

Grisly homicide shocks Houston

Police, friends of slain 24-year-old woman mobilize to find murderer

HOUSTON (AP) — Calls have been pouring in to police from people offering possible tips in the grisly murder of a young woman whose decapitated, limbless body was discovered alongside a highway.

"People are horrified about this," said Houston police homicide Sgt. Mike Peters. "People are shocked by it. Thank God there's still something out there that still shocks people."

More than 100 people have called police with reports and other possible tips in the slaying of 24-year-old Cecilia Reyes.

Reyes, who was two months pregnant, vanished Thursday night after leaving work and was identified by her husband by photographs Saturday, a day after her torso was found.

Her employer, Fiesta Beverage Mart, is offering a \$10,000 reward for information leading to her killer's arrest and conviction.

The murder has shocked her friends, some of whom were posting missing-person fliers when they learned that a woman's torso had been found Friday.

"Cecilia was such a very nice person. That's why everyone's in a state of shock to know they would torture her — cut her up like an animal," said co-worker Shirvy Stewart.

The 5-foot, 120-pound woman was last seen about 9:20 p.m. Thursday when she finished her shift at the liquor store in southwest Houston. She was reported missing Friday morning.

A cleanup crew working alongside U.S. Highway 290 East in northwest Houston found the torso about 1:30 p.m. Friday.

Her head was gone and both legs had been cut off just above the knees. Her left arm was missing, but her severed right arm was found next to her body.

The torso was in a plastic garbage bag,

wrapped in a blue blanket, inside a cardboard furniture box tied with twine.

Reyes' van was found Saturday evening about a mile from where the torso was dumped.

An autopsy is being conducted to determine exactly how she died. Investigators said examinations did not indicate she was raped.

Friends and relatives described Reyes as a quiet, serious, hard worker who moved to Houston from El Salvador with her mother and older sister nine years ago.

She married Oscar Reyes, a maintenance man also from El Salvador, about three years ago. The child would have been their first.

Gerald Sellers, manager of the Fiesta, hired Reyes six years ago and promoted her 2 1/2 years ago to the beverage mart.

"She was friendly, very considerate and full of life," he said.

Researchers move toward cancer cure

HOUSTON (AP) — Researchers say a new use for gene therapy that helps them track the effectiveness of bone marrow transplants could be the first step toward curing some forms of cancer.

The technique involves transplanting bone marrow cells that have been genetically "marked" for identification, said Dr. Albert Deisseroth, who is leading a research effort at the University of Texas M.D. Anderson Hospital.

"I want to convey the message that there is hope; there are new directions. We are opening new doors and eventually we'll be able to implement strategies to help people," Deisseroth said. "They may be less toxic, easier to

Experimental therapy 'marks' genes, helps doctors evaluate chemotherapy

endure and more effective. That's our goal."

He said the procedure could help make possible genetic manipulations to cure deadly cancers for which current treatments are relatively ineffective, the Houston Chronicle reported Sunday.

"The progress being made may be faster where the diseases are invariably fatal," he said. "The balance sheet for the potential gain is clearer."

Scientists alter cells genetically either to distinguish them

from other cells or to change their behavior.

Deisseroth has used the marking technique in a patient with chronic myelocytic leukemia, which causes an overproduction of white blood cells and ultimately is fatal. He plans to try the procedure on nine more patients.

His goal is to alter bone marrow cells so they are more resistant to the toxic effects of chemotherapy, a cancer treatment.

After 14 months of work on the processes, Deisseroth says he

is applying for federal approval.

Researchers say the marking project is important because it could give doctors a way to evaluate bone marrow transplants using a patient's own marrow. In the procedure, called an autologous transplant, doctors reintroduce the patient's own bone marrow after eradicating the cancer.

Deisseroth said he marks the patients cells by introducing a gene that causes resistance to an antibiotic.

If a patient suffers a cancer relapse after a transplant and the cancer cells carry the marker, then the marrow caused the relapse. If the marker is not present, chemotherapy was inadequate, he said.

Methadone outpaces heroin as top killer in '91

HOUSTON (AP) — More Houston-area residents died last year from using methadone, than by overdoses of heroin and other opiates the synthetic substance is used to overcome, a newspaper reported Sunday.

Fourteen people died of methadone-related causes last year in Harris County, while eight deaths were attributed to overdoses of heroin, morphine and other opiates, the Houston Chronicle reported Sunday in a copyrighted story.

