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# Minnesota Gay Homicide Study

## Helps Solve New Zealand Gay Murder

BY MICHAEL DAVIS

In the latter part of July, a prominent gay New Zealander was found murdered in his home. Initially, investigators were concerned about the likelihood of solving the case.

But two days after the murder, Eugene Moore, director of an international sexual-training organization based in Auckland, New Zealand, read a newspaper report on the crime. He thought he saw indicators that the victim's sexuality was a central issue in the crime.

Moore sent an e-mail on his thoughts to the senior detective, who previously had attended one of his training sessions. However, the detective had determined that it was not a "gay homicide." He called Moore the next day to discuss his theory that the crime was opportunistic on the part of the perpetrator.

Having recently come across the Minnesota Gay Homicide Study (MGHS) Web site, Moore read the detective 11 "markers" that the study had identified as prominent in these types of murders (see Sidebar).

After he read the list, Moore says there was "a moment of silence on the line," after which the detective stated he would have to rethink the entire investigation.

"He said that it seemed that I had the crime file in my possession," Moore notes.

A few days later, Moore, who also had written the investigating team a six-page letter outlining possible scenarios and issues for consideration, received word that an arrest was imminent. He was asked to come to the station and help question the suspect.

Moore makes it clear that the investigators in the end were able to identify the suspect from physical evidence, and that an

arrest would have been made even without the information Moore supplied.

"However," Moore observes, "the motive and circumstances of the murder and events leading to it were understood by the police primarily due to their new understanding of the nature of gay homicides, and in particular because of the astounding accuracy of the markers presented by the MGHS."

Because the case is, in his words, "still in the court system," Moore explains that he can't release any more specific details.

Even Dallas Drake, Cofounder and Principal Researcher of MGHS, with whom Moore collaborated, does not know the name or age of the victim, or how the death occurred. But he does know it is not uncommon for investigators who are unaware they are looking at a gay homicide to fail at solving a case.

"To increase the solvability of these cases," Drake remarks, "police need to first recognize that it is a gay homicide. Without that understanding, it's impossible to identify a motive or a possible offender."

In partial explanation of the apparent difficulty some law enforcement officials and others have in recognizing such cases, Drake stresses the difference between gay homicide and hate crimes that result in murder. While hate crimes and "gay bashing" are fairly easy to recognize, gay homicide (the phrase MGHS purposely adopted to refer to homicides where the victim or perpetrator is GLBT), is not limited to these particular crimes.

"For our research, it is important to look at any type of homicide that involves a GLBT person," Drake comments. "This includes, among others, 'argument' homicides, 'intimate partner' homicides, robbery, and even child killing."

Drake continues, "There are many different types of gay



Dallas Drake

PHOTO BY SOPHIA HANTZES

homicides, and because of our narrow way of looking at murder in the past, we don't even see it. Heterosexual people are killed because of homophobia. Sometimes, the offender is gay. We don't really understand what role sexuality plays in these murders."

Because sexual identity is not recorded in homicide statistics, ▶

### "Recognizing Gay Homicide"

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1. The death does not occur on the perpetrator's turf.
2. There is no sign of forced entry to the house or vehicle.
3. The body is found in a bedroom or sleeping area of the home.
4. The "male" victim is partially clothed when found.
5. The death is not caused by the use of a gun.
6. Signs of "overkill" or arson are evident.
7. A robbery, not in a place of business, occurred as part of the murder.
8. The incident occurred between 8 PM and 8 AM.
9. If the victim is over 40 years old, he will never have been married.
10. The victim lived alone.
11. The victim's occupation or hobby appears culturally significant.

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MGHS is faced with a sizable challenge. It hopes to identify and analyze all gay or possibly gay homicides in Minnesota from 1969 to the present.

Drake points out that the collection of this data is time-consuming, complicated, and expensive. It's the first time a database of this kind ever has been created.

From the information collected so far, the "markers" were developed that proved pivotal in cracking the New Zealand case.

With further study, MGHS hopes to continue its mission of developing research that will assist in increasing solvability of homicide cases, strengthen relationships between law enforcement and the GLBT community, and create safer environments.

Already, MGHS has developed a number of resources to assist and educate the GLBT community, law-enforcement and criminal-justice personnel, and the general public about issues and topics related to gay homicide.

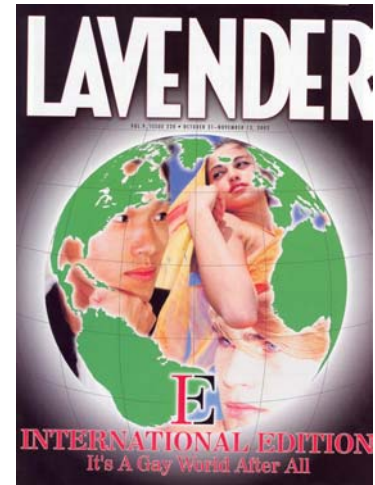
In fact, MGHS intern Joe Riemann is working on a research project regarding the solvability of gay-homicide cases. It is also his senior project at the University of Minnesota.

"We are proud to be sponsoring and helping direct this research project," Drake shares. "Lieutenant Carlson [Minneapolis Homicide Chief] and Sergeant Richard Zimmerman are assisting us in this work, and have been very supportive of what we are trying to accomplish. Without such a positive working relationship, this work would not be possible."

MGHS is an independent, all-volunteer, nonprofit organization based in Minneapolis. It is governed by a three-person volunteer board of directors, which includes Joe Shulka, Cofounder and President; Dallas Drake, Cofounder and Vice President; and Jon Mikolajczak, Treasurer. MGHS also works closely with a small group of "advisers" and a network of peer professionals who offer advice, perspective, and resources.

Volunteers always are needed to conduct research and to assist in daily operations. Both short- and long-term projects are available.

For more information, interested persons should contact Drake or Shulka at <mngayhomicide@earthlink.net>, or visit <www.mngayhomicide.org>. ●



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