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# Austin haunted by inexplicable slayings of four teens

By Karen Brandon
LOS ANGELES TIMES

AUSTIN, Texas — "Do you know who killed the girls?"

The question haunts this city. For more than three months now, fliers at restaurants and gas stations, highway billboards and taxicab signs have carried on a nonstop public interrogation.

And still no one has an answer to what people here call the Yogurt Murders.

The city has been filled with white ribbons and "We will not forget" mugs and buttons since four teenage girls were shot in the head at a yogurt shop Dec. 4. The store was then set afire, destroying much of the evidence that police might have used to track the killers of Jennifer Harbison, 17; her 15-year-old sister, Sarah; Eliza Thomas, 17, and Amy Ayers, 13.

The murders stunned this usually relaxed city of 466,000. Although the city's murder rate is low, residents now have the uneasy sense that the caprice of big-city crime has arrived. That feeling has been reinforced in the weeks since the murders with the unexplained abduction of a young woman from a car wash and the shooting of two children in their home, allegedly by a neighborhood teenager.

This spring, a television station set up a hotline staffed by psychologists to talk to people about their fears of crime and offer suggestions on how to handle the subject with children. The response offered a measure of the fear in Austin. More than 800 people called, so the station repeated the service the next night.

"The thing that really got to me was that if people got a busy signal, they kept trying and trying and trying," said Alyce Dorsey, assistant news director at KXAN, Austin's NBC affiliate.

Newspaper advertisements from the parents of the murdered teens ask this question: "Do you know the man and his accomplices who killed our daughters?"

Following the question is the FBI's description of the traits the killers are likely to have. (An undercharacter. A poor employee. An explosive personality. Someone who angers easily.)

Robert and Pam Ayers, whose daughter Amy was the youngest victim, say they and their 19-year-old son, Shawn, are simply getting by since their daughter's death. Robert Ayers was in a hurry to leave home to do some Christmas shopping that evening. Their daughter was planning to spend the night with Sarah Harbison, her best friend.

Robert Ayers' last recollection of his daughter is seeing her brown hair shining and bouncing as he headed out the door. Pam Ayers remembers kissing Amy goodbye, saying, "We'll see you in the morning."

Days later, they burned her in the country-western clothes, belt buckle and boots they had bought for her Christmas presents.

Why would anyone hurt these four girls?

Lt. Andrew Waters, the Austin police supervisor of the division that includes homicide, has lain awake wondering about that question.

Over 17 years on the police force, he has steeled himself to dealing with society's underworld. Still, this was a crime that hit a bit close to home. He has a 19-year-old daughter.

He hasn't seen a crime rock Austin this way in recent memory. The only time that would come close was in 1966, when Charles Whitman killed 13 people and wounded 31 others in a shooting spree from atop the tower on the University of Texas campus.

A song has been written about the girls. The reward offered for help in tracking the killers is up to $37,500. When police released the sketch of a man who may have been in a car outside the store the night of the murders, the department received more than 1,000 calls.

All Waters will say about what the fire left behind is that evidence indicates more than one person was involved.

"We have to be optimistic," he added. "This is just one of those cases where you feel it has to be solved."

But even he wonders whether solving the case will give the community any satisfying answers. "Nobody could ever make sense of this," he said.

The Philadelphia Inquirer / MICHAEL MALLY

**Bush and Specter at the airport.** The President urged term limitations for Congress; Specter is seeking his third term in the Senate.

# In Phila., Bush speaks of change

BUSH from A1

establishment insider. But his chief of staff, Samuel K. Skinner, said yesterday that he did not see anything contradictory about the President now running as an agent of change.

"Well, times change and presidents have to change with them," Skinner said.

Skinner contended that Arkansas Gov. Bill Clinton's time-for-e-change campaign had no bearing on the President's new calls for political reform.

And Skinner brushed aside suggestions that it is somewhat ironic for Bush, who has had so many government jobs, to crusade in this manner.

"You've got to understand the process, then you can change it," Skinner said.

Bush has made most of his proposals regarding Congress before. Yesterday, he wrapped them into one package and added some new details.

He said there should be an overall 12-year limit on congressional terms — two six-year terms for senators or six two-year terms for House members.

"As president, my terms are limited. The same rule should apply to members of Congress," he said.

Most of those in the audience applauded. But Sen. Arlen Specter (R., Pa.), who is seeking a third six-year Senate term, stood impassively.