Deaths attributed to methadone increased to an all-time high in Harris County despite increased efforts by state and federal authorities to regulate the use of methadone.

Health officials blamed the jump on the synthetic drug's illegal sale.

"Obviously, we have to intensify our efforts," said Ken Davis, chief investigator of the Texas Department of Health's food and drug division, which regulates methadone clinics in the state. "We've got a problem that we need to take care of."

Critics of methadone say the statistics prove the substance is as deadly as the disease it is used to treat.

"If somebody were selling bad booze on the streets, everybody would be up in arms," said Al Dugan, a former chairman for the Cenikor drug treatment program in Houston. "The problem is that methadone is very dangerous and can be fatal almost before anybody realizes it."

John Moseman, head of drug diversion for the Houston office of the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration, said the deaths reflect the rising availability of methadone coupled with increased difficulty in obtaining heroin.

"They (addicts) are going to go for whatever is the easiest to obtain, and the cheapest," Moseman said.

Methadone, developed by the Germans during World War II as a substitute for the painkiller morphine, is now used in drug treatment to suppress heroin and morphine withdrawal symptoms.

Health officials say methadone can be dangerous if its use is uncontrolled, and an overdose can be fatal.

"If you're a novice user, or if you take somebody else's methadone and you're not a habitual user of opiates, it's very easy to overdose and die," said Dr. Joseph Coppola, a professor of emergency medicine at the University of Texas Medical School.

Of the 20 methadone clinics operating in Houston, only two are non-profit. The rest are private, profit businesses.

The ensuing competition has fueled abuses of the substance and increased its availability on the streets, officials say.

A key source of that availability appears to be dosages addicts take home from the clinics. If they comply with state and federal attendance and drug screening requirements, addicts may take home up to six daily doses of methadone.

"I don't think there's any other source for the street sales," Davis said.

Aloha means adios; Hawaii wants out

HONOLULU (AP) — The natives are getting restless.

It's an awakening 100 years in the making for the native Hawaiians, whose aloha spirit of sharing and easygoing lifestyle left many of them at the bottom of the modern social ladder in the land of their ancestors.

Now they want to be recognized by the federal government as a separate nation.

They want \$10 billion in compensation for the past use of their lands by federal and local governments and for the overthrow of their queen.

And, they want huge federal grants to fulfill a neglected land trust program set up 70 years ago to give native Hawaiians homes and farms.

As next year's centennial of the overthrow of Hawaii's monarchy approaches, some 30 Hawaiian civic and community groups and political organizations have formed a loose coalition to look into gaining sovereignty for 40,000 native Hawaiians and 160,000 part-Hawaiians.

Their key ally has been senior U.S. Sen. Daniel Inouye, D-Hawaii. Inouye who has promised to introduce measures to create an independent Hawai-

ian government within the framework of the federal and state governments, allow Hawaiians to bring lawsuits against the federal government over the management of the major land trusts and provide compensation for past claims.

"I think the iron is hot. The time is right to strike," Inouye, who is of Japanese descent, told Hawaiian leaders when they recently presented him with proposals for federal legislation.

Two huge land trusts that make up 41 percent of all land in the islands are the economic motive in the sovereignty issue and date back to the 1893 bloodless overthrow of Queen Liliuokalani by a political faction made up primarily of white business leaders.

Historical records, however, show that a force of 162 Marines from a Navy ship took up a position near Iolani Palace on the pretext of guarding American property and preserving the peace between heated rallies being staged by the opposing political factions.

Upon annexation by the United States in 1898, about 1.75 million acres of crown and government lands of the Kingdom of Hawaii were ceded in a trust to the Territory of Hawaii.

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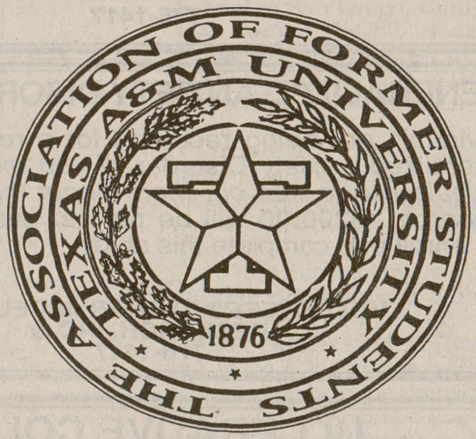
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