

LONG ISLAND'S LOST

PART 3 OF A 3 PART SERIES

A WALK BY THE RIVER

THE UNSOLVED MURDER OF A SAG HARBOR FLIGHT ATTENDANT IN IDAHO

BY BILL JENSEN



It stretches from Eagle Island State Park to Lucky Peak Reservoir, a 20-mile necklace of foamy green water, flowing west to east through Boise, Idaho at a leisurely pace. Bicycle paths dart alongside the river. Fly fishermen in hip waders angle for trout. Sometimes you can spy a bald eagle flying overhead.

On the Boise River Greenbelt, dogs should be leashed. Pedestrians have the right of way. Women should not be raped and murdered and tossed into the river.

In the fall of 2000, Lynn Henneman, a 38-year-old flight attendant from Sag Harbor who was married only a month, took a flight to Idaho from New York. She was to stay in Boise for the night and then work a shift back east to Chicago, then to New York. She never showed up to her post at American Airlines the next morning. Two weeks later, a fisherman angling at night discovered her body lodged under a log in the Boise River. Police believe Henneman was murdered only a few

hundred yards away from where Kay Lynn Jackson, a 22-year-old Boise native, was sexually assaulted and killed while walking to church in April, 1998. A year later, the body of 30-year old Cassandra Ann Yeager was found on the outskirts of the city at the Lucky Peak Reservoir.

A first glance at the evidence—three women, all sexually assaulted and killed within two years and 10 miles of each other, with all three bodies dumped on park land—pointed to a serial killer, that ultimate terrorizer of communities. But the answer is not so easy. The women were all killed by different means: Yeager was shot in the head; Jackson was stabbed in the heart and Henneman was strangled. What's more, perhaps most importantly in an age when crime-fighters use microscopes as much as pistols, the DNA recovered from the scenes indicated three different men were responsible.

In a small city that sells itself on its seamless combination of urban sprawl and green

splendor, officials breathed a sigh of relief. Three little monsters were better than one big one.

Three weeks ago, the spectre of a serial killer began haunting Boise again, when the body of Cheryl Hanlon, a 43-year-old Boise native, was found on a hillside in the city's North End. Like Henneman, Hanlon was sexually assaulted, found partially clothed and strangled with a piece of her own clothing.

With Lynn Henneman's picture staring back at him from his daily planner, where it has been placed since the inception of the case, Boise Police Officer Dave Smith, in charge of both investigations, worked 18-hour days to track down Hanlon's killer. Last Thursday, he got his man. "There are a lot of similarities [between Lynn's and Cheryl Hanlon's murder]," says Smith. That was the main reason he was assigned to the case. He's now opening up the massive binders of Lynn's case file, which he keeps within arm's length on his desk, and looking for a connection.

GLITTER PENS AND WINDOW PAINT

Everyone who checks into the Doubletree Hotel gets a free chocolate-chip cookie. It's the signature of the chain, a big, heated two-ounce puck of sugar that the front desk gives out with your key as a "welcome home" gesture. The cookies are baked on the premises, making the front lobby smell like a bakery.

Lynn Henneman's family converged on the Doubletree Riverside, which presides over the west side of the Boise River Greenbelt, in September of 2000. It was the same hotel that

Lynn had checked into two weeks before. They were there hoping, praying, holding vigil for any word of Lynn, who had gone missing without a trace. Her parents, Micki and Ron Huisenga, her husband, Walter Us, and her sister, Laura Pettet, were doing their own investigation, trying to piece together what they could about Lynn's last day.

Henneman was familiar with this part of the country. She grew up in Montana, and had met her first husband, John Henneman, in the college town of Bozeman. Divorced after 10 years, Lynn was waitressing in Montana when she met Walter Us, who was on a ski trip. The two hit it off, eventually moving in with each other and buying a house in Sag Harbor.

