

Nightmare In Napa - Nov. 19, 2005 (Courtesy www.cbs.com)

(CBS) The murders of former beauty queen Leslie Mazzara and her roommate Adriane Insogna shocked beautiful and quiet Napa, California.

Who wanted these two women dead? Correspondent Bill Lagattuta reports on the investigation, newly-released evidence and a stunning development that surprised everyone.

California's Napa Valley, world famous for its wine, is a place of almost mythical beauty. Every day, tourists arrive by the busload to drink in the local flavors, luxuriating in resorts and savoring exquisite food and wine.

Kelly McCorkle and her best friend Leslie Mazzara grew up thousands of miles and a world away from the golden lifestyle of Napa Valley. But, Kelly says, Leslie was drawn to wine country.

Leslie was raised by her single mother, Cathy, and her two older half brothers on a farm in rural Anderson, South Carolina.

“She was spoiled. She was a princess. We knew that. We adored her,” remembers her mother. “When she was a little girl she used to say she wanted to be a mother, a teacher and a nurse. And Miss America before she was 21.”

But her friend Kelly was the one winning beauty pageants.

“Leslie would come over to my house and put my crowns on her head,” Kelly recalls. “Finally, she said, ‘Can I have one of your crowns?’ And I said, ‘No. Go get your own.’ And she said, ‘You really think I could win one?’ So I talked her into doing it. I helped her fill out her application.”

Leslie won the title of Miss Williamston and went on to compete in the Miss South Carolina pageant, making raising money for abused children her platform.

As for Kelly, she won the Miss South Carolina title and later went on to be a finalist on the CBS reality show “The Amazing Race.” Kelly’s future seemed set, but Leslie, after graduating from college, was still searching.

Kelly says Leslie was passionate about the arts but was unsure what she wanted to do. She also thought about becoming a lawyer, a teacher or a reporter.

When Leslie’s mother moved to California, she remembers calling her daughter. “I said, ‘Maybe you can spend the summer pouring wine in wine country and just take a break.’”

Leslie headed straight to the winery owned by “Godfather” director Francis Ford Coppola, and was hired on the spot.

Leslie found a room in a house on Dorset Street in Napa shared by two other young women, Lauren and Adriane Insogna.

One of Adriane's best friends, Lily Prudhomme, says the women's neighborhood was safe and quiet.

But last fall, something horrible happened in their quiet neighborhood.

It was Halloween night, and Leslie, Adriane and Lauren were handing out candy to neighborhood children.

After the doorbell stopped ringing, the women headed to bed around 10:30 p.m. Leslie and Adriane slept in adjacent bedrooms upstairs, while Lauren's room was downstairs, near the back of the house.

At approximately 2 a.m. on Nov. 1, 2004, police say, an unidentified man entered the house and went upstairs.

Lauren awoke hearing screams.

"She (Lauren) couldn't quite make out what it was, but then things started to get a little louder. She actually got up and then heard somebody coming down the stairs rapidly," explains police Commander Jeff Troendly.

Terrified, Lauren waited. When she could hear nothing but her roommates crying for help, she climbed the stairs, where she found her roommates stabbed.

By the time police arrived, the two 26-year-old women were dead.

The murders shocked Napa. "People were shocked. Scared," remembers Napa Register reporter Marsha Dorgan. "Nothing like this has ever happened in Napa before."

Adriane's friend Lily says everyone had a theory. "There was talk about the girls were doing drugs, and that maybe they owed somebody money."

Some even thought it might have been a mob hit, because the three women had Italian last names. "It was ridiculous," says Lily.

And as improbable as it might sound, some people even thought that because Leslie's boss — Francis Ford Coppola — had made a famous mafia movie, he had connections to the mob.

Just hours after Leslie and Adriane were brutally stabbed to death in the house on Dorset Street, detectives went into a house one block away and pounded on Christian Lee's bedroom door.

"I was fast asleep and I opened the door and about five detectives jumped backwards," recalls Lee. He says officers asked him if he had any weapons in the home. "I said I had one and I asked if I could get it for them. "No, no, no. Just point to where it is."

Officers collected a knife from the corner of his room. Christian says they also took samples of blood, clothes and bed sheets, and asked him to come to the station for questioning.

Christian was Adriane's "on-again, off-again" boyfriend. He told police he had seen Adriane late the previous night when she dropped by after handing out candy to the neighborhood children. She had left at 10 p.m., Christian said, and it was the last time he saw her.

Christian says their relationship had been rocky, and they had been arguing for weeks. She wanted a commitment, but he says he wasn't ready.

