

FAMILY FINDS SOLACE WITH A BREAK IN 1970 SLAYING

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William Blake was 9 that cold November day in 1970 when his mother was killed in Detroit.

Today, Blake remembers his bewilderment at not being able to get inside his family's apartment on Edlie Street after school, even though his mother's car was parked outside as usual.

William and his younger brother Michael, then 7, went to a neighbor's home unaware that a killer may have still been in their parents' apartment with the boys' mother, Patricia Blake, and brother Richard, then 2.

For three decades, no suspect was identified in Patricia Blake's Nov. 9 killing -- until this week when Detroit police used high-tech fingerprint-matching software to link the crime to a convicted burglar now in prison.

"I'm glad they caught the guy," said William Blake, now a 41-year-old truck driver who lives in Southfield. "But I had gotten over it. I tried not to think about it."

The Wayne County Prosecutor's Office announced Tuesday that with the help of modern technology and fingerprints from a whiskey bottle believed to be the weapon, Patricia Blake's death may have been solved.

Prosecutors said they plan to charge **Raymond Rudder**, 57, imprisoned at Lakeland Correctional Facility in Coldwater on a 1998 home invasion conviction, today with first-degree murder in connection with the slaying of Patricia Blake, 34.

William Blake's father Tim Blake, who had found his wife's bloody body and unconscious son Richard in the apartment that night, got on with his life but never forgot.

Richard, who recovered from his injuries, now is an electrician at Beaumont Hospital. He lives in Berkley but could not be reached.

Tim Blake remarried, moved to Berkley, and got on with his life.

But Tim Blake never forgot his first wife's unsolved killing. Every few years, he called Detroit police asking them to review their files and search for clues. His friends, the Berkley Police Department, also helped push for further investigation.

Blake himself may still be in disbelief. Contacted Tuesday in his Berkley home, he said that he didn't want to comment extensively until the suspect is arraigned.

"Of course, I feel great about it," said Blake, now 63. "I'm glad to get closure; it's been a long 32 years. But I'm not ready to talk yet."

Blake's second wife, June, said she's thrilled that the case may be solved but it's hard on the children to relive the killing.

"I just feel so bad for the kids. They had to grow up without their mother," June Blake said. "It's been tough on everyone."

At the time, police told the Free Press that Patricia Blake's skull had been crushed and her ankles bound with an electrical cord. Another cord was twisted around her neck. But police said they believed she died of the beating from a large souvenir whiskey bottle and not strangulation.

That whiskey bottle, found unbroken and bloodstained in the apartment, may have solved the case. In September, Detroit Police Sgt. Isiah Smith, whose unit concentrates on unsolved cases, ordered the prints from the bottle be tested against known criminals in the national fingerprint database. The prints matched **Rudder**'s, Smith said.

Investigators pulled **Rudder**'s criminal history and everything seemed to fit. He has at least 10 convictions in Michigan -- seven for home invasion. He had been on parole for just seven weeks before Patricia Blake's killing.

Police say they believe **Rudder** broke into the Blake's east-side Detroit apartment on the 11700 block of Edlie. Tom Furtaw, a Wayne County assistant prosecutor, said they still don't have a motive.

The Blakes had moved to Detroit from Tennessee just six months before the killing and Tim Blake worked as an electrician with plans to make money for a few years to purchase land in Tennessee, his son said.

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Caption: Family photo; Photo WILLIAM ARCHIE/Detroit Free Press

This Aug. 31, 1970, photo of the Blake family shows, left to right, William Blake, his father Tim, holding Richard, and Patricia Blake, embracing Michael. Patricia Blake was killed a few months later. William Blake of Southfield, now a 41-year-old truck driver, was 9 when his mother was killed. "I'm glad they caught the guy," he says. (PHOTO RAN IN METRO FINAL ONE DOT, PAGE 3A.)

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