing because the resident was aware of facts that only law enforcement officials knew.

But the story was eventually discounted when investigators learned that the former resident had learned the details from someone in local law enforcement.

Information pointing to other potential suspects is depicted on what is known as the Keddie murder timeline—a computer printout that runs the length of two office walls in the sheriff's department. The department also stores more than 200 pieces of additional evidence in hopes of someday solving the case.

Even with all that evidence, what still amazes investigators is that the crimes occurred in a building that was surrounded by other occupied homes—a student housing complex for Feather River College, a 24-hour coffee shop and a busy tavern—and that no one heard a sound or saw anyone coming or going from the Sharp residence.

The decline of Keddie
The homicide drained all the life out of Keddie, which had been a previous hub of activity. Arthur W. Keddie established the city in the late 1800s at the turn of the last century.

Although the closure of the railroad terminal in Keddie nearly 20 years ago hurt the community, it was revived in 1978 when it underwent a massive facelift and was transformed into a popular resort.

"It was a nice area," DeCrona said. "The restaurant was nice. I went to dinner with my family there."

DeCrona, like so many others, agreed that the murders wiped out Keddie. A year after the slayings, the resort was put on the market for \$10 million, about \$7 million in 2001 dollars.

Then, three years ago, county officials condemned more than two dozen of the buildings located in Keddie, branding them as too dangerous for occupation.

Today, many of the buildings remain in disrepair, broken



Twenty years after the Keddie slayings, a once popular resort is marked by vandalism.

windows, broken doors and other signs of vandalism and mischief have replaced quiet, charming cabins. In many ways, Keddie now resembles a ghost town, literally and figuratively, out of some John Ford western.

Still remembered
Law enforcement officials say there is something haunting, something shocking, something sad about what took place in Keddie 20 years ago that manage to keep the pain alive in the distance.

When said that the newspaper routinely gets phone calls and e-mails from readers who still are interested in the case, DeCrona said he understands the fascination.

"People in the community, they know the victims," DeCrona said, explaining the interest. "It doesn't leave you're been occupying me for years, all of us. I don't think of it all the time, but I think of it often."

Six agrees with that sentiment as well. "There were a great number of people involved in the case," said Six, referring to people who were interviewed. "A lot of people were close to the crime for a variety of reasons."

"I don't think about it all the time," he said.

time. Six added, "But it's something that is unfortunate, something that is unfortunate in my mind."

Can it be solved?
Deputy David L. the current investigations supervisor for the department, said the crime still can be solved. He said the slayings are "something we routinely review."

Daniel, who has played a role in solving recent homicides for the department, including Rita Orta's slaying in her husband's home in 1995 and Ryan Dawson Dickey's slaying in 1997, said the recent resolution of

the Heidi Frederic case gives the department a glimmer of hope. Frederic was killed in 1984, but suspect David Mitchell was only identified as a suspect two months ago thanks to the use of a DNA bank at the California Department of Justice.

DeCrona agrees with Daniel's saying, "There is now hope with DNA technology."

"I do believe it will be solved," DeCrona said.

"Not confident too."

"I think it will be solved," Six said. "It's just that the slayings are still locker after all these years."

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