"She would say things that would make me mad. I would say things. I would make her mad. She'd end up finding someone to go out with," says Christian. Adriane told Christian she went to a party the week before and met a guy, something he admits made him jealous.

Christian says their relationship had its problems, but that he has never touched a woman in anger.

As it turned out, he was just the first of many people police would talk to as they began to sort through this brutal crime. Their instinct was that this was not a random attack, that either Leslie or Adriane, or both, were targeted by the killer.

To find out, investigators would have to dig deep into the victims' lives. In Adriane's case, that included talking to her mother.

Adriane's mother Arlene was on vacation in Australia when she got the news about the murder from her youngest daughter, Allison.

Of all her three girls, Arlene says she had worried the least about Adriane. After all, Adriane was the one who had beat all the odds once already and escaped death. At 16, Adriane survived a near-fatal car crash. "The car kind of rolled at least three times and every time Adriane's head hit the pavement through the open window..... It was a miracle she survived," remembers Arlene.

A few months later, Adriane was back in school but still suffering from temporary brain damage.

But over time, she healed and again excelled in school. A group called "If Given A Chance" noticed her story and gave her a scholarship to California Polytechnic State University so she could pursue her dream of becoming an engineer.

Eventually, the city of Napa hired Adriane to be an engineer, and she started dating Christian.

Ten years after the accident that nearly killed her, Adriane celebrated with her best friend, Lily Prudhomme. "We went out and took the day off work," Lily remembers, "and celebrated her tenth anniversary of what she used to call, "The day she was supposed to die."

They spent the day at an amusement park. It was just four months before a killer would take Adriane's life.

The two friends spent hours gossiping about their love lives. Lily was engaged to marry her high school sweetheart, Eric Copple. Inevitably, the conversation would turn to Adriane's relationship with Christian.

"She would come to work crying one day. And, of course, being friends, we would console her. But you sort off start to get to see Christian in this negative light. Because she wouldn't

necessarily tell her friends when they had gotten back together,” says Lily.

The idea that Christian could be a suspect in her daughter’s murder didn’t occur to Arlene. Her first thought was that the killer had to be someone Leslie knew.

“Leslie was a newcomer to the area, and she really wanted to make the most of her time here. She really wanted to go out and meet people,” says Arlene.

Compared to Leslie, Arlene says Adriane had a much quieter life. “Knowing Adriane and knowing she had spent most of her time with people she had known for years — it was just a completely different lifestyle. So I believe it was the lifestyle that Leslie was living that invited this perpetrator to come in unbeknownst to any of them and have this murder happen.”

Police also thought Leslie was the killer’s intended target.

“The blood evidence really speaks volumes what happened there. You’re able to start to get a picture in your mind of where these girls were and how they fought back the last moments of their life,” says Detective Todd Schulman.

Schulman is convinced the killer knew his target and where she slept, and says the killer went right for the stairs and headed to the bedrooms.

Looking at the wounds on her body, Detective Dan Lonergan thought Leslie was the killer’s likely target, certainly his first victim. “I would say that she was possibly attacked while she was sleeping,” he says.

Detective Lonergan says Adriane may have been awoken by the noise and tried to go to the rescue. “The evidence shows something of that nature,” he says.

“I went to the viewing of her body, says Lily. “Looks like she fought pretty hard. She had a lot of bruising. A lot of cuts on her hands. And Adriane hated turtlenecks. Hated them, would not wear them. But she was wearing one in the casket for obvious reasons.”

The killer was hurt during the attacks and left drops of blood, crucial DNA evidence.

Police also had a valuable witness, Lauren, the surviving roommate.

“I was in my bed and just opened up my eyes and realized something is not quite right. And then I heard a scream,” recalls Lauren. “I remember thinking, I need to get out. There was a person up there that may come for me.”

Lauren, 28, is still terrified, fearing the man who murdered her roommates will now come after her. When she agreed to be interviewed by “America’s Most Wanted,” she asked that her face be hidden.

What she saw and heard that Halloween night still haunts her. “I just kept saying “Oh my God. Oh my God,” recalls Lauren.

Lauren says she jumped out of bed and stood outside her bedroom door, listening.

Suddenly she heard the killer running down the stairs. “I was terrified. My gut told me to go out the back. I mean, it was the closest way anyway. I remember thinking, “I’m opening up the door for this guy to follow me out,” remembers Lauren.

Lauren hid in the backyard and never saw the killer or heard his voice. She only heard him leaving through a kitchen window in front of the house. After that, the only sounds she remembers were the cries for help from her friends.

Lauren started to panic. With her cell phone, she got in her car and drove away. She then called the police (audio).

As police questioned Lauren about what she heard and saw, they began to firm up their theory that it was Leslie who was the killer's primary target.