There now are no term limits on members of Congress, whose members may return as often as the voters want. Some serve for decades until voluntary retirement.

Presidents are held to two four-year terms under a constitutional amendment ratified in 1951 after the death of Franklin D. Roosevelt, who was elected president four times. Limiting congressional terms would also require a constitutional amendment.

Bush also proposed streamlining Congress by cutting the number of committees and subcommittees, called for eliminating special-interest political action committees, or PACs, and limiting other campaign fund-raising organizations — a main source of funding for most political candidates, including Republicans.

He opposed federal financing of congressional races, however, saying that that "would only worsen the problem."

The President said he would send legislation to Congress next week that would prohibit Congress from continuing to exempt itself from laws it imposes on other government bodies — such as conflict-of-interest and anti-discrimination statutes.

*Inquirer wire services contributed to this report.*

# Video series teaches homeless to survive

DUMPSTER from A1

from what they were doing and thought they had just picked up the flu," Dunlap said in an interview. "After the program, I got a call from a woman who was feeding her three grandchildren from dumpsters. It just never occurred to her that there might be a problem."

For the program, Dunlap, her husband, Dave, the president of Project Dignity, and Hayes, the show's regular host and a well-known homeless advocate in Los Angeles, took their camera downtown. They headed for an area of warehouses that distribute fresh fruits and vegetables.

"You take a chance any time you get some food," the homeless man identified as Harry told Hayes, as two of his homeless friends proceeded to dig through a dumpster. "You cut off the bad parts and salvage what you can. It's better than nothing."

One of Harry's friends pulled out half a watermelon, but Hayes advised avoiding it. Instead, he said, one should look for fruits and vegetables that, like the dirty but intact pumpkin, are whole and have not been punctured.

"Something like this, you don't have to worry about germs too much because it can be washed off," Hayes said. "A person has to be fairly skillful in going through the dumpster to eat."

Back in the studio — a stark set decorated with a home plant in a cottage cheese container, cardboard boxes and milk crates that sometimes serve as chairs — Hayes and the Dunlaps asked Orange County Health Inspector Ray Evans for his advice.

Evans warned against eating dumpster food, particularly meat, fish and dairy products. "Let's face it, these foods are there for hours, and we have the sun beating down on these metal dumpsters," he said, adding that the dumpsters are frequented by insects and rodents. In one dumpster, Evans said, he saw a bottle of pine cleaner dripping on to ground beef.

"Get outta here," Hayes said. "You've got a mixed media inside these trash cans," Evans cautioned.

Despite such warnings, dumpster dining is a reality, Linda Dunlap said, and will continue, even though some restaurants pour bleach onto discarded leftovers to discourage scavengers.

Some homeless people, for various reasons, would rather raid a dumpster than go to a mission for a free meal. "They want to remain independent," she said. "They don't want to be a burden on the state. So they're taking what nobody else wants."

> **"They don't want to be a burden on the state. So they're taking what nobody else wants."**
>
> Linda Dunlap,
> group's director

"I felt bad," Hayes said, recalling the first time he ate from a dumpster. "It's like the first time you urinate or defecate in the street," he added, pointing out that homeless people commonly go behind dumpsters to do that, posing additional health problems.

"The best choice is, don't take the stuff out of the dumpsters," Dave Dunlap summarized as the hour-long show concluded. "But if you have no other place to eat, wash it, if you can. If it's fresh, make sure the skin is not broken on it. Smell it. And stay away from meats and dairy products."

Short on budget and long on reality, the program has not produced any complaints from local cable viewers, said Tracy Johner, community production coordinator for Paragon Cable in Garden Grove, Calif. Other area cable companies have asked for copies and shown the program on their public access channels.

"Most people, when they think of public access television, think of things like Wayne's World — things that look really awful and are made by people who want to see themselves on TV," Johner said. "But some of the people doing it really want to help the community."

One episode of the series featured customized shopping carts that Project Dignity was having manufactured and making available to homeless people; each is equipped with a locking lid and a sticker warning that it is registered with the police department. Future programs will deal with voting rights, encampment issues and the school dropout problem among homeless children.

Since the viewers it is aimed at are not likely to have television sets, the Dunlaps have distributed tapes of the program to 32 homeless shelters and missions in Los Angeles and Orange County.

And for those who tune in from the comfort of their living rooms, the Dunlaps have a message as well.

"I think it's appalling that we've come to the point that we're doing a show telling people how to eat safely out of dumpsters," Linda Dunlap said as the episode closed. "If we were able to put men on the moon, we ought to be able to take them out of dumpsters."

