Murderer's Row

Criminal activity moves from barroom to living room

When a man kills a woman in Lafayette, he usually beats her to death. Other times, he uses a gun or a knife. Homicide scenes used to be common in and outside local lounges. Lately, they're in Lafayette residents' homes and along the city's streets.

Teen-agers were accused of none of the 18 homicides of 1982. Since January 1, however, they're blamed for 11 of 39.

Two of their 11 victims were fellow teen-agers. All but one young suspect used a gun. The 11th suspect, a 15-year-old girl, stabbed her victim to death.

Eldery citizens' homicides are less often solved. The senior victims are usually killed by bludgeoning and while they're at their homes.

Sunday is the most common day for homicide in Lafayette. Saturday is close behind.

These are some facts. The Advertiser found in a recent study of the 54 homicides in city limits in 1982, 1983, and 1987. The three years were picked because each hosted 18 homicides, the most in a year in Lafayette.

The 54 victims are among 145 people who were murdered in Lafayette in the past 12 years, including three who were killed this year.

In December, a 77-year-old local child read in The Advertiser that there were 18 homicides in the city's limits in 1982.

"Mommy, what was it like in 1982 that there was so much crime?" his mother said as he asked her.

She asked us. The Advertiser expanded the search, questioning what has or hasn't changed about Lafayette homicides since 1982.

A lot has. Murderers are younger. Victims are older. Homicides are in streets and homes. Drug use or bad drug deals are often involved.

Women's victims are men, not other women. Most homicides are east of University Avenue. Most suspects are black. Eiderly people's murderers are not found. Bullet wounds are the usual cause of death.

Francis Green, a recently-retired, 30-year-
Murderer's: Row

“You have a mean child today, uncaring, selfish child. Me, my, mine, and I want it now, child. They want it all, now.”

Alton Malveaux

“With a woman, I think a man thinks the chances of her having the strength to fight back are nil. Whereas, with another man, they’ll use a weapon and not even attempt to win a fist fight,” Woods said.

Three of the murdered women were elderly, two black, one stabbing. One man was killed where the home was being built, and was stabbed in the leg.

A younger woman was killed in her home while helping a niece escape a violent husband. She was lodging at a motel when her husband came to get her and had himself. One was visiting a motel and killed by a by-stander. One was working at a convenience store and stabbed by a friend.

Many times, a woman’s beating death isn’t during the first time a spouse or boyfriend has beaten her. It’s simply the fatal one, Woods said.

For many women, “in every beating, in every beating, I don’t know if this is ‘The One,’” she said.

Green was asked what would reduce crime, all types of crime.

“A new attitude, ... starting from birth, ... going into parenting, teaching kids how to resolve conflict, less violence,” Green answered.

Throwing money more at police to deal with the problem has been tried, beginning when crime rates rose nationwide in the 1970s.

“Yet, crime has kept going up,” Green said.

MORE FACTS

- Lafayette women kill too.
- Women are accused of four out of the 54 murders in the three-year study period. Two of them were boyfriends. One was a husband.
- Men are accused of the 50 other murders.
- Victims are getting older.
- Murderers are getting younger.
- Seventy of the 54 victims were black.
- Thirty of the 54 homicides were by gunfire; 16 by stabbing; seven by bludgeonning; and one man died when crashing in a robbery getaway car.
- Murderers in 1992 were by shooting and stabbing. In 1992 and 1993, they were by shooting, stabbing, bludgeonning, and a car crash.
- Seven of the 54 victims were younger than 20, and two of them were killed by fellow teen-agers.
- Eighteen victims were 20 to 29 years old; 21 were 30 to 49 years old; eight were 50 years old or older.
- Victims’ murders occurred in only six of 54 deaths.

In two of the six cases, a white person is accused of killing a black person; and, vice versa for the other four cases.

- Black citizens are more often victims and suspects in homicides.
- In 54 deaths, black people are accused of 35. White people are accused of 14. Five cases are not solved.

Among the 54 victims, 33 were black and 21 were white.

Among the nine teen-agers, black suspects of 1992 and 1993, all are black males, except one black female. Among their nine victims, all were black males.

Nine murderers occurred west of University Avenue and 45 were east.

Three of the 54 victims were killed while at work. A bar owner was killed while being robbed at his lounge in 1992. A convenience store clerk was at work when killed by two women by a friend’s husband in 1982. A mental health center doctor was stabbed by a patient in 1993.

Seven of 18 murders in 1992 occurred in or outside bars, three on the street, three in homes, and five elsewhere.

In 1992, four of 18 were around lounges, eight were in the street, four were in homes, and two were elsewhere.

In 1992, three were at bars, seven were in the street, seven were in homes, and one was elsewhere.

Sunday is the most likely day for homicide in Lafayette, hosting 13 of 54 deaths in the three-year study period. Saturday is the least likely, with four of 54.

April was the most likely month for homicide, with eight of 94 cases. Least likely is June, hosting only one homicide among the 54 deaths.

More women were killed in February.

Police officer who now teaches rookie cops at a USL police academy, fumbled for an answer to why homicide climbed in 1992.

"1992 saw a banner year for crime in all of Louisiana," he said.