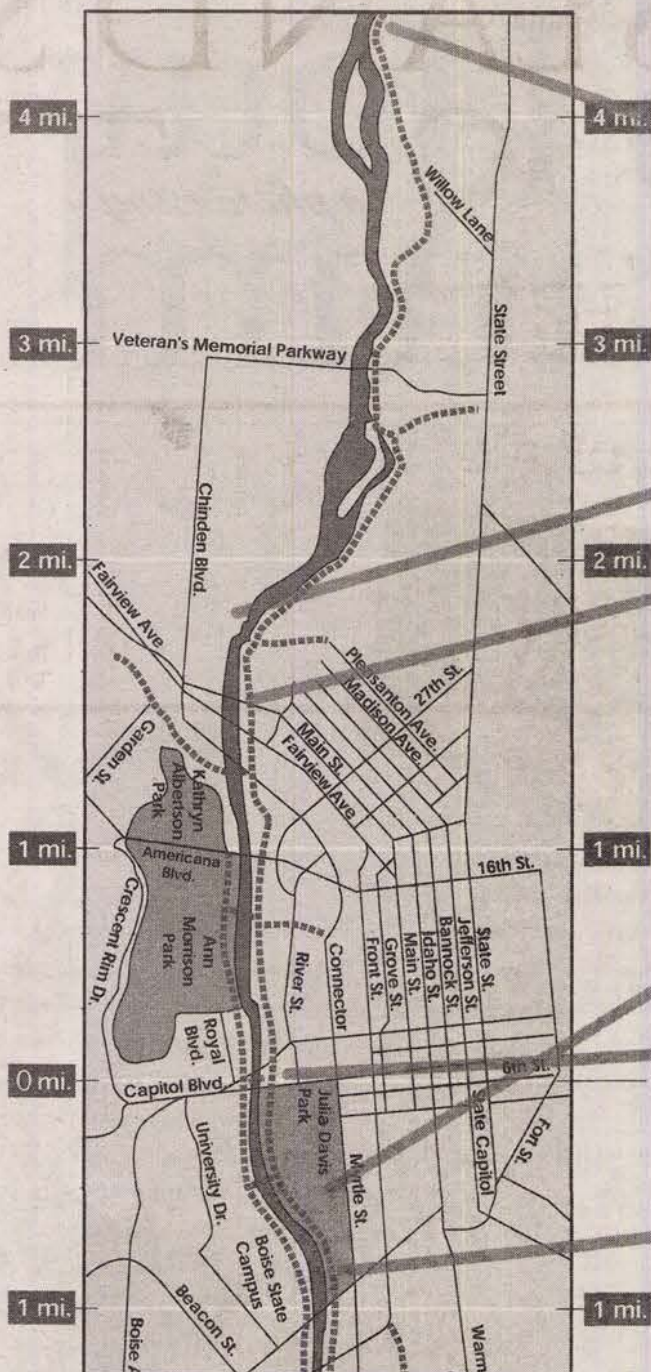
They had gotten married just one month before Lynn found herself on a night layover in Idaho.

Lynn checked into the Doubletree on September 24, presumably got her cookie and went to her room. She then told coworkers that she was going for a walk. Dressed in a dark, long-sleeved jacket, beige shorts and sandals, Lynn crossed a footbridge and veered onto the Boise River Greenbelt. She walked east along the river to the Boise Art Museum, where a credit-card receipt shows she bought glitter pens, window paint and a book of brain teasers. She later ate a spinach salad alone at the Table Rock Pub and Grill, a microbrewery on the edge of Julia Davis Park along the Greenbelt. (Just months before, a girl named Samantha Maher was abducted from Julia Davis Park, raped and murdered. Local Darrell Payne was arrested for the crime. His



The Boise River

BOISE RIVER GREENBELT



Lynn's body found by a fisherman two weeks later

Doubletree Hotel

Lynn's personal items found under Main St. Bridge. It is believed this is where she was murdered

Lynn buys gifts at Boise Art Museum - 4:21 p.m.

Lynn leaves Table Rock Pub and Grill - 7 p.m.

