

PASADENA STAR-NEWS

Monday, March 19, 2007 www.pasadenastarnews.com

Police back theory on missing boy



For an online video of the investigation, visit www.pasadenastarnews.com

INSIDE

► A chronology of Mack Ray Edwards' known and suspected victims / News 11

BY KENNETH TODD RUIZ
STAFF WRITER

SOMETHING TERRIBLE HAPPENED 50 years ago in the Arroyo Seco, a mystery coursing through Eldon Bowman's mind ever since.

On March 23, 1957, his son, Tommy, 8, vanished at the end of a brief hike less than a mile from the Altadena home they were visiting.

"I'll beat you to the car," Tommy told

his two cousins before scrambling out of their lives forever.

He went around a corner and then was just gone.

Massive searches were organized. For nearly a week, police and residents thought they were looking for a lost child. Screaming headlines in the Pasadena Star-News and newspapers throughout the Southland tracked every development.



TOMMY BOWMAN

Please turn to BOWMAN / Page 11

BOWMAN Author accuses Edwards

Continued from page 1

Weeks later, with all leads exhausted, the crisis of Tommy's disappearance settled into a kind of black hole. There was nothing more for his parents and siblings to do but return to their home in Redondo Beach.

Five decades later, a Pasadena man obsessed with ending Eldon Bowman's torment by uncovering the truth behind Tommy's disappearance has reached grisly and disturbing conclusions about what happened that afternoon. And the police say he's got it right.

Furthermore, the revelations of author Weston DeWalt could precipitate breaks in a number of other cold cases involving child victims throughout Southern California.

An incomplete confession

After more than two years singularly absorbed in researching Tommy's disappearance, DeWalt is convinced the boy was abducted that Saturday evening and killed by Mack Ray Edwards, then of Azusa, during the course of a long career as a serial sexual abuser and murderer of children.

DeWalt is not the only one who believes Edwards did it.

"I absolutely believe he's responsible for the disappearance of Tommy Bowman," said Detective Vivian Flores of the Los Angeles Police Department's Cold Case Homicide Unit. "He's gotten away with it. He can't win and I won't let him."

Not that Edwards is around to take his punishment.

Between 1953 and 1968, Edwards, who committed sui-

cide in 1971, is known to have slain a half-dozen children. Police now believe he's responsible for Tommy's disappearance and consider him a "person of interest" in up to 13 other cases of missing children.

Stella Darlene Nolan, 8, was abducted June 20, 1953, from her Norwalk home and sexually abused before being strangled and left for dead in the Angeles National Forest.

Three years later, Donald Baker and Brenda Howell, both 11, left Azusa on a bike ride and never returned.

In 1968, Gary Rocha, 13, was found shot to death in his Granada Hills home. One month later, 16-year-old Roger Madison of Sylmar left home on his motorcycle and was never seen again.

The following spring, the body of Donald Allen Todd, 13, of Pacoima was found shot to death under a footbridge not far from his home.

On March 6, 1970, Edwards walked into the LAPD's Foot-hill Station with a loaded handgun and turned himself in for kidnapping three young sisters in Sylmar, where he had been living. The girls had recognized Edwards, and after two escaped, the killer knew his years of mayhem were near an end.

Baker was Edwards' neighbor in Azusa; Howell his wife's younger sister. Madison was one of his adopted son's schoolmates.

Edwards confessed to all six slayings.

He said he threw Nolan off a bridge in the Angeles National Forest. When he returned later and found that she was still alive, he stabbed her to death and buried her along the Santa Ana Freeway on which he had been working.

He said he slit the throats of Baker and Howell, and dumped their bodies off Mount Baldy Road.

He said he stabbed Madison to death and buried him under a section of the Ventura (101) Freeway, which he has also been working on.

The bodies of Baker, Howell and Madison have never been found.

Edwards wanted the death penalty, and for his crimes, a jury delivered the sentence. But death didn't come quickly enough, and after several failed attempts, he hanged himself with a television power cord while on Death Row at San Quentin.

Not forgotten

Decades after the newspapers and their readers moved on to new atrocities, there are men and women for whom these children's names are daily material, their unanswered injustices stretching through time to demand answers.

There are people like Detective Diane Harris, who handles missing-persons cases for the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department.

"I keep them in the back of my mind — they're always there," Harris said of her child cases. "I can actually even tell you what their names are without looking at them."

Vivian Flores keeps her children with her at all times. In her LAPD office, at home or in her car, the detective doesn't let the thick binders with missing children's names printed on the cover out of her sight.