Why Leslie? When they began to look at her life, they began to find a young woman who had an effect on a lot of people.

Although Leslie had lived in California for just seven months, she was already incredibly popular. "Whenever Leslie walked into a room, everybody stopped and looked," remembers Vanessa Schnurr, who had traveled from South Carolina to Napa with her friend Katie Norris to visit Leslie a few weeks before the murders.

Leslie dated a number of men while she was in Napa. At the time of her murder, Vanessa and Katie say she was seeing two guys, an older man who they won't name, and Beau (sp), who they say Leslie was getting serious with.

Katie and Vanessa recall that the older man saw some flowers Beau (sp) had sent Leslie and was furious. "He had this very dark, evil gaze. I'll never forget his eyes. Ever," says Katie.

"He was jealous. I said, you know, "Get rid of him," recalls Amy Brown, Leslie's oldest friend.

Amy says Leslie was "drop-dead beautiful" and had a certain aura. "Everybody that I've met through her will come up to me and say: "You know Leslie was my best friend." It's just how they felt about her. That's how she made me feel."

Napa police wanted to talk to every man Leslie had ever been involved with and see if they could match any of them to the DNA the killer left behind. Detective Lonergan thinks it's a possibility that someone Leslie came in contact with may have become obsessed with her.

"I would say Leslie is a heartbreaker. She never did it on purpose, but I think that there were lots of people out there that would have loved to have won her over, claimed her as their girlfriend," says Leslie's friend Kelly.

Napa police searched through Leslie's computer and found an e-mail that interested them, from an old boyfriend she had met in Alaska when she was just 20.

"She was the perfect woman. I mean, she's everything I was looking for, and then some," says Aaron Davis. He proposed, but Leslie turned him down. And although she broke up with him more than five years ago, Aaron had recently tried to contact her.

"I was going to marry that girl. There's other women out there, but there's not another Leslie," says Aaron.

Amy Brown says a lot of men fell hard for Leslie. "Guys just loved Leslie and even if they weren't dating they would buy her things. And she never asked for anything. It was just like they would give the world to her. I mean this was the woman they were going marry. They just loved her to death."

Amy says one boyfriend's family sent Leslie on a cruise, while another man even bought her a car. "She had no idea that these men, or guys, would think that they were the one who was going to be with Leslie. She was just dating to find the right person for her."

A month before she was murdered, Leslie went back to South Carolina for Amy's wedding, carrying new luggage another guy had bought her.

Amy says she felt "queasy" that guys were buying gifts for her friend. And there was something else that bothered Amy.

She learned that on the night of her best friend's murder, the father of one of men Leslie had broken up with tried repeatedly to reach her on the phone. "It gives me chills when I first heard that," says Amy. "I've never had an ex-boyfriend's father call me..... I think it's very weird."

Almost a year had passed in Napa and there were still no answers on who murdered Leslie and Adriane.

Leslie's mother Cathy was frustrated with the investigation, and about having to defend her daughter's reputation.

"When she would break up with a boyfriend they were still friends. I mean it's not like she left a chain of enemies," says Cathy. "There might be a few broken hearts but I don't think they were angry at her."

In Anderson, South Carolina, Leslie is remembered as a hometown hero.

When she was the local beauty queen, Leslie raised money for the Calvary Home for Children, a charity that houses abused kids.

Leslie's brother PJ wants another home built in Leslie's honor. To raise money, he has teamed up with Kelly, who got some big help from some famous friends, including Rob and Amber, who were contestants on the TV show "Survivor," got married on television, and competed against Kelly on the "Amazing Race."

Together they organized a fundraiser, "The Raising Race," a South Carolina version of the popular TV show. Hundreds turned out to meet them.

Meanwhile, back in Napa, Adriane's friends were dealing with the tragedy in their own way.

Her best friend Lily and her boyfriend Eric Copple, who had been putting off getting married, decided life was too short. "We've been together almost eight years now. It was time to go ahead and get married," says Lily.

Adriane's mother Arlene attended the wedding, and even addressed the couple. In her friend's honor, Lily played her best friend's favorite song, called *She Will Be Loved*.

Although the day was joyful, Lily says she couldn't get beyond the fact that there had been no arrest in Adriane's murder. "Somebody must know something. Somebody would have had to notice their friend acting strange or had bruises. Doesn't seem like someone could walk away from it acting fine."

But by the following summer, police seemed baffled. Investigators said they had contacted more

than 1,000 people, ruling them out one by one. They started with the inner circle, people who knew the victims, including boyfriends, friends and friends of friends. Two hundred of the men investigators met with gave DNA samples.

