



October 4, 2009

## New unit turns up heat on cold cases

### Investigators to re-examine long-unsolved homicides

By TYRONE TONY REED JR.  
ttreed@jacksonsun.com

It's been 16 1/2 years since 24-year-old Stacy Gatley was gunned down inside his Mustang GT in Lincoln Courts.

Gatley, a husband and father of two from Henderson, was found slumped over inside his car around 9:30 a.m. on April 8, 1993.

A week later, police charged Antonio Bates, then 23, with first-degree murder of Gatley. Bates also faced charges in an attempted-murder shooting that occurred two days after Gatley was killed.

On Jan. 5, 1995, the charges were dropped, and Bates was released from jail. Police said they were unable to produce witnesses and some witnesses recanted their statements.

Gatley's widow, Teresa, his 23-year-old son and his 19-year-old daughter still wait to find out who killed Gatley and why and to see that person brought to justice.

"My son was 6 1/2 years old, and my daughter was 2 years and 9 months old when Stacy was killed," Teresa Gatley said. "Two years ago, when my son turned 21, we went to Jackson to talk to authorities about the case. My son wanted to know everything about the case."

Gatley's death is one of 38 homicides that will be re-examined by the new Cold Case Investigative Unit of the Jackson Police Department. The unit, which is funded through a federal grant, began work Sept. 8 and will focus on trying to solve killings from the past two decades. Gatley's case is the oldest of the homicides the unit will look at.

Teresa Gatley said she hopes the formation of the unit will mean that the person who killed her husband will be found and punished.

"I think the unit is the best thing to happen to Jackson," she said. "We're very hopeful that the case will be solved. This murder has deeply affected our family, especially my son."

Lt. Tyreece Miller oversees the Cold Case Investigative Unit as well as the Jackson Police Department's Violent Crimes Unit.

"A cold case is defined as a case that is at least one year old that can't be further addressed by the original investigator because of workload, time constraints or, above all else, the lack of viable leads," he said.

Miller said unlike the Violent Crimes Unit, the Cold Case Unit will not face the time constraints that prohibit violent crimes investigators from concentrating on an unsolved homicide from 15 years ago while also investigating a violent crime that happened the other day.

"I think we've assembled investigators of a wide variety of experience," he said. "These cases are unsolved, and by taking a second look, the cases can only improve. We now have people solely

dedicated to these cases. With time and dedication, a great many of them can be solved."

Tempie Hampton, 70, of Chicago, said she was ecstatic when she heard about the new unit.

"My son, Wesley Lamont Hampton, was killed in 2007," Tempie Hampton said. "He would have celebrated a birthday on Oct. 21. It's been a disappointment to my family and I that his murder hasn't been solved.

"But, with this new unit, I'm just hoping they catch the killer and find out why my son was killed."

Wesley Hampton, 33, was shot as he sat in a parked car in the driveway of a house in the 300 block of Lexington Avenue. Police said it appeared to be a robbery.

The shooting was reported to police at 8:15 p.m. Aug. 17, 2007.

Police said Hampton did not live at the house where the shooting happened but was known to stay there frequently.

Tempie Hampton said over the years, it seemed like a lot of the cases that officers in Jackson worked were solved rapidly, but her son's slaying was still a mystery.

"I bugged (investigators) to no end," she said. "I'm sure they had great leads, but none of them led to my son's killer."

## A unit needed

Having unsolved homicides has a negative impact on everyone in a community, said Larry Ross, one of the investigators with the Cold Case Unit.

"We all want to live in a safe community," he said. "But there's an uncertainty in the community when you have unsolved crimes."

There have been 18 homicides in Jackson since 2008, with one unsolved.

"That's something I'm very proud of," Miller said. "That's a 95 percent homicide solvability rate since 2008."

But, he said, one unsolved homicide is nothing to celebrate because that means there is still a family out there mourning the loss of a loved one and awaiting justice.

Thirty-nine deaths have gone unsolved out of the 148 homicides in Jackson since 1993. Thirty-eight of the unsolved homicides are now classified as cold cases.

Miller said the unsolved killing of Euhommie Ollie Bond, 41, of Jackson, is not considered a cold case because it is less than a year old and because investigators still have viable leads.

