



Unsolved Murder Rate Makes Your Blood Run Cold

DIANE DIMOND Crime and Justice

From time to time I get a message like this in my e-mail box:

"... A friend of mine has made a YouTube video about the murder of my 10-year-old brother in Jacksonville, Fla., in 1968. Glen's death was not investigated in 1968 and still today there has been no justice for Glen."

I diligently go to the Web address provided thinking the cold-case story of Glen might make a good subject for one of these columns.

I'm quickly overwhelmed. It's clear reading the impassioned blogs of Glen's still bereaved sister, Sandy, that the family's pain is as real today — a full 40 years later — as it was that early February morning in 1968 when little Glen's body was found beaten and "partially hanging" from a neighborhood rope swing.

His death was originally labeled an accident. But the bruises on his tiny body, clearly visible on his face at the open casket funeral, told his family otherwise. Nevertheless, police simply closed the case with no investigation.

Two years ago, sister Sandy got another Jacksonville detective to declare "foul play" was involved. But since no evidence had been gathered in 1968 there was little authorities could do if they re-opened the case — so they didn't.

Sandy's lonely quest for justice for her little brother continues. Her parents went to their graves never knowing who abducted and killed their little boy — or why.

It's the "why" that seems to be so important to the survivors of cold-case victims.

I've studied a lot of statistics about murder in America, none so sad as the numbers of unsolved cases. Of course the numbers vary from week to week, month to month as more cases hit the books and more cases are finally declared solved.

But consider the latest government statistics: 16,137 murders in the United States and more than 37 percent went unsolved — calculate that forward and it means more than 6,000, literally, got away with murder. And those figures are from the year 2004. Don't forget there were thousands more unsolved murders in the years before that and in each of the years after.

It all seems so simple when we watch TV shows like "Cold Case." Old crimes seem to get tied up in a nice little bow by the end of each program. That is not reality for about a third of all murder cases in America. Think of the human collateral that leaves.

I have a friend named Danielle who still slips into a deep depression every March on the

anniversary of her mother's unsolved murder in Tucson. Fifteen years after Gail Parker's bludgeoned body was found at a remote desert site, Danielle's father remains alone, content with the memories of the love of his life.

After the murder, Gail's elderly mother developed a dependence on Percoset and tried to commit suicide. She died in 2005 never knowing who took her daughter from this earth. The murder left a hole in the heart of this family, one that cannot begin to heal until the person responsible for creating it is found.

Grief expert Lu Redmond estimates there are seven to 10 close relatives affected for each murder victim, those left behind to carry the daily burden of loss. It's a horrific domino effect that leaves thousands of wounded people to grieve and mourn for the rest of their lives.

Some homicide survivors commit suicide, some crusade for justice like Glen's sister, Sandy. Others like Danielle get on with their lives. She's built her own public relations business in New York, but as she wrote to me recently, she never forgets the way her mother died.

"Every day is a struggle for me ... to get up in the morning, to work, to put a smile on my face when all I feel like doing is crying. To the outside world, I seem like a person who has it together, but I am a complete mess inside."

On Capitol Hill the Senate has been pondering a \$10 billion bill that would fund, among other things, a traveling exhibit to commemorate the War of 1812 and "The Star Spangled Banner" and a Museum of the History of Polish Jews in Warsaw.

In these tough economic times lawmakers might want to focus on helping Americans survive and function in their daily lives. How about focusing on programs that could bring down the crime rate by rounding up cold-case criminals-atlarge while bringing some measure of peace to homicide survivors?

If politicians are struggling for grounds to fund victim's assistance programs or coldcase law enforcement teams, I've got a YouTube video they should watch.

Diane Dimond can be contacted

through her Web site

www.DianeDimond.net



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