

Cop recalls hunt for child killer



Sgt. Charles Green: "It's not like he committed a crime on an adult. He did it with kids, and that's a lot different."

By SUZIE ROLLINS

The Oakland County child killer is probably dead.

That's the opinion of a former member of the Oakland County Homicide Task Force who spent three years searching full time for the killer.

"I think if the guy's alive and on the street he'd be operating," Troy Detective Sgt. Charles Green said.

Green discounts theories that the killer could be in prison, convicted of another crime.

"If he is in jail, by this time he'd have to talk to somebody and someone (a prisoner) who wanted to buy time would have told the police," said Green.

CRIMES AGAINST children anger criminals — so Green believes that a fellow prisoner wouldn't hesitate to turn in the killer if he boasted of the slayings while imprisoned.

"We've checked the local jails and state prisons and had contact with every state in the union and we haven't come up with anything."

"It's not like he committed a crime on an adult. He did it with kids, and that's a lot different," he added.

It is three years ago this month that Green began his pursuit of the child killer. The Troy detective became involved when the body of 12-year-old Jill Robinson was found Dec. 26, 1976 in a ditch along Big Beaver and I-75. Police believe she had been abducted

near a Royal Oak hobby shop, held for three days and then taken to the place alongside I-75 where she was shot in the face at a close distance.

"I was working the shift when the body was found and was assigned to the case. Shortly after that a group of officers got together and formed the task force," he said.

He joined 19 other police investigators in the Oakland County Homicide Task Force. Initially, all the officers worked full time on the case, but gradually the task force was decreased in size as funding diminished. It was disbanded completely one year ago. Green was one of the first officers to join the force and worked on it until it was dissolved in January 1979.

OFFICIALLY, the search still continues. A \$100,000 reward for information leading to the arrest and conviction of the killer or killers still stands. And telephone tips keep coming in, Green said.

"When the book 'Angel in the Snow' (a fictitious book about the slayings) was released a few weeks ago, we got about four tips from people who said they had ESP and heard something. We checked them out but didn't find anything," he added.

Every so often a person reports to police that he/she spotted a blue Green, the type of car which police suspect the killer may have driven. But it's nearly impossible to trace a blue 1976 Gremlin today because of the time that

has passed, said Green. The car could have changed owners and the license plates have changed since that time.

Green investigates tips made by Troy residents. Out-of-town tips are turned over to Capt. Robert Robertson of the Michigan State Police Northville Post, who spearheaded the task force and is still in charge of the investigation.

Green believes his theory that the child slayer is dead is supported by the investigative efforts of police officers throughout the U.S. and in other countries.

"The whole issue has had so much media exposure, and we've been in contact with every police agency in this country and overseas. If he were in another state and committed a crime we would know," he said. "I think he was killed or committed suicide."

Even though Green believes the child killer is dead, he is still suspicious of people. Every time he hears of a sexual crime against a youngster, his ears perk up and he asks questions.

"Guys (other policemen) drop names on my desk of people they think may be involved with kids," he said.

DURING THE THREE-YEAR task force investigation, the police checked over 15,000 tips. Many were from people who have been investigated by police themselves, Green said. Five persons confessed to the crime. All were cleared.

"Before I joined the task force I in-

vestigated a lot of cases but none were like this. I thought I knew a lot about people but I found out that I didn't even have the first page turned," he said.

The killer's victims, two girls and two boys, were between the ages of 10 and 12 and of similar build. All were thin, attractive, with brown hair and red highlights. They were similarly dressed.

Evidence indicated the children were sexually molested.

Police continue to look for a white male, 25-30 years old, with dark eyes. He is believed to be between 5 feet 8 inches and 5 feet 10 inches tall and to weigh between 150-170 pounds.

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