

Clues sought

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Two slain on North Coast

Crime + Criminals - 1970-1989

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SANTA CRUZ — The bodies of two San Francisco men who had been shot to death were found late Tuesday afternoon on a trail leading to Laguna Beach on the North Coast.

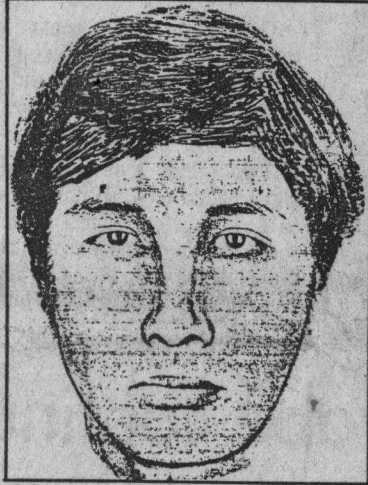
Investigators are looking for a man who may have accompanied the two Chinese-American victims.

Detectives have tentatively identified the two as being in their late teens or early '20s, and were from the San Francisco area. They were withholding names pending verification and notification of next-of-kin.

Their bodies were found on the trail, some 100 yards below Highway 1 at about 6 p.m. Both had been shot in the back and, according to investigators, had been dead for about two hours or less.

Both victims were found face down; one on the trail and the other alongside the trail which leads to Laguna Beach, opposite a horseshoe turnout off Highway 1, about 5½ miles north of the city limits.

Originally, investigators had thought one of the victims had been shot twice and the other once, but closer examination has



Composite sketch of man sought for questioning

revealed both suffered multiple gunshot wounds, according to Sgt. Carl Kuebler.

He said investigators believe the victims were shot with a pistol, probably a revolver because no casings were found near the bodies.

Kuebler said no motive has been established for the killings. There was no indication of robbery, he said.

Because of the location of the bodies on the trail, investigators say they believe the two men were killed at the scene. There

was no effort made to conceal the bodies, and identification was found on at least one of the victims.

Kuebler said investigators don't believe the two victims were taken to the trail "for the sole purpose of murder."

He said the victims may have been trying to run away from their attacker or they may possibly have been surprised by their killer as they walked the path to the beach.

Two girls who were at the beach told investigators they had seen three Oriental males together. They described one as being 20-25 years of age, 5-3 to 5-5 and 140 pounds. He was wearing Topsider-style brown shoes, a long-sleeve shirt and green gym shorts with white trim.

That man was last seen alone, getting into a maroon sedan, possibly a Pontiac or Chevrolet.

Kuebler said the man is not a suspect; "we just want to question him."

Deputies briefly arrested another man in the parking area above the beach when they arrived at the scene, but released him after questioning.

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He matched the description of a man seen walking past the bodies on the trail by the two men who discovered the victims.

Frank Hilty of Santa Cruz and his brother-in-law, Ken Kerndt, of Colorado discovered the bodies as they walked down the trail to the beach. They notified authorities.

They told The Sentinel the two victims were dressed in jeans and shirts and appeared to have beach gear or possessions with them.

They said they saw "scuffle" marks near one of the victims, indicating to them the victim may have "rolled around" after being shot.

Hilty, who lives along the North Coast, said he was taking his brother-in-law to see the ocean.

"I saw two dead bodies, instead," said Kerndt.

Locating the driver of the maroon sedan may provide investigators with a lead, if not clues to the double murder.

Investigators are seeking more potential witnesses in Tuesday's homicide. They are asking anyone who was at Laguna Beach between 4 and 5 p.m. Tuesday to call them at 425-2431.

That would be more than detectives have had to go on seven other murders they've been investigating since February.

So far, the sheriff's office has no clues in any of those cases. In one, authorities have not yet established the identity of a black man's badly-decomposed remains found May 14 east of Highway 17.

Most of the other victims had been dead from periods ranging from a day to months.