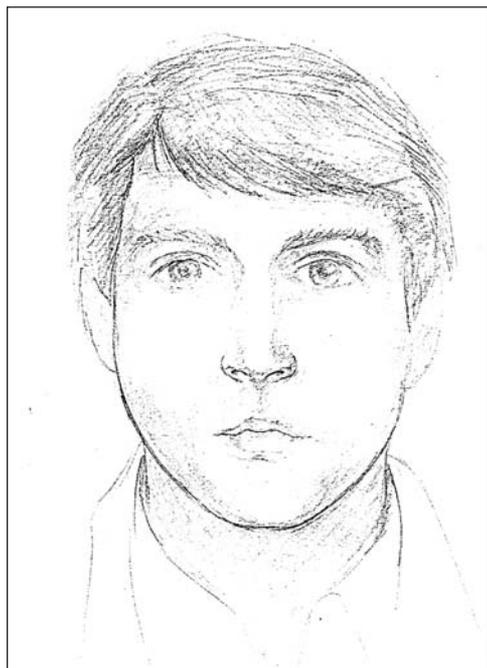


City raises reward in '84 Tenderloin slaying to \$100,000

► CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

ine and possibly identify "foreign DNA" for which the inspectors can find a match. But results won't be in for two months or more. Pera was surprised at how well evidence in this case was preserved to guard against deterioration.



This police sketch is of a person who was seen in the building on O'Farrell Street about the time Mei Leung was murdered in 1984.

The police have an old sketch of a person of interest they'd like to locate in the Mei Leung case. He's not a suspect, Pera says, but he was seen in the building about the time of the slaying.

Right after the murder, a woman and her young son went into the basement perhaps to check on laundry and the boy noticed blood on the floor. The mother decided to go upstairs and report it. In the elevator, she said in a police interview, was a young white man fiddling with the control buttons

as if he didn't know how to use them. The sketch is of him.

"We have DNA from a lot of people, including hotel residents, but we couldn't find anyone still living in the hotel from 1984," Pera said.

The current apartment manager, Mina Seo, on the job about a year, told The Extra

she was aware of the case but no residents have ever mentioned it and no one that she knew of had lived there since 1984. The building is between the Sui Lai Thai restaurant and another apartment building and has undergone ownership changes and renovations since then.

A \$10,000 reward for information leading to a conviction in the Mei Leung case was offered early on. Pera went to the mayor's office in November and got the reward raised to \$100,000.

"It's worth a try," she said.

The city's unsolved murder cases go back to the turn of the 20th century. And Toomey and Pera, who worked together 10 years in homicide before getting the cold case assignment, are finding surprises.

Olav Brudvik was strolling near the Embarcadero at Harrison Street after a couple of drinks one night in 1944 and was robbed and beaten to death. More than 60 years later, his great-nephew, who was working on the family tree, called the cold case unit. He said he had the name of a suspect who might have killed his relative.

"We checked out the man's name," said Pera. "And he hadn't admitted it (the crime). But we found he had quite a rap sheet, lots of prior arrests for robbing and beating people up. We were 99% sure it was him but he had died. So we closed the case."

"People don't realize what an impact a murder has on a family. It probably lasts two or three generations. Bringing it to a close is great. But sometimes people are grateful that we are just giving it a look. It's a pleasure to deal with the people."

Toomey and Pera have about 50 cold cases on their desk in various stages — untapped, in lab work, awaiting court scheduling — with 20 now being actively pursued. They also brought 100 "warm" homicide cases with them.

Here are the active ones involving District 6:

- June Palmer was an attractive blonde, 31, a business type who had gotten into drugs

after arriving here from New York in the 1990s. She was arrested for petty theft here and in Millbrae. In June 1995, she was raped and strangled. Her body was dumped at 986 Howard St., an area where she was hanging out. The family called and the cold case unit began looking at it in February.

- Brandy Toms, a 45-year-old African American prostitute, in 1999 was found at 34 Sixth St., brutally beaten and repeatedly stabbed in her Seneca Hotel room 228. "She was a drug-using prostitute," Pera says, "and her life revolved around having or not having \$3 or so. People can even get killed for owing that much. But nobody deserves to die that way." Toms had no family but left a lot of DNA and broken bottles for the lab.

