

State and Local

Slain A&M grad was never just a number

By CYNTHIA GAY
Staff Writer

Vanessa Buss was once a student at Texas A&M, but she was never just a number.

Buss graduated last May, worked three months, and then, on Oct. 7, was shot to death in Houston. Professors who knew her say they've lost a friend.

"Vanessa was a real person," says Dr. Debra Reed of the finance department, — Buss' major. "She wasn't just a person passing through."

Buss, 24, was slain in the rear parking lot of a restaurant near downtown on a Monday night, and homicide detectives are still searching for her killers.

Buss, a sales assistant at Kidder Peabody & Co., and a female co-

worker stopped for a drink after work and left the restaurant before 8 p.m.

Buss was shot near her car, her purse was found beside her. Police says the motive was probably robbery or abduction.

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— Dr. Debra Reed.

News of her death soon reached A&M.

I went numb after hearing of Buss' death, says finance professor Scott Lummer. "I was really unable to deal with anything for a good hour."

Buss worked for Lummer and Reed, she also took several classes taught by Lummer. Lummer says he encouraged her to take a graduate course her spring semester with eight graduate students.

"She was not intimidated (in the graduate course)," Lummer says. "She carried herself very well (and during class she) perhaps had more intelligent things than I had to say."

The salutatorian of Jasper High School, Buss was described by her professors as mature, bright, ambitious, outgoing and easy to talk to.

"She had the ability to deal with problems herself," Lummer says. "It was students like her that made me realize this was a very special place," he says. "There are few like her and those few are what makes this job fun."

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dard on what you can expect from students. She was a real perfectionist, really hard on herself. She was very genuinely conscientious."

Between a student and a professor, some type of barrier usually exists, Lummer says, and should be maintained. However, he says, "Vanessa was somebody you could feel very easy about breaking down that barrier."

But Reed says many students never realize that those strangers who pace back and forth in the classroom, filling chalkboards and minds with boggling abstracts, really do care about their students.

"Students think we just sit back and grade tests and never give it a thought what impact that has on their life," Reed says, adding that as professors now and students in the past, "we've been on both sides of the fence."

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But he adds, "Given you are going to live in a big city, I don't think you can afford to be a hermit and live in a shell."

Reed says, "I would now think twice about getting a job in Houston."

Buss hesitated to go for the Houston job because of the price it would cost her personal life, Reed added. But, Little says, she was a hard worker.

Feedback from the job market indicates that, as a whole, A&M graduates are willing to work, not expecting a cushy job, she says. "(Buss) was even more so," Little says, "She really had her priorities."

One week after Buss' death, her family, friends and employers had raised almost \$11,000 in reward money for information about her slaying.

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Lummer says, "She wanted to build a successful life for herself. I wouldn't have expected her to be anything less than a complete success."

Jack Little, one of Buss' friends at A&M, says she did very little job hunting while at A&M, and "she set out on foot" to find her job at Kidder Peabody & Co.

Buss was not taking unnecessary chances by simply walking from the restaurant door to her car, Lummer says, but a woman walking alone is perceived as an easier target for crime.

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Friday night yell practice scheduled for Rice game

Midnight yell practice will be held Friday at Foor's Gold in Houston.

Joe Stampley will be performing during the evening. Admission is \$5 with a Texas A&M student ID. Regular admission is \$7, but non-students who come with students will be admitted for \$5.

Draft beer will be 75 cents from 7 to 10 p.m.

To get to Foor's Gold from A&M, take Highway 290 to Highway 6. Go right on Highway 6 to Westheimer. Take a left on Westheimer and the club is about 2 miles down the road.

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