

[The Witthuhn murder and a Basher attack were the oldest unsolveds in Irvine and Tustin in 1988]

ORANGE COUNTY'S OLDEST UNSOLVED HOMICIDES; [Orange County Edition]

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ORANGE COUNTY SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT (*55 unsolved murders in unincorporated areas)

Dorothy Gale Brown, age 11, July 3, 1962 The girl's nude body was found in the ocean about 200 yards offshore, just south of Cameo Shores near Corona del Mar. The cause of death was listed as asphyxia due to drowning. The victim had last been seen alive July 3, riding her bicycle near her home in Torrance. She was found the next day by a diver, who brought her body ashore with the help of another diver. At the time, investigators found some clothing near Sunset Beach, but they were never able to confirm whether they belonged to the girl. There were no witnesses to her abduction.

ANAHEIM (*29 unsolved murders) Ernest James Wagner, age 68, July 14, 1971 Wagner was found shot to death in his residence in the 500 block of south Archer Street, in a room above the garage, where he lived. Although he owned the residence, he had rented the main house to a family of four and had chosen to live in the upstairs room. He was found by members of this family at about 5:10 p.m. July 16. There was no sign of forced entry or burglary. Almost 40 people were interviewed, but none of them reported seeing or hearing anything that led to a suspect. For a long time it was thought a family member committed the murder, police said, because there was no evidence of a forced entry and because, earlier that week, members of the victim's family had been seen entering and leaving the residence.

BREA/YORBA LINDA (*3 unsolved murders) Robert Jay Robinson, age 24 March 2, 1983 Robinson, who worked as a pool cleaner, was found bludgeoned to death in the living room of his downstairs apartment in the 300 block of Imperial Highway. Several members of his family found him at about 6:30 p.m., when they arrived to pick him up for dinner. There were no signs of forced entry or burglary in the apartment, where Robinson lived alone. Police believe he was killed shortly before he was discovered. Police interviewed 25 to 30 people, but no one had seen or heard anything.

BUENA PARK (*10 unsolved murders) Vicki Miner, age 16, November 14, 1970 Vicki Miner's badly decomposed body was found in a vacant field near Malvern Avenue and Dale Street. Police determined that she had been bludgeoned to death. A student at Buena Park High School, Miner was last seen alive as she left for school at about 9:30 on the morning of Oct. 30. Her parents reported her

missing later that day when she didn't show up at school. The coroner estimated she had been dead about 14 days before she was found. The girl's body was fully clothed, but she was missing a Size 28 to 30 brown leather belt, Size 7 dark brown leather sandals and a dark brown suede purse. None of these items has ever been recovered.

COSTA MESA (*15 unsolved murders) Jim Raymond Perry, age 22, April 30, 1975 The construction worker was found stabbed to death on the couch in his apartment. He was found by a friend, who had become worried after Perry hadn't been heard from for several days. Perry, who lived alone, may have been dead for up to 8 days before he was found, police said. The police had no witnesses, made no arrests and have no suspects. He was a popular, longtime resident of Costa Mesa with no prior record. "Everybody says `nice kid' ," a police spokesman said.

CYPRESS (2 unsolved murders) Paula Joy Pleshe, age 33, July 14, 1981 Pleshe was stabbed to death at about 7 a.m. in the carport behind her home on the 4700 block of Larwin Lane. Police have been unable to establish a motive-Pleshe had no known enemies and she was not robbed or sexually assaulted. Based on witnesses' descriptions, police initially suspected two male Latinos of committing the crime. One was about 40 years old, 5 feet, 9 inches tall and weighed about 230 pounds. The other was about 20 years old, same height and weighed about 150 pounds. Both had black hair.

FOUNTAIN VALLEY (*2 unsolved murders) James Michael Gardner, age 21, Aug. 7, 1968 Sometime between 12:30 and 2:40 a.m., the Santa Ana resident was riding his motorcycle on the southbound San Diego Freeway, just north of the Ward Street overpass, when he was shot with a .22- or .25-caliber handgun or rifle. His body was found by California Highway Patrol officers, who initially believed he had been involved in an accident. Evidence that he had been shot was uncovered only at the autopsy, when several bullets were found in his body. There were no suspects.

FULLERTON (*10 unsolved murders) Charlotte Schmidt, age 46, Jan. 15, 1962 Charlotte Schmidt was found bludgeoned to death in the dining room of the San Juan Drive home she shared with her husband, who found her when he returned home from work at about 5 p.m. The pathologist later determined she had been dead about 2 to 3 hours before she was discovered. There were no apparent signs of forced entry into the home, which was up for sale at the time. But the rear sliding-glass door in the living room was found slightly open. Also, there was no sign of burglary. The case was "initially worked thoroughly," a police spokesman said, adding that the investigation was followed up with another one about 2 years later. The investigators contacted many people and were told of someone, most likely a solicitor, who had been seen going from door to door in the neighborhood that day. Eventually, though, police were unable to focus on anyone in particular.