Special to The Inquirer / PAUL MORSE

**"Dumpster Dining" host Ted Hayes** is homeless and has resorted to gleaning food from garbage himself.

# Democrats approve campaign-finance bill

By Helen Dewar
WASHINGTON POST

WASHINGTON — House and Senate Democrats announced agreement yesterday on legislation to overhaul Congress's lax campaign-finance laws, in a move they hope will assuage voter anger over campaign costs, incumbents' advantages and special-interest influence on lawmakers.

The bill, approved by House-Senate conferees on a straight party-line vote over strong Republican opposition, would use public subsidies and other incentives to encourage candidates to abide by voluntary spending limits, starting with the 1994 election cycle.

Candidates would be limited to $600,000 for House races and up to $5.5 million for Senate contests (with additional funds available for Senate primary elections) if they accept benefits such as broadcast subsidies, matching federal payments and low-cost mail rates.

The measure also would curtail contributions by political action committees (PACs), curb the channeling of unregulated funds (so-called "soft money") through state parties to help federal candidates, and plug other loopholes through which special interests have influenced the financing of campaigns.

The bill is expected to pass both chambers during the next few weeks, but neither house was able to muster the two-thirds margin necessary to override a veto in earlier voting on the legislation. White House deputy press secretary Judy Smith said yesterday that President Bush would veto the measure.

While chances of enactment are viewed as minimal, the legislation is expected to become a central focus of both parties as each attempts to portray itself as the party of change, reform and responsiveness before an electorate that has become impatient with politics-as-usual in Washington.

Senate Majority Leader George J. Mitchell (D, Maine) said the bill "represents a truly historic opportunity to enact fundamental reform of our nation's campaign-finance laws ... the toughest campaign-finance reform bill in the nation's history."

Republicans signaled their vehement opposition to the measure at a news conference Thursday, denouncing it as a "sham" effort to give the Democrats new advantages in elections and a "bait-and-switch" maneuver to distract voters' attention from Congress' current embarrassments.

They also called it a "rubber check" because it does not include money that would be necessary for the subsidies, which would have to be provided in subsequent legislation.

Referring to the plan's reliance on public financing, Senate Minority Leader Bob Dole (R., Kan.) said: "The last thing the American people want to hear from Washington is a bunch of incumbent politicians demanding even more money from the taxpayers so they can stay in office. Take your political tin cup to the taxpayers on that one and see what you come back with. My guess is, a black eye and a fat lip."

Under the legislation, House candidates who meet certain qualifications and comply with the prescribed spending limits would be eligible for federal matching funds for contributions of $200 or less, up to a total of $300,000.

Qualifying Senate candidates would receive vouchers equivalent to 20 percent of their general election spending limit and could buy broadcast time at one-half the lowest rate charged to commercial advertisers.

# Alaska Democrats Most uncommitted

ASSOCIATED PRESS

ANCHORAGE, Alaska — Alaska Democrats displayed their traditional independence in this year's presidential caucuses, with a plurality of 36 percent uncommitted to any candidate.

With 96 percent of the results reported from Thursday's caucuses, former California Gov. Edmund G. "Jerry" Brown Jr. finished second with 33 percent. Bill Clinton was third with a 30 percent showing, although he had been endorsed by 8 state party leaders.

Veronica Sajtar, a district organizer for the Alaska Democrats, said the results were true to form.

"At the caucuses, we generally split," she said. "We've never had a decisive winner."

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Baptists

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH
17th & Sansom Sts
Sunday, April 5th, 1992
9:45 Sunday School
11:00 Worship Service
"No Phoney Baloney"
Wednesday, April 8th, 1992
3:00 Organ Recital
David Lawrie, Organist
DR. PETER C. WOOL
Minister
JON SPONG
(Director of Music)
(Nursing care is provided during this service)
(Reduced-rate parking available Sunday at Liberty Place)

Presbyterian

ARCH STREET
Presbyterian Church
18th & Arch Streets
"The Church of Penn Center"
DR. G. HALL TODD
Minister
Sunday, April 5
Sermon: 10:45 AM
"Christ's Commerce With The Dead"
Lenten Service
Wed., April 8
12:10 - 12:30
Organ Recital By:
Paul Sejko
Service & Sermon
12:30-12:50
Theme: Scenes From The Life of Jesus.
#8 At the Banks of the Jordan
Dr. Todd Will Preach
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