

A8 Friday, October 1, 1999

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Austin American-Statesman

In the months after the December 1991 killings of four teenagers in a yogurt shop, Austinites sought answers and posted research, including on talkshows. Eight years later, Austin police are preparing to make arrests.



Police have 4 suspects in '91 murders

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in, and he began to talk some, then he sort of cut it off," said the official. The tip "was followed up on, but it wasn't taken up as far as it could have been."
Here is what police believe happened that night, the law enforcement official said.
Four males — two adults and two juveniles — drove up to the yogurt shop as store employees Jennifer Harrison and Thomas were closing up. Sarah Harrison and Ayers were there to help.
Three of the men went inside. Reberry was the motive, police believe, but none of the girls were sexually assaulted. Two were unharmed. Each was shot in the head, and the suspects set fire to the shop to cover up the crime. The girls did not know the suspects.
The killings shocked Austin. An estimated 1,500 Central Texans attended the funeral services, and the procession to the grave sites stretched five miles. The Rev. Kirby Garner, officiating at the Mass, spoke for the community when he said, "Questions. So many questions. I feel shock. I feel anger. I feel rage, helplessness, and I feel loss."
Three weeks later, Austin was rocked again with another violent crime when Colleen Reed, 28, was

kidnapped from a downtown car wash. Only this year, Kenneth McCall, a linking criminal, was executed for Reed's murder and her body recovered from a shallow grave near Waco.
The yogurt shop killings proved even more baffling.
From the beginning, investigators were swamped with tips — as many as 1,000 the first two years. The crime was called an "America's Most Wanted" and CBS' "48 Hours." Several times, police thought they were close to solving the case.
In the fall of 1992, a Mexican national who had lived in Austin allegedly confessed to Mexican authorities, and Austin investigators went to Mexico City to interview him. The man eventually recanted, claiming Mexican authorities had tortured him. Austin police said they didn't have enough evidence to charge him or to clear him.
The case, while never closed, slowly faded from public headlines. By 1994, the lead investigator, Sgt. John Jones, was reassigned to another unit.
A couple of years ago, Detective Paul Johnson was temporarily assigned to a task force of local, state and federal authorities over

the case. He began reorganizing the massive case file into manageable bits.
"The benefit of looking at a case when it is cold is, you have fewer distractions," she said.
You may contact Lashon Copple at kopple@statesman.com or 480-3617.

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Unsolved murders of teens seized psyche of Austin

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claimed the University of Texas Tower in the summer of 1988 and fired a high-powered rifle, inadvertently killing 14 people and wounding 41. A host of murderers seized the psyche of Austin.
The horror loomed again in July 1991, when two teenagers kidnaped two young men — Juan Correa, 24, and Brandon Shaw, 20 — and dumped the car into Town Lake.
But the difference between those two cases and the yogurt shop killings is that their murderers were swiftly punished. Whitman killed under a barrage of police bullets within two hours of his first shot. The members of the two young men were caught within days and sent to prison.
Justice for the teen girls at the [Coke] Bakery's Yogurt Shop was a particular type of hope, a yearning for some sign that there is a final justice.
"I think it will be solved," Austin police Lt. Andrew Waters said after the police began working on the case eight years ago. "We don't feel like this type of information can be covered up forever."
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flowers and burning candles at the site. A brown marker was erected near the store.
A gun shop owner in Round Rock said shortly after the slaying that he had 15 to 20 callers a day from store owners inquiring about the legality of arming employees.
In 1984, owners of the shop agreed to pay families of the girls \$12 million to settle a civil suit. The families said they hoped the lawsuit would spur employers to provide better security.
In March, Barbara Ayres, mother of two of the girls, urged a state Senate committee not to approve a bill that would have lessened an employer's liability for not training employees in security measures.
But along with the fear, the activism, and the grief, the killing of the four teenagers also gave birth to a particular type of hope, a yearning for some sign that there is a final justice.
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