- Nancy Gridley, 24, was in San Francisco for a wedding, staying at the Rodeway Inn at Geary and Larkin streets. She checked in on Thursday, July 12, 1973, and was hoping to stay four days, if the inn had space on Sunday. But she disappeared on Friday. She showed up in the George Washington High School parking lot on 30th Avenue, sexually assaulted and strangled. The unit is investigating similar cases involving three other young women in the May to July period.

Toomey's audience at the police meeting didn't fail to recognize the sensational aspect of his work and he was asked if he had ever appeared on "America's Most Wanted" television show. Twice, he replied, and he was once subpoenaed in the Scott Peterson murder trial.

Toomey had worked on a case involving a missing young pregnant mother and her 5-year-old boy. Police found a pelvis floating in the bay, then went to the missing mother's family and got DNA samples from a hairbrush and matched the DNA to the pelvis. Toomey sent Fire Department divers down for the boy and the fetus but they were never found.

Peterson's lawyer tried to make the suspect in that case the same as the murderer of Peterson's 27-year-old wife, Laci, who also died pregnant. ■

TENDERLOINHEALTH

a continuum of care

Outreach and Community Events March 2008

Health Promotion Forum

Topic: Fight For Your Rights!

Speaker: Steven Bruce, Executive Director, People with Disabilities Foundation

Date/Time: Tuesday, March 18, 12 pm - 2 pm

HIV Treatment Forum

Topic: Crystal Methamphetamine: Questions Answered

Speaker: Jay Fournier, Abbott Laboratories

Date/Time: Monday, March 17, 3 pm - 4 pm

Client Advisory Panel

Come talk with Tenderloin Health's Board Client Representative(s) and program managers about plans for Tenderloin Health. Also provide input on new services and how we can improve.

Date/Time: Wednesday, March 12, 11:30 am - 1 pm;

Wednesday, March 26, 11:30 am - 1 pm

Volunteer and Intern for Tenderloin Health

Orientation: Sunday, March 9, 12 pm - 6:30 pm

220 Golden Gate Ave., 3rd Floor
lunch provided

You must register for volunteer trainings.
Stop in/call Emilie (415) 437-2900 ext. 234.

For a schedule of our current groups or for more information call 415.431.7476 or go to www.tenderloinhealth.org

One way to lick prostitution

WHEN is prostitution the answer? When nobody can answer the question.

"Does anybody know why there are one-way streets in the Tenderloin?" asked Northern Station police Capt. Croce Casciato. He stumped his audience of 80 residents attending the Alliance for a Better District 6 Safety Forum on Feb. 12.

Hearing no reply, Capt. Casciato began describing the street scene here in the early 1970s. As a Central Station cop, he patrolled the TL where there were lots of prostitutes. Johns in cars cruised both sides of two-way Turk Street, stopping for hookers who jumped into their cars and sped off looking for a dark place to have sex.

Making pinches snarled traffic and frustrated some drivers.

"When we arrested people we impounded their cars," Casciato said. "I did the towing to the garage at 255 Turk. We had a lot of community meetings about the problems and the only way to stop it was to make the streets one-way."

And that's why the Tenderloin has one-way streets. Casciato didn't, however, say that was why so many streets South of Market are one-way.

So what happened to the prostitutes? someone wanted to know.

"They went to the Western Addition." ■

—TOM CARTER

Tenderloin code enforcer moves on

DEPUTY City Attorney Neli Palma, who leaves her job as code enforcement overseer for the Tenderloin to join a private law firm specializing in public law, received commendations for her eight years of service here from the Alliance for a Better District 6 and the mayor's office at the Tenderloin police captain's meeting in February.

Before joining the city attorney's office, Palma served on the Rent Board, volunteered in the neighborhood as a tenant advocate, and was active with the North of Market Planning Committee and drafting the Tenderloin 2000 plan for neighborhood improvements.

Palma said as a deputy city attorney she was first assigned to the Sunset District, especially around the Parkside area. But she said she quickly grew tired of nearby St. Francis Wood residents complaining about their cars and longed for poverty issues. She was soon transferred to the TL.

Palma, a graduate of USF Law School who passed the California Bar in 1999, will remain in San Francisco. She said her greatest rewards were correcting housing code violations, then getting hugs from the tenants.

"I knocked on a lot of doors," she said with tears in her eyes. ■

—TOM CARTER



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