

El Paso Police search for clues on murders

Officer: One piece lost from puzzle

EL PASO (AP) — El Paso Police believe they are missing just one piece of information that may lead to an arrest in connection with the slayings of six young women whose bodies were found buried in the desert.

The first of the bodies was found nearly a year ago, but police have so far charged no one in the slayings. "There is a bit of information out there we need, and if we get it, that could mean the end of this case," Capt. Greg Drollinger said, declining to be more specific about the piece of evidence.

On Sept. 4, 1987, some water utility employees spotted the first two of six young women whose decomposed bodies were found buried in the desert of northeast El Paso during a five-month period.

The victims varied in age from 14 to 23. They were found buried in shallow graves within a half-mile of

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each other near the city's outskirts. The first two bodies — those of Maria Rosa Casio, 23, of Addison, and of Karen Baker, 20, of El Paso — were found near each other in a pile of dirt and trash near some sagebrush.

After police dogs found the bodies of El Pasoans Desiree Wheatley, 15, and Dawn Smith 14, on Oct. 20, police said they believed a serial killer might be responsible for the killings. They formed a task force

whose members have interviewed more than 400 witnesses from Utah to Florida to Mexico, Drollinger said.

Later, the bodies of two more El Paso women were found buried in the desert. The body of Angelica Frausto, 17, was found last Nov. 3, and Ivy Williams, 23, on March 14.

More than 50 people have been considered suspects, but the number of suspects has since been trimmed to less than 10, said Sgt. Ramiro Gomez, who is in charge of the six-man task force.

Investigators refuse to name any suspects or say exactly how many there are.

"We are not always interested in telling people what direction our investigation is taking," Drollinger, who oversees the Criminal Investigations Division, said. "We need to be cautious because we are trying to build the strongest case possible."

Movie causes more uproars near Dallas

DALLAS (AP) — About 1,000 Christians protested the first Dallas showings of "The Last Temptation of Christ" at the movie's first sellout showings in Dallas, and a smaller group protested the protesters.

"They're a pretty good group of people," said Dallas Police Sgt. Ray Beaudreault, in charge of a tactical squad at the AMC Prestonwood 5 Theater in far North Dallas, where the show began Wednesday.

"They had opposing viewpoints," he said. "It's just democracy in action."

A beefed-up private security force helped Beaudreault and nine other Dallas police officers make sure nothing got out of hand.

Police reported no incidents. The vast majority of the protesters opposed the film, including a group of several hundred from one church, Christ for the Nations, located in the Dallas neighborhood of Oak Cliff.

Russ Houck, a talk show host on an area Christian radio station, said: "It (the protest) allowed people to stand up for him (Jesus). It allowed the people who produced this kind of trash to realize we're not going to take it anymore."

Elderly women stitch away time at senior center

STEPHENVILLE (AP) — The huge frame fills the room, dwarfing the two women who sit stitching and chatting about the week's happenings. Soon a man peeks around the corner and calls out: "Hey, Cotton-top." Thelma Miller looks up and laughingly waves him away.

This is a typical scene at the Senior Citizen's Center where every day is a quilting bee.

Thelma Miller, Thelma Noah, Odessa Wylie and others gather as often as they can to work on the latest quilt and to visit.

Quilting, for most of these women, is an art they learned from their mothers or their grandmothers.

"My grandmother started me when I was 10 years old," Miller said. Noah recalls helping her mother when she was a young teenager.

"The first thing to do to make a quilt is to put up a frame," Noah said. "Next, you cut out all the pieces, or you can piece as you go, like I do."

The women explained that the pieces can be sewn together by hand or on a machine. Once the pieces are

sewn together, they make up the "top."

The next step is to put a lining, the batting, and the top on a frame. Then it's time to quilt — stitch the batting, lining and top together.

Some things have changed since Miller and Noah began to quilt but most have stayed the same, they say.

One difference is the batting that fills the quilt is no longer made of cotton. Instead, it is polyester.

"The cotton batting slipped more and needed more stitches to hold it in place," Miller said.

Another change is the way the stitches are made to sew the batting in place. When Miller and Noah were growing up, the women used to quilt in shells or half-squares.

"They would use a piece of chalk tied to a string to measure and mark where to sew," Noah said. Now, most people sew along the lines of the pattern.

Neither Noah nor Miller could say how long it takes to finish a quilt. "It just depends on who comes in to help and how long they stay," Miller said. "When we get tired of quilting, we pick up and go play dominoes," she said.

Airline files lawsuit against scalpers

FORT WORTH (AP) — American Airlines says it hopes lawsuits filed in three cities against individuals and companies will help end alleged abuses of the airline's AAdvantage frequent flier program.

"We simply cannot tolerate this situation," Lowell Duncan, vice president-corporate communications for American Airlines said.

Duncan said more lawsuits may be filed. "We have an obligation to our AAdvantage members who do abide by the rules and to our paying customers to put a stop to the practice," he said. Duncan said the complaints allege that millions of dollars in revenue are being lost due to sale and barter of AAdvantage awards.

The seven-year-old program's rules specify that customers earning free trips and benefits cannot sell their tickets to others. Members may give awards to anyone they choose, but the airline has repeatedly reminded people that the awards can not be sold, purchased or bartered.

The lawsuits were filed Thursday in Fort Worth

against Texas Traveller, in Salt Lake City against Platinum World Travel and The Coupon Connection; and in New York against American Coupon Exchange. The companies do major business in buying awards from frequent fliers and selling them to others.

In all three suits, American has asked for an injunction to stop the defendants from purchasing, selling and bartering of brokering AAdvantage frequent flier bonus mileage.

American filed a similar lawsuit Tuesday in Fort Worth against Texas Budget Flights and the travel agency's owners, Curtis R. Sweeten and Tonya K. Sweeten, both of Plano, the Fort Worth Star-Telegram reported.

"Advantage has always been seen as a way to reward our best customers for flying American," Duncan said. "It's been a very successful marketing program, building brand loyalty and helping us establish long-term relationships. We feel that a person who purchases an award is not a part of that relationship and has no right to fill one of our seats without paying us for it."

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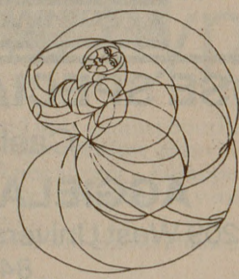
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