Unsolved Atlanta murders arouse residents' anger

United Press International
ATLANTA — Terry Pue sat in
the all-night hamburger joint until it was nearly dawn and when he left, he told the girl behind the counter "ain't nobody gonna get

Twenty black children have been murdered since July 20, 1979, and not one killer has been caught.

For 20 months, residents of the When Curtis Walker got home from school, his mother told him not to set foot out of the house. But bleak and crowded housing projects and the run-down black neighborhoods have huddled

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Fanned by activists who persist in seeing the murders and/or the failure to catch a killer as a racial plot, and the steadfast refusal of police to discuss the case, anger is now taking its place alongside the fear.

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There have been attempts to label a large portion of these killings as statistical normalities; one

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authority remarked recently the city normally has as many as 20 such cases a year.

But rudimentary statistics released by the Atlanta Police Department for 1975-78 fail to bear this out. In the worst year, 1975, seven black children were killed, but most were infant child abuse cases. In 1978, only one was murdered. Over that four-year period, 17 black children were murdered, 11 were under the age of 5, and only one of those cases remains unsolved.

The only link between all 20 victims is their race, their poverty, and the fact that not one of their killers has been arrested. All but two were boys, ranging from 9

abducted, killed and then dumped someplace other than where they were killed. The lack of a crime scene is the worst obstacle investigators face.

The best apparent indication of a link between some of the cases is the cause of death - 10 of the victims are known to have been strangled or suffocated - and the proximity of some of the bodies.

Sources say investigators may know the race of the killer in some of this year's cases. Skin tissue lodged under the victims' fingernails would reveal this, but authorities will not say whether they have found any.

Much has been made over synthetic fibers found on some of he bodies. But sources say these fibers, despite being evidence that might link a suspect with a body — if there was a suspect, are not identical and do very little to tie any of the cases together. There is also strong belief at

least some of the last seven killings all by suffocation or strangulation - may be the work of the same killer, a psychopath stimulated by publicity surrounding the

previous killings.
"We have created him," said a medical examiner working on the

Police say in most child murders, the killer will be found within his family. They are sure that is the case in only a few of these deaths. At least one, they feel, is the result of the victim's court testimony; others may have come from sour drug deals or ripoffs.

But most, they feel, are ultimately motivated by sex.

They believe that despite the fact not one of the boys' bodies showed any signs of sexual molestation or abuse, and that none

were nude — all but two were fully clothed. Some of the boys, in fact, were believed to have occasionally sold homosexual favors.

One investigator said the most likely sexual killer would be a sadist whose gratification comes from the very act of destruction.

'When there's a sexual motive, strangulation is the favorite method," says Georgia Crime Lab Director Larry Howard. All of the boys, with one excep-

tion, appeared to have gone quietly to their executions. Probably with the offer of money, they were lured away, investigators surmise, probably by a man on foot. They probably walked together to his car, got in willingly and were killed later. Medical examiners insist there is no indication any victim drugged or chloroformed. Only Terry Pue, who at 5-feet-5 and 102 pounds was one of the largest victims, bore any marks of a struggle.

No investigator or source close to the investigation gives any cre-dence to the theory these are ra-

The method of killing does not fit a racial hatred pattern, say the experts; such a killer would be much more likely to shoot his victims and leave them where they fall.

cial murders, beyond the obvious fact that the killers have concentrated on black — generally light-skinned — children.

The main argument given against a racial motive is the utter lack of precedence. No one can

recall a killer actived by racial hatred who slew children at random. The method of killing also does not fit a racial hatred pattern, say the experts; such a killer would be much more likely to shoot his victims and leave them where

Many black leaders are disgusted with the way the city went begging for vast sums of money to fund the investigation, and with the police policy of total silence on murders. Four prominent black legislators have announced their support for a white candidate for mayor — the present mayor, Maynard Jackson, is black.

And in at least one housing project, some of the residents denounced the police force as incompetent and uncaring and set up their own armed patrol to watch over their children. A few weeks ago, a black man, told by a fright-ened woman that she saw a car with white people in it trying to grab a black child, opened fire on the car. No one was hurt.

'The police don't say nothin' because they don't know nothin," groused a black man standing out-

side his apartment.
Public Safety Commissioner
Lee P. Brown has laid down strict orders against discussing the case, because, he says, he doesn't want to tip the police hand to the kil-Everyone can understand that, but authorities in other cities, with experience in mass killings, say the time has come for Atlanta police to lay their cards on the table

The silence seems all the more strange because of the city's showboat antics last fall.