GARDEN GROVE (*17 unsolved murders) Jack McElroy, about 50 years old, May

20, 1962 At about 11 p.m., two customers stopped at the Hancock service station that then stood at 9122 Garden Grove Blvd., but McElroy, who was the attendant that night, was nowhere to be seen. While searching the premises, the customers found his body in the restroom. He had been beaten to death. Police say the killer or killers took about \$150, McElroy's wallet and the keys to the station. The customers told police they saw two sailors walking away from the area shortly before they found the body. There were no other clues. Between 200 and 250 people were interviewed at the time, including some servicemen from Long Beach, but police were unable to come up with enough leads to make any arrests.

HUNTINGTON BEACH (*6 unsolved murders) Unidentified female, 20 to 25 years old, March 14, 1968 The unidentified woman, possibly Latino, was found dead in a ditch in a then-open field on Yorktown Avenue and Newland Street. The victim's throat had been cut and there was some evidence of a sexual assault. The body had been dumped in the field some time after 4 that morning, and she was found by children at about 4 p.m. The victim, who police say had bad dental work, was wearing purple Capri pants, a long-sleeved floral print blouse that had been ripped, a black bra and a white metal ring with a purple stone. The police found very little physical evidence-one of the few clues was an indication that a car had been driven off after the body was dumped. About 30 to 50 people were interviewed by the police, but officers were unable to come up with any leads.

IRVINE (*7 unsolved murders) Manuela E. Witthuhn, age 28, Feb. 5, 1981 When Witthuhn didn't show up for work that morning, her employers contacted her father, who lived near the home she shared with her husband at 35 Columbus. The father went to investigate at about 11:30 that morning and found her body in the bedroom. She had been bludgeoned to death. Police said there was some indication a burglary had been committed, but there were no witnesses, no leads and there are as yet no clues in the killing.

LAGUNA BEACH (*4 unsolved murders) Brent Tobey, age 55, Nov. 20, 1978 A friend of Tobey's had just arrived for dinner at the house in the 1300 block of Carmelita Street in which Tobey lived alone. At a few minutes past 9 p.m. the telephone in Tobey's bedroom rang. When the friend went to answer it, he found the victim dead on the floor next to the bed. He had been stabbed 10 to 15 times. Police found no signs of forced entry or of a burglary. The only evidence investigators had to go on was a single drop of blood, which was found on the kitchen floor. The victim's blood type was A, but the drop was Type O, leading investigators to believe the killer was injured during the attack. The murder weapon was never found. "We have absolutely no suspect information, nothing," a police spokesman said.

LA HABRA (*2 unsolved murders.) Thomas Adame, age 21, Nov.20, 1980 Thomas Adame was in the front yard of a relative's home in the 300 block of Pacific Avenue with his cousin, Bennie Adame, and at least one other person. Suddenly, a group of about four people who were hidden in the bushes of a home

across the street opened fire, killing Thomas and wounding Bennie. The shooting, though gang-related, also involved a long-simmering family feud that stemmed from the killing by someone in the Adame family of a rival family member. "It was gangs per se, but it involved a couple of families most of all," said the police, adding that "this was a retaliation-type thing." Ironically, Thomas had not been involved with the feud in any way-he had just gotten out of the service. Also, police determined Bennie was the killers' target. "We know who did it but we can't prove it," a police spokesman said.

LA PALMA (1 unsolved murder) Patricia Ann Ross, age 31, Dec. 11, 1974 Ross was overdue for a dinner engagement. When telephone calls to her apartment went unanswered, one of her friends retraced the route she would have taken, believing her car may have broken down en route. When he arrived at her apartment at 8:15 p.m., he found her dead in the bedroom. Ross had been sexually assaulted and strangled, but there were no signs of burglary or forced entry. She had last been seen alive at about 5:30 that evening at her business, Annie Green Things, a plant boutique in La Palma she had recently sold. Police believe she had been dead approximately 1 to 1 1/2 hours before she was found. "We talked to literally dozens and dozens of people, none of which panned out," said the police. Neighbors told police that all they heard was a knock on the door and a conversation at about 6:30 or 7 p.m., but nothing to indicate a violent struggle or anything giving them reason to call the police. "Nobody saw anything. We've exhausted every single one of our leads. Occasionally, every few years, we may get a call" related to the homicide, said the police. But none has provided any leads.

