

[← Back](#)

Drive-by victim dies; police search for link - Connection? A drive-by shooting occurred at same Tacoma home 2 years ago

By Stacey Mulick November 30, 2002 Publication: The News Tribune Page: A01 Word Count: 808

Tacoma police investigating a deadly Thanksgiving night shooting explored the possibility Friday that it was related to a drive-by shooting at the South End home more than two years ago.

Meanwhile, the family and friends who had feasted on a holiday meal just hours before the fatal attack mourned the loss of a second youth killed in the shooting. Kimberly Carol Riley, a 19-year-old University of Washington student, died of her wounds at Madigan Army Medical Center. A short time earlier, 5-year-old Jeremy Britt Bayinthavong died at Mary Bridge Children's Hospital and Health Center. "You've got to find this guy," a grief-stricken Joe Britt said outside his home Friday. Britt is Jeremy's grandfather and hosted the Thanksgiving Day gathering of relatives and close friends, including Riley. Britt said he had no idea who shot at his home, killing two and wounding his 20-year-old niece, Harmony Spencer, and 22-year-old nephew, Jeff Spencer. Harmony Spencer was shot in the abdomen; Jeff Spencer was wounded in the leg. Doctors listed the siblings in satisfactory condition. Thursday's shooting was the second at the home. Someone fired several shots into the home about 8:20 p.m. March 3, 2000, while Britt and his wife were inside, Mattheis said. Investigators recovered 23 rounds from both levels of the home, Mattheis said. That shooting remains unsolved. "Whether that's

connected to this one, we don't know," Mattheis said. Detectives on Friday scoured the yard of the split-level corner home in the 1000 block of South 75th Street. They examined bullet holes left in a lower-floor window and collected remnants of the shells to send to the state crime laboratory. Investigators announced no arrest and did not release a possible motive. However, they believe the deadly shooting was not random. "It's tied to the house or somebody in it," police spokesman Jim Mattheis said. "This is a totally dead-end street. They came here with a mission and obviously accomplished it." The gunman walked up the lawn to the window at the Britt home about 10 p.m. Thursday and opened fire. It's unclear whether the gunman was shooting at someone specifically. The shades were slightly drawn, but the windows were steamed up, Mattheis said. "He came close enough to know people were in there," he said. The Britts live at the home with their daughter, her boyfriend and the younger couple's son, said Jennifer Yi, a next-door neighbor. Jeremy, the son of one of the Britts' sons, lived elsewhere; Riley was a family friend and lived in Seattle. At least a dozen people were in the house Thursday evening. Britt said some of the children had just gone downstairs while the adults cleaned up after the party on the second floor. "It just happened," Britt said through tears. "It sounded like eight or nine (shots), then all hell broke loose." A dense fog had rolled in and neighbors who heard the shots couldn't clearly see the gunman. One neighbor saw a Ford pickup speed down South 76th Street moments after the shooting, Mattheis said. The driver turned on the vehicle's headlights at the top of the hill before turning out of sight. Jennifer Yi, a next-door neighbor, was at the home earlier Thursday. She said the adults talked upstairs and children and young adults filled the downstairs. The youngsters watched television and played games. "They are really close with their family," Yi said. A neighbor who asked not to be identified described Jeremy as a cute boy who loved to ride his bicycle in the neighborhood during the summer. "He liked to have fun," the neighbor said. Yi said she saw Jeremy playing a card game downstairs Thursday, and he seemed a little upset because he was losing. "He was just a little kid," said Yi, who used to baby-sit the brown-eyed boy. "He had beautiful eyes." - - - Stacey Mulick: 253-597-8268 stacey.mulick@mail.tribnet.com - - - Have you seen it? * Tacoma police described a possible getaway vehicle as a dark-colored, older model, full-size Ford pickup with a loud exhaust system. The 1970s to 1980s truck had a light-colored canopy and FORD written in large letters across the tailgate. Police asked anyone with information about the truck or the shooting to call 911 or Tacoma-Pierce County Crime Stoppers at 253-591-5959.

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Page: A01

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