Fear reached the point of hysteria - demonstrated when, with murders unsolved, blacks being killed in other parts of the country and Ku Klux Klan activity rising, a boiler exploded at a housing project day care center, killing four

Explaining it was an obvious accident and not a bomb did little to allay panic. So the city - despite already having been burned for creating massive hoopla by hiring a strident psychic — drummed up a \$100,000 reward and Mayor Jackson ordered a house-to-house canvass of the entire city. Police and firemen, grousing over the massive waste of manpower, knocked on every door, from the shanties of Cabbagetown to the mansions on Paces Ferry, politely asking if anyone had seen anything suspicious. It did appear, however, to produce probably its only intended effect — relative calm returned to black sections.

Investigators have little doubt the publicity has led to more deaths — but it has apparently had little effect on potential victims. Despite frantic mothers and \$60,000 worth of police flyers urging children to beware, police making a test had no trouble enticing black children into private cars with a \$5 bill.

An almost circus atmosphere has grown up around the killings. who don't come, write. One consultant the city picked up is a professor at Duke University who is trying to correlate the flood of vi-

hand himself over to them. Reporters have rushed onto the air with breathless reports of "unusual abrasions" on bodies that had been in a river for two weeks, and unexplained" graffiti on rest-

ernor, took out an ad urgi killer to give up, if not to pol then to him. The most success that line apparently belongs to Rev. Earl Paulk. Paulk, a sino man, has had a number of from men claiming to be di killers; some he believes may been real. One of them was cently arrested, however, charged with making harra

calls. Police said he was nok People in touch with their tigation insist the special force, which has grown from men to a staff of 106 since its in tion last July, is doing every within its power to crack thea The pressure on its officers iso

of the Atlanta homicide squad retired in anger a few days the first two children's but were found in 1979, says the force is "too little and too late

Perry says the task force, at ew, became a dumping groun

'This is a terrible mistake,"

"They got the wrong people the field and the wrong people the phones," he said. Brown and Napper, Perry says, are highly telligent, well-educated men, but

Whatever they may under liowever, stand about police work, Brost samedthe and Mayor Jackson are masters possible res and Mayor Jackson are masters fund-raising. In a campaign with aggressively organized that a beginning aggressively organized that a been appro-times it overshadowed the invest of infraction gation, they begged, pleaded at bothell play demanded money from the Tate said Reagan administration, big but of any wron ness and the public. They come is coaches, plained the investigation was cost onnected ving up to \$170,000 a month over partment.

peripheral social services, and in ery school sisted there was no legal way in "I can no funnel money directly into the in that have u black organizations around the black organization around the black tion and in Congress grew He said heavy that Reagan finally knuck investigation led under and sent the city \$1.5 time.
million. A concert by Samm "It (investigation) Davis Jr. and Frank Sinatra raise incted," he another \$150,000, and private and enough ev civic donations poured in at such fluid rate that Jackson recen announced the city needed in

Television personalities have Fifteen task force investigat solemnly urged "the killer" to are from surrounding juris tions, none of which pay the officers overtime. They volunt their time and hope for time later. Atlanta officers are p overtime, and the sight of so the Atlanta officers making \$1,40

whelming. But W.K. Perry, veteran

Perry says he quit bec Brown and his Police Chi George Napper, were so absor 'community relations" they would not give him men to handle a soaring mun rate. He makes no bones abou bitterness.

for men other departmen wanted to get rid of; he said of ers with no interest in work murders and no investigative perience were assigned to t force, and police recruits, with experience of anything, brought in to handle the floo

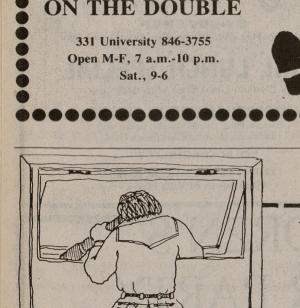
Perry, now a private detection who is following the case close "I've worked over 2,000 ho cides, and I know you've got have the ability to pull information out of people.

"they are oriented to commun im of the ity relations. They don't know tate what a good, basic police work." partment w good, basic police work."

The Reagan administration The Reagan administration vestigations coughed up nearly \$1 million for and have his

But the money is causing pro

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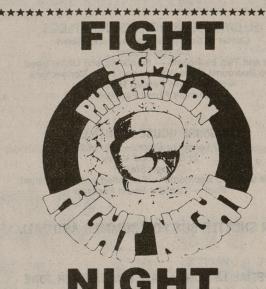
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