

Clerk recalls near fatal attack

The death this week of an Allsup's clerk revived memories of a near fatal attack for another clerk 15 years ago

MARK R. FLETCHER
HOBBS NEWS-SUN

The murder of Elizabeth Garcia this week brought back some terrible memories for Eva Pellissier.

She, like Garcia, was an Allsup's clerk, a college student and the victim of a violent attack while working the overnight shift.

The difference? Pellissier

lived to tell her story, but just barely.

In August 1986 Pellissier — then surnamed Thomas — was a 21-year-old clerk working the overnight shift at Allsup's on the corner of Joe Harvey Boulevard and Dal Paso Street.

Three men entered the store between 3 a.m. and 4 a.m. and stole \$36 from the register. Before they left, they slashed Pellissier's throat and left her for dead. The store, then only three months old, had no working security cameras — even the phone didn't work. Pellissier had to scrape up

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Police following leads in clerk's death

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The Hobbs Police Department said Friday they were continuing to follow up on leads that have surfaced in recent days, but still have no suspects in the murder of 26-year-old Elizabeth Garcia.

"We are contacting other jurisdictions to see if they have had any similar crimes, with similar MOs," said Capt. Donnie Graham, with the

Hobbs Police Department.

On Thursday police reported that preliminary autopsy results showed that Garcia died from multiple stab wounds.



Garcia

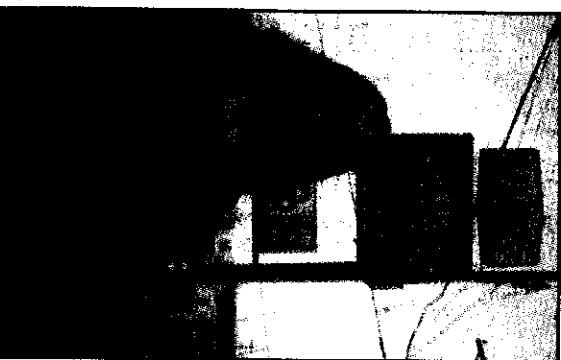
According to police, someone abducted Garcia between 2:24 a.m. and 3 a.m. Wednesday from the Allsup's at 5312 N. Lovington Hwy. directly across from New Mexico Junior College.

A passing motorist driving along French Drive near the intersection with Sanger Street discovered Garcia's

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TAMMY MCKINLEY/HOBBS NEWS-SUN

Eva (Thomas) Pellissier stands in front of the same Allsup's where she was attacked in August 1986.



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some scattered change off the floor of the store, while holding her neck shut and find a pay phone to call police.

The first officer on the scene, Mary Mabry, said she found Pellissier still clutching the phone in her hand and holding her throat.

Pellissier, who once had dreams of becoming a police officer herself, said Mabry was a classmate of hers at New Mexico Junior College.

"I rode in the ambulance with her to the hospital," the now retired Mabry recalled.

The date of the attack happened to be her adoptive parents' wedding anniversary, and authorities interrupted their anniversary party to escort them to the hospital.

"When my mother saw me, she screamed and fainted," Pellissier said.

She recalled how she started crying when her mother fainted, but had to stop herself or medical personnel wouldn't be able to close the wound in her

throat. It took more than 2,000 stitches to close the wound, and she spent two weeks in the hospital recovering.

Fifteen years later she only has one-third of her vocal cords and for five years after the attack had almost no voice.

Even today, the 36-year-old Hobbsan still speaks with something of a whisper, and often wears a necklace to hide the scars.

Pellissier said she has spent the intervening 15 years trying to put the incident behind her, but she said Garcia's murder, and her own sense of outrage, made her feel that she needed to do something.

"A generation later and the violence is still happening," Pellissier said.

Pellissier said that during the nearly three years the case wound its way through the courts, she came to feel that the incident — and the web of police and courts — would overwhelm her.

"That courthouse was my home for three years," she said.

During the course of the trial

Pellissier received a direct, face-to-face apology from each of her attackers, something she says she has never received from Allsup's.

Make no mistake; she wants one.

Pellissier blames the store not only for not having working cameras in the store, but also for allowing her to work alone on the overnight shift.

She said even during the late 1980s she and other clerks would give free coffee to police officers to encourage them to stop in more often and check on them.

Despite her anger toward the convenience chain she still frequents the store, but when she does happen to visit the Allsup's near her home she often frightens the clerk. Not to be cruel, but to help reinforce the need to be vigilant during the overnight shift.

"Sometimes I come in and find them with their back turned to the door, so I scare the daylights out of them," Pellissier said. "I always say, 'Wouldn't you rather this came from me than some guy with a knife or a gun?'"

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body around 2:03 p.m. and alerted police.

Garcia, a single mother of three, was alone in the store and had only worked for Allsup's three days when she was killed.

It was also her first time to work the overnight schedule alone.

Although investigators have not yet determined a time of death, Garcia was apparently murdered shortly after her abduction.

According to the police report, 2:24 a.m. was the last time entered on a receipt in the cash register.

About 30 minutes later the woman's boyfriend Jaime Pacheco stopped at the Allsup's on his way to work. When the man discovered her missing, he notified police. Graham said the call came into their department at about 3 a.m.

Graham said officers found Garcia's textbooks, backpack and other items on the counter at the store. Her car was also left in the Allsup's parking lot.

Graham said all the cash in

the register drawer had been removed and the panic alarm worn by clerks was also missing.

Attempts to contact Allsup's management have proved unsuccessful.

Crimestoppers has offered a \$1,000 reward for information leading to the arrest of a suspect.

Anyone with information about Garcia's abduction or murder should call the Hobbs Police Department at 397-9265 or 397-9275, or via e-mail at rporter@hobbsnm.org. The Crimestoppers number is 393-8005.