

Centre Daily Times

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Family keeps hope 6 years after mother's disappearance

By Jim Hannah

As long as her mother is missing, 16-year-old Shawna Condon will never give up hope she is still alive.

It will be six years ago Wednesday that Brenda Condon disappeared from a Spring Township tavern, leaving behind her two children and many unanswered questions.

Shawna hopes to graduate from high school so that her diploma will be hanging on the wall when her mother comes back home. Shawna, who was 10 when her mother disappeared Feb. 26, 1991, doesn't believe her mother is dead.

"I wish she would come back," said Shawna in a phone interview from her father's home near Clearfield. "I keep hoping and praying."

Spring Township police said the case is still open, but if no one comes forward with new information, police hold little hope in solving the case.

Shawna said she lives her life in a way that would make her mother proud, but it hasn't been easy in the years following the disappearance.

Shawna was held back a year in school because of her grades. She couldn't focus on school work amid rumors that her mother's body was found or that she ran away.

"It hurt," Shawna said.

Six years later, Shawna said she still has to stay busy to keep her mind off the disappearance.

Things have been easier for Shawna this year. She found a way to keep busy and meet new friends by enrolling in a vocational program at her high school. She is studying cosmetology

and plans to graduate from Clearfield Area High School in May 1999.

Shawna only wishes there was more television coverage of the disappearance. She said the coverage would make it easier to find her mother, wherever she is.

Condon was just five days shy of her 29th birthday on the night she disappeared. She was working in her second week on the job as a bartender at the now defunct Carl's Bad Tavern.

Witnesses told police they last saw Condon at 1:15 a.m., serving an unknown male customer. Police wanted to find that man and released three different composite sketches, but he never surfaced. He was the only person in the bar that night that police couldn't identify.

To add to the mystery, Condon's boots were found in the men's restroom. Her 1986 Mercury Capri was left in the parking lot. The tavern was found unlocked, but nothing was taken.

Soon after the disappearance there was some speculation by police that Condon left on her own will, but her sister doesn't believe that.

"I know her (Condon), and she didn't just take off," said Iris Myers, Condon's sister. "Whoever did whatever made sure she wasn't going to show up a few years later."

Myers thinks her sister was murdered in the bar. "She knew something someone else didn't want her to know," she said.

Myers said Condon's son, Todd, graduated from high school and has a full-time job. Shawna said she doesn't see her 18-year-old brother a lot since he started working, but said the disappearance made the two very close.

On the anniversary of the disappearance, Shawna hopes to spend a quiet evening with her brother and other family members talking about her mother.

"You just keep on going," Myers said. "Brenda is not forgotten. You think about the disappearance every day. You say, 'Is this the day they find her or someone comes forward?'"

Condon's name was entered on a national database of missing persons. Myers also contacted several psychics. But no one has ever heard from Condon.

Bloodhounds were brought to the area where she disappeared and searchers combed the area from helicopters. A \$25,000 reward was offered for information about what happened, but that didn't help, either. The reward is no longer being offered.

Police said they interviewed more than 100 people and conducted half a dozen polygraph tests during the investigation. The last time people saw the woman, who was blue-eyed, 5 feet, 3 inches tall, weighed 110 pounds with shoulder-length, dark-reddish hair, she was

wearing a silver shirt over a black tank top and jeans with silver studs.

Spring Township police Chief Ron Schall called the case “up in the air” and said he has no theories on what happened.

“Any leads we got, we followed through, “he said, “but none panned out.”

It’s the only unsolved missing person case in the township Schall could recall.

“What makes this case so frustrating is that she is just gone and no one saw or heard anything, “he said.

Condon was the first of three local women to disappear under mysterious circumstances in 1991.

Josette Brungart, 37, of Rebersburg disappeared in June after a fight with her husband while delivering newspapers. She was last seen walking along the road in Walker Township. Six months later, her body was found in a deeply wooded area. Police could find no signs of foul play.

Katherine Heckel, 40, of Mill Hall, left the International Paper Co.’s Hammermill plant in Lock Haven at lunch in July and never returned. Her car was found three days later near the Lock Haven Hospital. Her body was never found.

No one was charged in either case.

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