LOS ALAMITOS (*3 unsolved murders) Don Lynch, age 69, July 20, 1976 Don Lynch owned and operated Don's Turf Motel at 4732 Katella Ave. At about 11 p.m., a lone bandit entered the office and held up Lynch at gunpoint. The gunman ordered Lynch's wife and grandson into a room next to the office, apparently with the intention of tying up the family. When Lynch attempted to fight off the robber, he was shot in the face. The killer then forced Lynch's wife to tie up the grandson and fled with the money. The robber was described as a male Latino, about 25 to 30 years old, 5 feet, 9 inches tall and weighing about 175 pounds, with black hair and a mustache that reached the corners of his mouth. There are no suspects in the case. "All leads have been exhausted," a police spokesman said.

MISSION VIEJO (1 unsolved murder) Robbin Brandley, age 23, Jan. 18, 1986 The young communications and fine arts student had spent Saturday night working as an usher at a concert and reception at Saddleback Community College. She left the concert sometime between 10:30 and 11 p.m. Shortly afterward, her fully clothed body was found lying in the parking lot next to her car. She had been stabbed to death, and authorities said there was no sign of a struggle, robbery or sexual assault. No one reported having seen or heard anything, said a Sheriff's Department spokesman, although the killing occurred in a lot that was "fairly close" to the building where the concert was held. "We were

really quite surprised that no one saw or heard anything," considering the proximity of the lot to the building, the spokesman said.

NEWPORT BEACH (*5 unsolved murders) Linda Ann O'Keefe, age 11, July 6, 1973 Linda Ann O'Keefe was used to walking home from Lincoln Intermediate School in Corona del Mar. On the day she disappeared, however, she had called her mother and asked for a ride home, but she was told that she would have to walk. A bicyclist found her at about 10 the next morning in a ditch beside Back Bay Road. She had been strangled. Several witnesses said they saw a young girl fitting O'Keefe's description getting into a van at about 1:15 on the afternoon that she disappeared. The van was described as a 1969 to '73 turquoise-colored vehicle of an unknown make and model, with windows on both of the rear double doors, no windows on the left side, and the license plate mounted on the left rear door. The driver was a male Caucasian, about 24 to 30 years old, with brown, curly, medium-length hair, small or droopy eyes, and a deep tan.

ORANGE (*6 unsolved murders) Floy Faye Redmon, age 75, May 6, 1965 Orange police believe Redmon knew the person who killed her. The evidence at the scene showed that she had apparently invited her killer into the house, where she lived alone, to have a cup of coffee. Redmon drank her coffee black and the killer took cream. At about 9:30 that morning, the killer struck her repeatedly on the head with a pressure cooker lid. Police believe the killer then ransacked a back room where Redmon purportedly kept some cash, heard her make a sound, returned to the kitchen and killed her. The murderer left some clues, including fingerprints on the coffee cup and some filter-tip cigarettes (Redmon's brand was unfiltered). For an unknown reason the killer left about \$650 lying around the house. No one in the neighborhood saw or heard anything until about 3 p.m., when one of Redmon's neighbors found her body.

PLACENTIA (1 unsolved murder) Albert Garnica, age 18, March 23, 1985 Garnica was the victim of a drive-by shooting. At about 2:41 that morning, Garnica was standing with several other people in front of a house in the 900 block of south Melrose Street, where he and his friends often congregated. A 1976 to '78, T-top Oldsmobile with three people inside approached them. Someone inside the car shouted something, possibly a gang slogan, shots rang out and Garnica and three others were hit. Garnica later died at Anaheim Memorial Hospital. Investigators were able to accumulate some evidence to present to the county grand jury, but it was not enough to result in an indictment. No arrests were made at the time and police have no suspects in the case, which remains open.

SAN CLEMENTE (1 unsolved murder) Douglas Gordon Haworth, age 59, Sept. 7, 1965 Haworth was a transient who came and went as he pleased. He could always find a place to stay-if his daughter and her family or one of the numerous friends he had in town couldn't accommodate him, he could just as easily make do in a car. On the night he died, Haworth had gone to a bar in the 1600 block of north El Camino Real for a few beers. Later he holed up in a car parked on the lot

of an auto shop next to the bar. At approximately 9:30 or 10 p.m., someone killed him. Haworth, who was found next to the car, had been beaten with a cement block. One witness remembered seeing two men talking in the area. Another claimed he saw someone standing in the vicinity with his hands upraised, as though holding something overhead. Neither witness could provide any further description. Around the time of his death, Haworth had been staying with a friend who lived in town with a girlfriend. Both were alcoholics and the woman was involved with drugs. Police came to strongly suspect the friend had committed the murder, but had no physical evidence. Any hope of solving the crime ended when the couple died. Two weeks after the killing the woman took an overdose of Seconal and a year later the man hanged himself.