A national crime study said that crime is in cycles. Every 30 years, it climbs like a rocket, Green said. But, he questions the truth of the claim.

In Lafayette in 1982, the city was economically bounding, while oil prices were high. Drugs existed then as they do now, but crack cocaine wasn’t on the market yet, Green said.

He had no explanation for the Lafayette crime of 1992.

He has one for the crime of 1992 and 1993, however: crack cocaine, juvenile offenders, violence, unemployment, inadequate parenting, and a general breakdown in the moral fiber of society.

Juvenile crime is the most menacing, he added. Green is also a member of the parish juvenile detention center’s board.

"They don’t even have regard for human life," he said, of many Lafayette juveniles. "They feel they have no future."

Alton Malveaux, 23-year director of the parish juvenile detention home, said, "I haven’t seen a shoplifting kid in detention in so long, I don’t think I could spell it anymore."

Twelve years ago, the home was filled with kids who were full up on shoplifting, drug possession, being in a stolen car.

Today, shoplifters are written up and sent home.

The 35-bed detention center is now home to kids accused of narcotics, forgery, burglary, murder, attempted murder, and more.

"It’s getting worse and the sad part is, I don’t see any end to it," Malveaux said.

The Advertiser studied Malveaux’s detention home statistics too.

- The home served 455 juveniles in 1992, up 60 percent from 255 in 1985.
- Among those who were booked in 1985, 32 percent were younger than 15. In 1992, 39 percent were under 15.
- In 1985, 42 percent of the juvenile suspects were black. In 1992, 80 percent were black.
- The juveniles’ crimes in 1985 were against people 27 percent of the time. In 1992, that grew to 68 percent. “Victimless crime,” such as drug distribution, grew too, to 20 percent from 14 percent. The remaining type of crime against property declined.

"In the last six years, I’ve seen a complete turnaround," Malveaux said. “It’s different charges completely.”

The kids have bad attitudes.

“Yeah, I have a mean child today, uncaring, selfish child. Me, my, mine, and I want it now, child,” Malveaux said. “They want it all, now. The shoes, the car, the clothes. And, they think, ‘I’ll be damned if I’m gonna go to Storey’s and flip burgers and get to that. I’m gonna sell crack cocaine.”

Would a canning or a public whipping reduce kid crimes?

Malveaux laughed.

"You try to cane one of these kids today. They’ll shoot you. They’ll come back and shoot you,” he said.

Corey Darcet recently retired after 27 years as a city police officer. He once headed the city homicide division and retired as the Metro Narcotics chief.

He fumbled too for an explanation of the 1992 homicides. Some police believe that the city’s 2 a.m. bar closing law reduced drunken crime after 1982, Darcet said.

Meanwhile, however, the murder count has not declined. Making up for adult, bar-room homicide are teen-aged killers, curbside.

“I can remember a day in the 1960s when a kid shot Wilbert Tabb, a sheriff’s deputy. That was a rarity. That was a real surprise,” Darcet said. “Nowadays, it’s not new.”

Kids with guns in Lafayette are probably more likely to kill than armed adults are, be added:

“They’re not worried about killing or being killed.”

One kind of homicide has not changed since 1982: the murder of women.

None of the 10 women who were among the city’s 54 murder victims in 1982, 1992, and 1993 were killed by women. Five were beaten to death, two shot and three stabbed. All by men.

Meanwhile, among the 10 men, four were 42 victims by 42 gunshots or stab wounds, one died in a getaway car crash, and two died of head injuries. One was an elderly man who bludgeoned the other fell from a balcony while in a bar-room fight.

Mary Lou Woods, director of Faith House shelter for battered women, said the beating deaths are not surprising.
was a perception within the local community that in metropolitan areas, juries were more likely to find in favor of the defendant. It was more of a rumor than a reality.

— Doug Moreau, East Baton Rouge Parish district attorney

People are fed up with crime, and the easy answer is punishment. ... The death sentence appears to discriminate against the black and indigent. It's less likely to come within public outcry.

— Mike Mitchell, East Baton Rouge Parish Public Defender's Office

From East Baton Rouge Parish courts to death row

- Of the 76 men and one woman on death row in Louisiana, 18 were sent there by East Baton Rouge Parish juries decided they should be executed rather than serve life prison terms. Most of the inmates were convicted for crimes committed in this parish. Others were sent in Baton Rouge — with juries chosen from East Baton Rouge — after their trials were moved because of publicity in their home parishes.

Michael Owen Perry
Age: 34
Race: White
Place of residence: White Castle
Status: Convicted of murder and sentenced to death in 1985.

Dale Dwanye Craig
Age: 24
Race: Black
Place of residence: White Castle
Status: Convicted of murder and sentenced to death in 1983.

Jeffrey Frost
Age: 27
Race: Black
Place of residence: White Castle
Status: Convicted of murder and sentenced to death in 1986.

Todd Kevin Wesson
Age: 25
Race: White
Place of residence: White Castle
Status: Convicted of murder and sentenced to death in 1985.

Donnie Tilley
Age: 28
Race: Black
Place of residence: White Castle
Status: Convicted of murder and sentenced to death in 1985.

Quincy Broaden
Age: 23
Race: Black
Place of residence: White Castle
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