Detective Schulman says all of the men who gave DNA samples had been ruled out as suspects, including Adriane's boyfriend Christian and all of Leslie's boyfriends.

Then in September, 2005, almost a year after the murders, police decided to make public a piece of evidence.

Police had located several cigarette butts outside the house, cigarettes that had been smoked down to the filter. DNA on the cigarette butts matched the DNA of the killer's blood at the scene.

Police think the killer stood outside smoking cigarette after cigarette. And, he smoked an unusual brand. Distinctive markings on the band matched those of Turkish Gold, a variation of Camel cigarettes that had only recently been on the market.

"We feel like the cigarette brand is something that's going to prompt someone in the public to make that one phone call that's going to lead to the identity of the killer," says Schulman.

Just five days later, police called Adriane's mother to tell her that they had made an arrest. "I was very stunned. I didn't know what to say. And so my next words were, "Who was it?" And I was not at all prepared for the answer to that question."

Arlene knew the man well. Police had arrested Eric Copple, 26, the husband of Adriane's best friend Lily.

"When I learned who it was, I was shocked and I was overcome with grief," says Arlene.

Knowing that the police believe Lily's husband was the killer only brought back thoughts of the gruesome murders

How did the police finally identify a suspect? And one who was under their noses the whole time? It turns out Eric Copple went to them. It was a Tuesday night, after all of the detectives working the case had left for the day.

Copple showed up at the police station with his wife and other family members.

"Eric Matthew Copple was interviewed and made admissions that link him to this crime," Police Chief Richard Melton said.

Napa police always said they would look at the inner circle, the people in closest proximity to the victims, but they never even interviewed Copple. Police say they left phone messages for him, which he ignored.

Police believe Copple thought he was about to be caught.

Copple smoked cigarettes, which all his friends knew, but the police had waited 10 months to tell the public that they were looking for a killer who smoked. When Copple heard the police say the killer smoked the same unusual brand as he did, he turned himself in and reportedly confessed.

So did police drop the ball?

“We would have ultimately contacted him. We would have obtained a DNA sample,” the police chief said.

When they finally obtained a DNA sample, police say, they had a match.

Eric, who worked as a land surveyor, had no arrest record. Police won’t say whether he used drugs or had a psychiatric condition.

Arlene says she and her daughter were both fond of him.

Adriane would tell her mother stories about Eric that Adriane and Lily thought were funny. “Lily would comment on how obsessive-compulsive Eric was. “In other words, a neat freak. It’s the classic, if you would just move something, he would go back and just quietly move it right back,” says Arlene.

But there’s nothing Arlene can think of that suggested Eric was dangerous.

Arlene worries she will lose the friendship with Lily that pulled her through her grief: “I’m crying for her, and worried I might lose her. She might be afraid I would blame her, which I don’t.”

When Lily did her interview with *48 Hours* a year ago, she told us she couldn’t imagine the killer would go unnoticed.

Eric Copple was in the room during our interview as Lily talked about how Adriane must have fought her killer. “She was a scrappy girl. I hope she hurt him,” Lily said at the time.

And now, after so many months of focusing on Leslie as the killer’s primary target, and thinking Adriane died trying to defend her, the families now wonder if this was about Adriane.

“It seems logical now that because of Adriane’s close relationship with Lily and with Eric, that she would be the target,” says Arlene.

And Arlene apologizes to Leslie’s family. “I’m so sorry, I’m so sorry it’s someone on Adriane’s list, you know,” she says. “We’ll have to see what happens, though.”

“It hurts me that she is feeling any guilt about it,” says Leslie’s mother Cathy. “He was a sick person.”

The police won’t say what Eric’s motive was but Cathy doesn’t expect to ever understand it anyway. “She was just beginning her life. She had been through so much and she was just beginning to realize her full potential,” she says.

Cathy’s terrified to hear the details of what happened to Leslie that Halloween night, expecting it will all come out at Eric’s trial.

“I don’t look forward to knowing how my daughter died. I just know that I’ve been told it’s a vicious murder. It’s hard to live with that,” says Cathy.

It’s an emotion Adriane’s mother understands well. She says, “Each piece that I gather causes so much pain. I can’t understand how it could have happened. But I see the devastation it has left in its wake.”

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One long year later, police can now claim they solved the Halloween murders in Napa.

But why did it happen? The answers may not becoming anytime soon. Because in spite of the confession police say he gave them, Copple has decided to plead not guilty. Prosecutors haven't announced yet whether they will seek the death penalty.

Eric Copple is expected to stand trial next year. Since Eric's incarceration, one of his visitors has been his wife Lily.

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