SAN JUAN CAPISTRANO (1 unsolved murder) Avelino Morales, age 19, Aug. 28, 1988 Morales worked as a stable hand at the Sycamore Trails Stables. At about 1:50 a.m., a woman who had come to the stables to unload a horse found his body on a dirt slope next to a horse barn. The Sheriff's Department said he died as a result of blunt-force trauma to the head. The police questioned a number of people but couldn't come up with any suspects in the case.

SANTA ANA (Police were unable to provide the number of unsolved murders) Christine Elizabeth Wariner, age 47, Feb. 15, 1964 The last time anyone saw Wariner alive was at about 10:30 p.m., when a neighbor saw her entering the second-floor apartment/office in the old Santa Ana Hotel on North Main Street in which she lived alone and from which she managed the hotel. At 3:30 the following afternoon, neighbors found her dead. Wariner had been bludgeoned and sexually assaulted. Police found no evidence in the apartment of forced entry or burglary. There were "no signs of a struggle. No statements from witnesses that they heard anything during the night," a police spokesman said. There was "very little physical evidence at the scene to go on." The police interviewed 48 people from the hotel and six were given polygraph tests, but no leads were uncovered.

SEAL BEACH (*2 unsolved murders) Cindy Van Cott, age 24, March 30, 1980 Van Cott, a young factory worker who lived in Santa Ana, was last seen alive at about 11 p.m. March 29, when she left a motel in Costa Mesa with a man named Jim. The next day, at about 11 a.m., a man who was walking his dog found her nude body in the water at Sunset Aquatic Park, in the flood-control channel off the "D" dock near Edinger Avenue. The exact cause of death was unknown, but police say there was evidence of head trauma and of strangulation. She died before she was put in the water. Police also say she had a blood-alcohol level of 0.17. Witnesses described Jim as white, about 28 to 30 years old and about 5 feet, 8 inches tall with a muscular build. He had dark blond or brown hair, thick eyebrows, a mustache and beard. Witnesses also told police he was driving a white compact pickup with a white camper shell. Police questioned about 15 to 20 people at the time, but made no arrests. STANTON (*10 unsolved murders) Donna Rae Goodell, age 43, April 21, 1975 Goodell was a housewife who sold Avon products part time. At about 7:30 that evening, her husband returned home from work and

found her dead. The Sheriff's Department lists her death as resulting from blunt-force trauma to the head, but she was also strangled. She had last been seen alive at about 2 p.m. at her home. Investigators found no evidence of forced entry into the house.

TUSTIN (*2 unsolved murders) Debra Jean Kennedy, age 24, Oct. 6 or 7, 1979 Kennedy shared a downstairs apartment with her 28-year-old sister in a four-plex in the 15500 block of Boleyn Circle. Sometime between 9 p.m. on Oct. 6 and 6 the following evening, someone bludgeoned her to death. Her sister, who had just returned from a trip to Las Vegas, found her nude body on the open sofa-bed in the living room. There were no signs of forced entry or of burglary. No arrests were made at the time. One neighbor reportedly heard a muffled noise at about noon the day Kennedy was found, but this was discounted. Police, believing the slaying was linked to a series of similar killings that had plagued the county during the previous 3 years, included the case in a massive investigation involving several local law enforcement agencies. The link, however, was eventually discounted. In 1983, police received two tips in the case, but they proved fruitless.

VILLA PARK (1 unsolved murder) Helen Schwartz, age 53, Oct. 16, 1985 At about 1:30 that afternoon, Schwartz and her husband returned home and were confronted by an armed intruder. She was shot in the head. Her husband fled out a side door and was able to call for help from a neighbor's house. The Sheriff's Department described the killer as a male Latino between 21 and 25 years old, about 5 feet, 9 inches to 5 feet, 10 inches tall and weighing 140 to 150 pounds, with black, collar-length hair, a full mustache and a goatee. No arrests were made at the time. "I know (investigators) talked to many, many people on this," a Sheriff's Department spokesman said.

WESTMINSTER (*5 unsolved murders) Frank Schiavone, 41, and Shirley Schiavone, 44, May 9, 1972 At about 2:15 that morning, the Schiavones returned home from a local bar called Woody's. As they entered their home in the 6000 block of Choctaw Drive, someone approached them from behind and shot them both to death with a large-caliber handgun. The killer had apparently been lying in wait for them nearby, possibly in some bushes outside the house. The couple died just inside the entrance way to their home. Their 11-year-old son, who was alone in the house at the time, was awakened by the shots and discovered the bodies. There was no apparent motive for the slayings. Witnesses described a white male wearing light-colored clothing fleeing the scene, but police were never able to come up with a suspect. The case is "still under investigation, but after all these years there are fewer and fewer things to follow up on," a police spokesman said. "We haven't had anything (to go on) in quite some time." Note: The Brea Police Department reports that Yorba Linda, which the department also serves, has no unsolved homicides on file. Source: Individual police departments

