

National

Sex not discounted as motive in Atlanta child killing

ATLANTA — Authorities said the decomposed body of a black male pulled from the Chattahoochee River late Tuesday was a young man with probably no connection to the city's string of 23 slain and missing children.

The partially nude body was found in the river several miles from where the body of Timothy Hill, the 21st victim, was discovered Monday.

Clad only in a T-shirt, the body appeared to officials to be that of a black teen-ager at first, but an autopsy early Wednesday established the victim as being over 20 years of age.

There had been immediate speculation that the body might have been that of 15-year-old Joseph Bell, missing since March 2. But the autopsy, conducted at a funeral home in suburban Douglasville, ruled that out.

"This is not Joseph Bell," said Douglas County Sheriff Earl Lee. "This is a black male who looks about 70 inches tall and weighs about 150-175 pounds."

Lee said he could give no opinion on whether the body might be connected to the child murders, "but it is coincidental that the body was recovered from the same river just a day apart" from the body of Hill.

A spokesman for the special police task force, which is investigating the slayings of 21 black children and disappearances of two others over the last 20 months, refused comment.

Lee said there were no visible wounds on the body, which had been in the water several days, but "we are investigating it as a homicide." The body was discovered, lodged against a tree trunk, by a canoeist.

Just as the youth found Tuesday night was almost nude, so was the muddaked body of 13-year-old Timothy Hill, the 23rd black victim. His body had been fished from the Chattahoochee Monday and identified Tuesday.

Dr. John Feegel, assistant Fulton County medical examiner, said Hill died of asphyxiation — "suffocation, if you will" — at the hands of a killer who apparently dispatched the young-

ter as gently as possible.

Forensic experts and officials investigating the unsolved murders say they are more certain than ever that sex is probably the motive in most, if not all, of the slayings.

The removal of all of Hill's clothes except undershorts "may be strongly suggestive of a sexual motive," Feegel said Tuesday. His statement echoed the beliefs of other investigators in the baffling case.

Dr. Larry Howard, director of the state Crime Laboratory, has said that a sexual motive appeared to be a likely reason for the murders. No investigator has discounted the sexual motive.

Hill disappeared while playing near his home March 13, but his name had never been added to the list of the special police task force investigating the murders because authorities stuck to the belief for nearly three weeks that he was a runaway.

Hill's death was likely to center police attention on his

acquaintance or other connections with at least seven other murdered children. Hill lived around the corner from Joseph Bell, 15, who vanished earlier this month. He may also be known to Anthony Carter and Jeffery Mathis, two other murdered children.

Hill's older brother Richard was once a maintenance man on a housing project where two other victims, Curtis Rogers and Aaron Wyche, lived and which one other murdered child, Aaron Jackson, frequented.

Feegel said the fact there has been no evidence of sexual molestation on any of the victims' bodies does not discount a sexual motive.

"One can abuse a person without leaving any marks," said Feegel. "Little boys in their underwear are in their underwear because someone has probably been fooling around with them."

Most of the victims, however, have been found fully clothed.

College dean says kids learn easier

Clowns vie for spots in school

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"I got to think it's easier for these kids now," said Jacobs, as Ron Sederini, the college "dean," put the applicants to the test. "These kids can learn in nine weeks what it took me five years to learn."

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You just watched. Every day — every day — every day."

Jacobs, a German immigrant, broke in with Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey in 1924, working as a contortionist. Later that same year, he got his break, and began training as a clown.

Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey began the Clown College in 1968, at the behest of Irvin Felt, its president.

Each year since then, about 50 students have been selected from a pool of as many as 4,000 for nine-weeks of training in Venice, Fla. Auditions for the college are held annually in 40 U.S. cities, whenever the circus comes to town.

Many of those trying out Tuesday in Baltimore viewed clowning as a way to break the routine of the work-a-day life.

Bruce Forcheimer, 25, of Baltimore, described himself as the

"head go-fer" at the Baltimore Civic Center, site of the try-outs. "I've waited for this a long time, and I really want it," he said.

Bill Hechert, 20, is studying natural sciences at Towson State University, but said he'd rather be a clown.

"I like to make people laugh, and I'd like to travel," he said.

The tryouts lasted about two hours and included slap-stick, pantomimes and other improvisations, along with the unicycling and juggling.

Sederini asked the first seven people called up to feign happiness, then sadness. Sederini next had them act as though they were peering through a restaurant window and persuading a customer to toss them a pork chop.

Chuck Sidlow, one of two "Boss Clowns," said he saw "one or two" people whom the admissions

board might want to take a closer look at. Final notices will be sent out before Sept. 15.

Admission is a good step toward becoming a professional clown, but it is no guarantee. Only about one-half of "college" graduates get contracts with Ringling Bros. and Barnum and Bailey, clowns said.

Jim Killebrew and Brian Smith, two 1979 graduates who signed contracts, expressed satisfaction with the clowning life.

"It's been a blast," said Killebrew. "The money is sort of secondary. But I'm like Steve Martin — I'm just amazed that I'm getting paid anything for having fun."

Jacobs, who boasts owning "the smallest automobile in the world — 3-feet by 3-feet," agreed. He signed an autograph for a young admirer and said, "Let's keep the world happy."

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United Press International

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