During the two years of DeWalt's investigation, he has worked with Harris, Flores and retired homicide investigator Bill Gleason, now a consultant for the Department of Justice.

"I've never met Tommy Bowman's father, but to find out what happened, to let him know where his kid is and maybe bring his body home, is more satisfying," Flores said.

Police, then and today, didn't

A CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS Known and suspected victims of Mack Ray Edwards



- Stella Nolan
 - Donald Lee Baker
 - Brenda Howell
 - Thomas Bowman
 - Bruce Kremen
 - Karen Lynn Tompkins
 - Gary Rocha
 - Roger Dale Madison
 - DeWalt
- **1918:** Mack Ray Edwards born in Arkansas.
 - **December 1947:** Edwards arrives in Los Angeles with his wife Mary, 17.
 - **1952:** Edwards joins the AFL-CIO International Union of Operating Engineers, Local No. 12.
 - **June 20, 1953:** While living in Pico Rivera, Edwards abducts Stella Darlene Nolan, 8, from Norwalk. Ed took her home, molested her, then strangled Stella and threw her off a bridge in the Angeles National Forest returning later to find her still alive, Edwards stabbed her to death and ultimately buried her body along the Ana Freeway on which he had been working.
 - **Aug. 5, 1956:** Edwards, then living in Azusa, pays \$7 to 11-year-old neighbor Donald "Donny" Baker to Brenda Howell, 11, out on a morning bike ride. Edwards followed in a pickup truck, and once in a secluded cut their throats. Brenda was his wife's sister. Edwards later tells police he dumped their bodies near Mt. B Road in the Angeles National Forest.
 - **March 23, 1957:** Tommy Bowman, 8, runs ahead of his family while on a brief hike in the Upper Arroyo and is never seen again.
 - **July 30, 1960:** Wearing a "Summer Fun Club" shirt, 7-year-old Bruce Kremen strays from a supervised of about 80 YMCA campers, never to be seen again. Foul play was suspected.
 - **Aug. 18, 1961; July 3, 1962:** Karen Lynn Tompkins and Dorothy Gale Brown, both 11, go missing in T Brown was sexually molested and drowned; her body is recovered from the ocean.
 - **Nov. 28, 1968:** Intending to molest another girl, Edwards, now a Sylmar resident, lays in wait inside a T Hills home and surprises Gary Rocha, 13, whom he then fatally shoots in the body and head.
 - **Dec. 16, 1968:** Edwards arranges a meeting with 16-year-old Roger Madison of Sylmar and then stabs death in an agricultural area not far from his home. Edwards claims to have buried Madison under a section Ventura (101) Freeway he had been working on.
 - **May 16, 1969:** Donald Allen Todd, 13 of Pacoima, told his parents he had a lawn-mowing job, and after meeting up with Edwards, they go to a remote area where Edwards shoots him several times. Donald's box later found under a footbridge about 1.5 miles from his home.
 - **March 6, 1970:** With the help of a juvenile accomplice, Edwards kidnaps three young sisters: Jan Cohr Cindy Cohen, 13, and Valerie Cohen, 12, from their Sylmar home. After taking the three girls in a camper Bouquet Canyon in the Angeles National Forest, Edwards and his juvenile accomplice abandon them after escape. Knowing the girls would identify him, Edwards goes home and then turns himself in at the LAPD's Station and subsequently confesses to the murders of Nolan, Baker, Howell, Rocha, Madison and Todd.
 - **May 22, 1970:** A guilty plea to three murders and the kidnapping earns Edwards a place on San Quen Death Row.
 - **October 29, 1971:** After several suicide attempts, Edwards hangs himself in his cell with a power cord television set.
 - **March 23, 2004:** Still hoping to find Tommy alive, Eldon Bowman contacts Sheriff's Det. Diane Harris Tommy on the National Missing and Exploited Children's Web site.
 - **January 2005:** Pasadena author Weston DeWalt, with Eldon Bowman's permission, makes contact with to access old case files.
 - **Late 2005:** Working with Harris and other police investigators, DeWalt first identifies Edwards as a sus Tommy Bowman's disappearance.
 - **October 2006:** Police serve a search warrant on Edwards' widow and recover material evidence, includ DNA sample of Edwards and a letter smuggled out of prison.

SOURCE: Staff reports

Staff graphic by MA

buy Edwards' story that he had told them everything. They believed there were more — possibly many more — victims.

All share the opinion that Edwards abducted Tommy, and are considering whether he was involved in other disappearances: Bruce Kremen. 7. from