Out of the cold cases, 32 of the victims were shot, four victims were strangled, one victim was beaten and one victim was stabbed.

Capt. Mike Holt applied for a grant in 2008 through the state's Office of Criminal Justice programs to form the Cold Case Investigative Unit.

The grant is for a total of \$140,000, which is in effect until June 30, 2011. The grant is stimulus money that was released through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009.

"There's no guarantee for the grant to be renewed after June 2011," Miller said. "If the grant's not renewable, but the unit is successful, the department would look for other ways to fund it."

The money will be used to pay members of the unit and purchase supplies and equipment.

"I'm excited about it," Holt said. "It's something we've wanted to do for a long time."

The unit is made up of four investigators and an administrative assistant. They will work solely on cold cases. The unit is its own entity but will get its cases from the Violent Crimes Unit.

Miller said some cases probably will yield results sooner than others. He declined to comment on which cases investigators will focus on first because he said revealing the information could jeopardize the cases.

The number of hours investigators will work will depend on the information they are working with and what they are able to develop from it.

"Investigators will locate and relocate witnesses and evaluate forensic evidence to ensure all evidence had been appropriately examined and to determine what new forensic technology would be relevant," Miller said. "They will also conduct database searches using programs like the FBI's ViCAP, Violent Criminal Apprehension Program.

## The Cold Case Unit

The members of the unit include the following:

- Rita McCoy is a registered nurse, flight nurse and assistant coroner.

McCoy has been in the emergency room for 21 years and a nurse for about 20 years. She works for Memphis Medical Air Ambulance Service and is an assistant medical examiner for the Madison County Medical Examiner's Office.

McCoy has five years of training in death investigations and being an assistant coroner and is a board-certified medicolegal death investigator.

- Jimmie Leach retired from the state Department of Safety before joining the unit. He worked in the Criminal Investigation Division of the Tennessee Highway Patrol.

Leach worked 10 years with the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation as a special agent and six years with the Tennessee Department of Safety's Criminal Investigation Division and has 30 years of law enforcement experience.

- Larry Ross retired last year from Union University after serving as director of safety and security for Union University. He has a total of 27 years experience in law enforcement.

He was a criminal investigator with the Tennessee Department of Safety's Criminal Investigation Division for 22 years. Leach was his boss.

Ross also is a former deputy sheriff for Carroll County.

- Jerry Priddy is a retired captain of the Jackson Police Department's Criminal Investigation Division. He worked for the Police Department from April 1975 to June 2008.

- Vern Scott serves as the unit's administrative assistant. She retired from the telecommunications industry after 32 years.

"I think the members of the unit mesh well together," Scott said. "They're an excellent group to work with."

## Solving mysteries

Members of the unit were contacted by the Police Department to see if they were interested in joining.

For Ross, it was in his blood to say yes.

"It's been my experience that once a cop, always a cop," Ross said. "Once I decided to retire from Union, I went home and sat down for a while. I didn't like that."

Ross said being a member of the unit is a good opportunity to bring justice to victims and their loved ones.

"These cases we are working on have years on them, and it would be good to solve these cases and bring closure to the families."

Priddy added, "It's not just the family that needs closure. It's friends who knew those people and want to find out what happened and see the person responsible pay."

McCoy, who was born and raised in Jackson, said joining the unit was something she wanted to do for the community.

"This could be your family (with an unsolved homicide)," McCoy said. "I would want someone to do this if it was my family."

Priddy said Holt discussed the idea of joining the unit with him several times.

"He felt like I would have something to contribute, especially since I know some of the cases from the beginning," Priddy said. "We hope to bring people to justice for the things they have done."

Ross said the unit's first plan of action has been to go through the cases, organize them and look for cases that have a high probability of being solved.

"I'm hoping (the formation of this unit) will encourage family and friends that their loved ones are not forgotten and that we want to bring them closure."

Visit [jacksonsun.com](http://jacksonsun.com) and share your thoughts.

- Tyrone Tony Reed Jr.,

425-9758

## Additional Facts

How to help

- Family members of Jackson homicide victims are asked to call the Cold Case Investigative Unit at 425-8400.
  - The unit would like to update its records and talk to the families.
  - Anyone with information about these homicides is asked to call the Jackson Police Department at 425-8400 or Crime Stoppers at 424-8477.
-