

After 28 years, DNA brings closure, tears

Investigation identifies missing Deerfield man as victim of 1981 homicide



Deanna Dent/Sun Sentinel photos

Family members release doves at Pineview Cemetery in Deerfield Beach, where about 30 people gathered Thursday for Gregory Vondell Andrews' funeral Mass and burial. Andrews' body was found in 1982 and was only identified this year through a DNA match.

By Jerome Burdi
STAFF WRITER

DEERFIELD BEACH » Gregory Vondell Andrews missed the birthdays, the first boyfriends and everything that goes into watching three daughters grow up. He missed the birth of eight grandchildren and the loss of one.

He wasn't around. He disappeared in October 1981 and his family waited all those years for him to come home.

It wasn't until last month that they learned he was killed shortly after he went missing. His body was found in January 1982 and Andrews remained one of the Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office's unidentified homicide victims and one of the Broward Sheriff's Office's missing persons until a DNA match earlier



A family member holds up photos of Gregory Vondell Andrews, who is survived by three siblings, three daughters and seven grandchildren.

Family mourns long-dead relative

this year.

About 30 friends and family gathered Thursday for Andrews' funeral Mass and burial. He was cremated and buried at Pineview Cemetery in a diamond-shaped porcelain urn next to his mother, Elizabeth Andrews. She died in October 2007 without knowing what happened to her youngest child.

Two of his daughters have memories of their father. The youngest, Kwinika Andrews, 32, only knows him through family stories. The last time Shayla Times, 33, saw her dad she was 5. She remembered the construction worker coming home and washing the cement from his arms.

"Daddy, can I have some money?" she asked.

He gave her 85 cents and she bought candy.

The eldest daughter, Tanisha Smith, 37, remembers her father the best. She sobbed uncontrollably Thursday at the funeral Mass. The last time she saw her father, at 9, she was laughing.

"I just remember him opening the door and coming in and I couldn't stop laughing," Smith said. "When I got the call [about his murder] I couldn't stop crying."

The family held onto an ember of hope that one day Andrews would come walking through the door. The only solace to knowing he was killed, Smith said, was that he didn't abandon his children.

"I just want him back," she wailed. "I hope they find out what happened to him."



Deanna Dent/Sun Sentinel photos

Tanisha Smith, who was 9 when her father disappeared, is comforted during the ceremony. "When I got the call [about his murder] I couldn't stop crying," Smith said.



Roses adorn Gregory Vondell Andrews' grave. He was cremated and buried at Pineview Cemetery in a diamond-shaped porcelain urn next to his mother.

Who was he?

Gregory Vondell Andrews is remembered by his daughter Tanisha Smith in a video report at SunSentinel.com/dnacase

Andrews lived with his mother in the 100 block of Southwest Third Avenue in Deerfield Beach when he went missing. He got involved with drugs and that's what loved ones, along with Sheriff's Office investigators, suspected led to his murder.

Andrews was killed by a shotgun blast to the back and his body was dumped in the woods west of West Palm Beach. His skeleton was found by a hitchhiker on Jan. 11,

1982, near Okeechobee Boulevard and State Road 7.

In some ways, the daughters said, they feel suspended at the age they were when they lost their father. They feel robbed of all the times he was supposed to be there. The grandchildren he never met ask about him.

"I still feel like my daddy's going to come back and save the day," Times said.

The Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office asks anyone with information on Gregory Andrews to call Sgt. William Springer at 561-688-4013.

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