

Slaying of singer shatters loved ones

Detroit News, The (MI) - Thursday, January 20, 2005

Author: The Detroit News ; Luther Keith

After finishing his shift as a cook at a downtown Detroit restaurant, **Sean Harris** hopped a city bus and headed home.

He could have driven his car to work but parking was expensive and he was trying to save a few bucks.

When Harris wasn't working at the restaurant, he was working on his music. He possessed a magnificent falsetto voice, people often compared him favorably to the legendary Eddie Kendricks of the Temptations, but he also had the grit and soul to sing the blues, the music he loved.

When he got off the bus, just a few blocks from his home on Detroit's west side, he was probably thinking about his music, his next gig with his band Double Shot at the Attic Bar in Hamtramck, or an upcoming show as a background vocalist as a member of The Three Wise Men with the popular group Jocelyn' B and the Street Players.

All that was shattered on the night of Jan. 6 when someone robbed, shot and killed Harris on Cortland Street before he made it home, stripping him of his identification and leaving him a John Doe in the city morgue for two days while his frantic family worried about his fate.

He became Detroit homicide victim No. 10 for 2005, cut down at 37 years of age, a cruel ending for a life he filled with harmonies as much to please others as to please himself.

Hundreds of mourners turned out for his funeral Monday at St. Cecilia Catholic Church in Detroit, reminding all that Harris was much more than just another crime statistic, even if he wasn't a household name. Singers Thornetta Davis, one of Detroit's top blues talents, and gospel vocalist Linda Boston were among those who eulogized Harris in song.

As much as people loved his impressive ability as a vocalist, it was also clear that Harris was loved because he was a kind, caring and sincere person who made friends as easily as he stretched out a note.

"It still hurts so bad; it's like somebody took a dagger and stabbed me in my heart and just started grinding," sobbed a still grief-stricken Jocelyn Bulford, who hired Harris to join her group Jocelyn' B and the Street Players 10 years ago. "Sean had a special place in my heart. Nothing has ever hit me as bad as this."

Andrew Miles, the guitar player Bulford's band, also was close to Harris.

"I never heard him say a negative word about anyone; he was a beautiful cat," Miles said. "To say he was talented was an understatement. He was the kind of guy who would send chills up your spine when you heard him sing. When you heard him, you were hearing greatness."

Just two days before he was killed, Harris sang the song "Amazing Grace" at his father's funeral.

With Jocelyn' B, Harris made his mark as one of Three Wise Men, joined by his cousins, Keir Ward and Eric King. Together the group wove mesmerizing harmonies behind the vocal stylings of Bulford, pushed by a fiery seven-piece rhythm and blues band.

"I called them the Three Wise Men because, like the Three Wise Men of the Bible who brought gifts to Jesus, their music was a gift to me," Bulford explained. "Now there will never be another Three Wise Men."

Bulford was so shaken by Harris' death that she had second thoughts about continuing her singing career.

"My guys all told me that Sean would want me to go on," she said. "They said he would want us to keep making music."

The band has had several performances since Harris' death. Bulford acknowledges it's been a struggle and credits the owners of the Cavern Club in Ann Arbor, Memphis Smoke in Royal Oak and the Tenny Street Road House in Dearborn for helping the band get through this rough emotional period.

On Jan. 27, the band will perform at Tenny Street at a benefit for Harris' family. Harris is survived by a 10-year-old daughter, Daeseana; his mother, Norrell Harris; and a sister, Toya.

Police still don't have any suspects in Harris' death.

"I can't make any sense of it," Miles said, "but God will have his way with the person that did it."

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