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Investigations continue into unsolved C.R. murders

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CEDAR RAPIDS - Willie Junior Brocks and Judith Weeks may well have crossed paths in the southeast Cedar Rapids neighborhood where they lived. Their deaths in separate incidents brought them together again - in police files, as two of the city's three unsolved murders this year.

The hardscrabble lives of Brocks, 49, and Weeks, 44, included frequent brushes with the law - Brocks for dealing drugs, Weeks for public intoxication.

Police Capt. Glen Fox said that a victim's history doesn't affect detectives' approach to their case.

"Homicides our guys take pretty seriously, and they take them pretty personal," said Fox, head of the department's investigative division. "To have one unsolved bothers all of us."

Detectives still work Brocks' case full time, Fox said, and the Nov. 27 shooting death still generates calls.

"We're chasing around a number of different theories on him," Fox said. "Time has gone by on that case, but we've still got plenty to do."

Brocks' body was found just after 7 a.m. on a Saturday along the 400 block of 15th Street SE. A woman who lives on the block said she heard a shout, followed by a single gunshot, about two hours earlier - an account police said fits what they know about the shooting.

Brocks was released in May after a six-year prison sentence for selling crack cocaine. Eleven days before his death, he and a woman were charged with trespassing - they were arrested at a garage in the 1200 block of Third Avenue SE where they had been living, according to court documents.

Brocks was well-known in the neighborhood, which prompted numerous calls to police. Detectives weeded the good tips from the bad, Fox said.

"He had a lot of acquaintances," he said. "We have had some problems with people who told us incomplete stories, and we have to go back and interview some of those people again."

Fox said the stories haven't produced a solid lead.

"We haven't narrowed down to any specific suspects" in Brocks' death, he said.

Detectives have discarded some potential suspects in Weeks' death.

"I don't want to close the door on anybody right now," Fox said. "We have eliminated some people as suspects, and some we have not."

Weeks' body, nude from the waist down, was found in the back yard of a vacant apartment house at 1319 Second Ave. SE the afternoon of April 5. The only apparent injury was a wound to her forehead caused by a bladed object, according to a police affidavit filed with an application to search her apartment.

Fox said activity on that case slowed after an initial public appeal brought calls from people who encountered Weeks in the hours before her death. Their stories helped detectives account for most of her time the night and early morning of April 4-5, "but there's still some lapses we can't account for," Fox said.

Lab work on evidence collected from around Weeks' body generated several leads still being pursued.

"That has led us to further investigation," Fox said. "It's continued to be an active case. We have some leads we are still pursuing."

There were two more murders in Cedar Rapids this year.

A jury acquitted Paul Gilbert, 18, of Cedar Rapids in the May 10 shooting death of Jamar Magett, 19, of Chicago. Magett was shot in the head and chest while standing in the 1400 block of Fifth Avenue SE - just around the corner from the spot where Brocks was found.

No one else has been arrested in that case.

On June 26, Weldon Ellingson, 79, apparently shot his stepdaughter, Marilyn Freestone, 58, before killing himself. The murder-suicide occurred in the home they shared at 1836 C Ave. NE.

Illustration: COLOR PHOTOS

Judith Weeks Found stabbed and bludgeoned to death

Willie Junior Brocks Found shot to death

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