

Book recounts probe of Oakland child killer

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The investigation is continuing "in greater depth than people realize," Tobias said.

ANOTHER TASK FORCE member, Rollin G. "Jerry" Tobin, was Birmingham's police chief then and now heads Southfield's public safety department. Tobin wants the book to "pick up some information. I hope someone out there will somehow realize they're sitting on a fact. Somebody has to know who the killer is."

Some task force members "get together for a few beers every now and then," Tobin said, "and we get a little sick to our stomachs about it."

Author McIntyre interviewed both Tobias and Tobin at length before writing the book. Tobin called it "extremely factual." Tobias said, "It's factual, but it's been embellished to make it more interesting to the reader and to add to the intrigue."

McIntyre, who lives in Southfield,

has been a broadcast journalist and investigative reporter for more than 30 years. He's spent the last 12 at WWJ-AM in Detroit where he currently does a once-a-day radio commentary.

As one of the reporters covering the story, McIntyre said he became close friends with many officers, including state police Capt. Robert Robertson, who headed up the task force. Now retired, Robertson asked McIntyre to write the book.

MCINTYRE STARTED with six cardboard file boxes filled with memos, newspaper clippings and other information that Robertson gave him. The reporter then taped 30 hours of interviews with officers involved in the case. Robertson served as technical adviser, reviewing the chapters as they were finished for accuracy or probable accuracy, since much of the dialogue had to be re-created.

"It was a real help knowing these

people as well as I did because I knew how they thought. And Robertson said I was right on," McIntyre said from his home office.

The book is a compelling tale. Its 231 pages are condensed from the original 576 pages that took McIntyre five years to complete.

He's quick to point out that the book isn't too detailed about the victims, only the investigation. McIntyre said he contacted Timothy King's parents. "They declined to be interviewed. They weren't that happy that we were even resurrecting this thing," McIntyre said.

Despite the bitter memories, the book reveals several heretofore unpublished details about the investigation.

ONE OF THE most interesting is the fact that while King was still listed as missing, chief assistant county prosecutor Richard Thompson signed a memo authorizing police to stop and search cars on the

road after midnight. Although the searches were illegal, it was a risk the police took and a secret the media kept, McIntyre said.

"Everybody pulled out all the stops. I've never seen so much cooperation with the media. Nobody violated that," McIntyre said.

The media, which crawled all over the investigation, also caused problems, McIntyre said. For instance, one male suspect was a Farmington Hills priest who was convicted of molesting two young boys. He passed a lie-detector test supposedly proving he wasn't involved in the child killings.

"We made him more of a suspect than he was," McIntyre recalled. "You have to remember at that time the community was in a hanging mood."

As for theories about who did it, McIntyre disagrees with the common belief that the killer is either dead, in prison or cloistered away in a rest home somewhere.

"I THINK THE guy just stopped killing, and he's still out there somewhere. He was able to stop killing kids the way some people stop smoking. I also think the guy is smart enough to know that if he did it again, he'd be caught," McIntyre said.

Although some would say the task force and its investigation was a failure, McIntyre doesn't agree.

"The task force at that point in time did everything they could have done to try to catch the child killer, but what they did is bust two child porn rings and ferret out a lot of child molesters," he said.

Investigators started from scratch to set up the task force, a concept of

meshing different police jurisdictions that hadn't been attempted before, McIntyre said. Task force members even helped other communities, like Atlanta, set up their investigative teams, he said.

When Shawn Moore of Livingston County was murdered, a former Oakland task force member, state police detective Joe Krasse, helped organize that task force. "They learned a lot of things, and that was why they caught Shawn Moore's killer so quickly," McIntyre said.

The book is selling at Borders's Bookstore, among other locations. Anyone with information regarding the child killer may call the state police at 348-1505.

Boy honored for fire heroics

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On behalf of the city, Mayor Jody Sorenson presented Billy with a resolution honoring his "courageous action in averting what could have been a tragic loss to the Ryan family."

One-year-old Tiffanie was asleep in her 15-year-old uncle Arthur's room when he smelled smoke while watching television about 7:40 p.m. Nov. 13.

When the teenager opened the door to an adjacent bedroom and saw a small fire near the bed, he ran

downstairs, where four family members gathered water buckets and even a hose.

Billy, who his mother Sarah described as adventurous, was first up the stairs with a sauce pan full of water.

He tossed water on the flames but by that time, the room was filled with smoke and the room where Tiffanie was sleeping was filling fast with smoke.

"So he grabbed the baby, crawled to the stairs and while kind of stooped over, carried her down," his mother said shortly after the fire.

Billy Ryan grabbed the baby, crawled to the stairs and while kind of stooped over, carried her down.

"I met them about three-quarters of the way down. No one else could get any higher. The smoke was that bad."

Billy, Tiffanie, Arthur, Sarah and her husband, Arthur, Tiffanie's mother, Angela, and another daughter, Victoria, 13, all made it outside safely.

By the time firefighters arrived,

flames had already started to travel across the ceiling over the bed where Tiffanie was asleep.

The fire apparently started when smoking materials were accidentally discarded near the mattress in the bedroom. Flame damage was confined to the second floor, according to a Farmington Hills Fire Department report.

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