Samantha Maher abducted from Julia Davis Park that previous July

DNA did not match that of Lynn's killer.)

Witnesses saw Lynn leave the restaurant at around 7 p.m. That was the last recorded sighting of her on Earth. Since she had an early flight the next morning, one could surmise that she began the three-quarter-mile walk up the north side of the river back to her hotel.

When she failed to show up for work the next day, coworkers reported her missing. Police began an exhaustive search of the Greenbelt. They brought out the dogs, the all-terrain vehicles, the divers, combing tooth and nail on the ground. They deployed the helicopters, for a bird's-eye view from above. They got nothing.

A week-and-a-half later, Lynn's wallet and ID were found under the bleachers at a local high school, a mile from where she was last seen.

Near the Main Street bridge on the river, police found the glitter pens and window paint Lynn had bought at the museum, along with her beige shorts.

Then on October 7 at close to 7 p.m., an angler fishing on the south side of the river near East 50th Street spotted a naked figure trapped beneath a log. The vigil at the Doubletree turned to mourning.

An autopsy confirmed that Lynn had been murdered and was sexually assaulted. Amazingly, though it had been submerged in water for two weeks, police were able to lift DNA from the body. That gave them hope. One hundred and fifty-two local men had their DNA tested. No match. A sample of the DNA was entered into the national FBI database. No match. Anyone arrested along the Greenbelt for a sex offense—even on indecent exposure charges—has their DNA tested. Still, no match. "I get leads on this thing every week," says Smith. "If anyone is arrested [for a sex crime along the River], I chase 'em down and swab 'em."

MURDER BEGETS SAFETY

Last April, 50 people gathered on what would have been Lynn's 40th birthday, dropping handfuls of pink, red and white rose petals into the Boise River. The gathering was organized by Paul Blomberg, father of Samantha Maher, another Greenbelt victim, who has developed a rapport with Lynn's parents. When contacted at their home in Bozeman, Mont., Lynn's mother, Micki Huisenga, declined to be interviewed, citing both pain and a fear that the killer, still on the

loose, could seek more retribution.

"Basically, we just don't want to go there," said Huisenga. "It hurts."

Lynn's murder prompted new security initiatives along the Greenbelt: more lights and new security patrols. Boise police officers have stepped up bicycle patrols. A motorcycle detail, the result of a community donation drive, has been instituted. Mile markers have been installed along the Greenbelt by area Eagle Scouts, and dense brush that could be used as ambush cover has been removed by park rangers.

Since Lynn's murder, no one has been killed along the river.

Lynn may have saved other lives. Or has her killer simply picked another span of geography in which to work?

Three weeks ago, Cheryl Ann Hanlon's

body was found five miles away near a children's playground, and Det. Dave Smith raised his eyebrows to a possible connection.

On March 13, armed with a tip, Smith arrested Eric Virgil Hall, 32, for first-degree murder in connection with the March 1 killing of Hanlon. The next day, Hall, characterized by police as a transient, confessed to Hanlon's killing. Hall is a previous sex offender, who was actually arrested only two weeks ago for failing to register for a previous conviction.

The similarities between the murders are cause for hope.

Hanlon was strangled with her own clothing, similar to Lynn. She was found partially clothed. Both seemed to be victims of opportunity, rather than planned assaults. Both had murderers who made attempts to conceal the crime, throwing Lynn into the

river, Hanlon into a shallow grave. Both were beaten about the head and both had jewelry removed—Lynn had been wearing a gold sapphire ring with diamonds, which has not been recovered. Hall was in Boise at the time of Lynn's murder, living right off the Greenbelt.

Like the 152 men before him, Hall will be swabbed for DNA, and tested against the sample found on Henneman. "We won't know for a couple of weeks," says Smith.

The detective keeps in constant contact with Lynn's parents. On Monday, he called them with the news about Hall. "I told them to be cautiously optimistic," says Smith.

And even if Hall turns out not to be his man, Smith will still cling to hope, and a scrap of DNA, that Lynn Henneman's killer will be found. ●