

DRAWING

the line against crime

POLICE SKETCH ARTIST MICHAEL STREED OF CORONA WRITES BOOK ON INTRIGUING CASES

SKETCH COPS:

True Stories from Those Who Draw
the Line Against Crime

By Michael Streed

PublishAmerica

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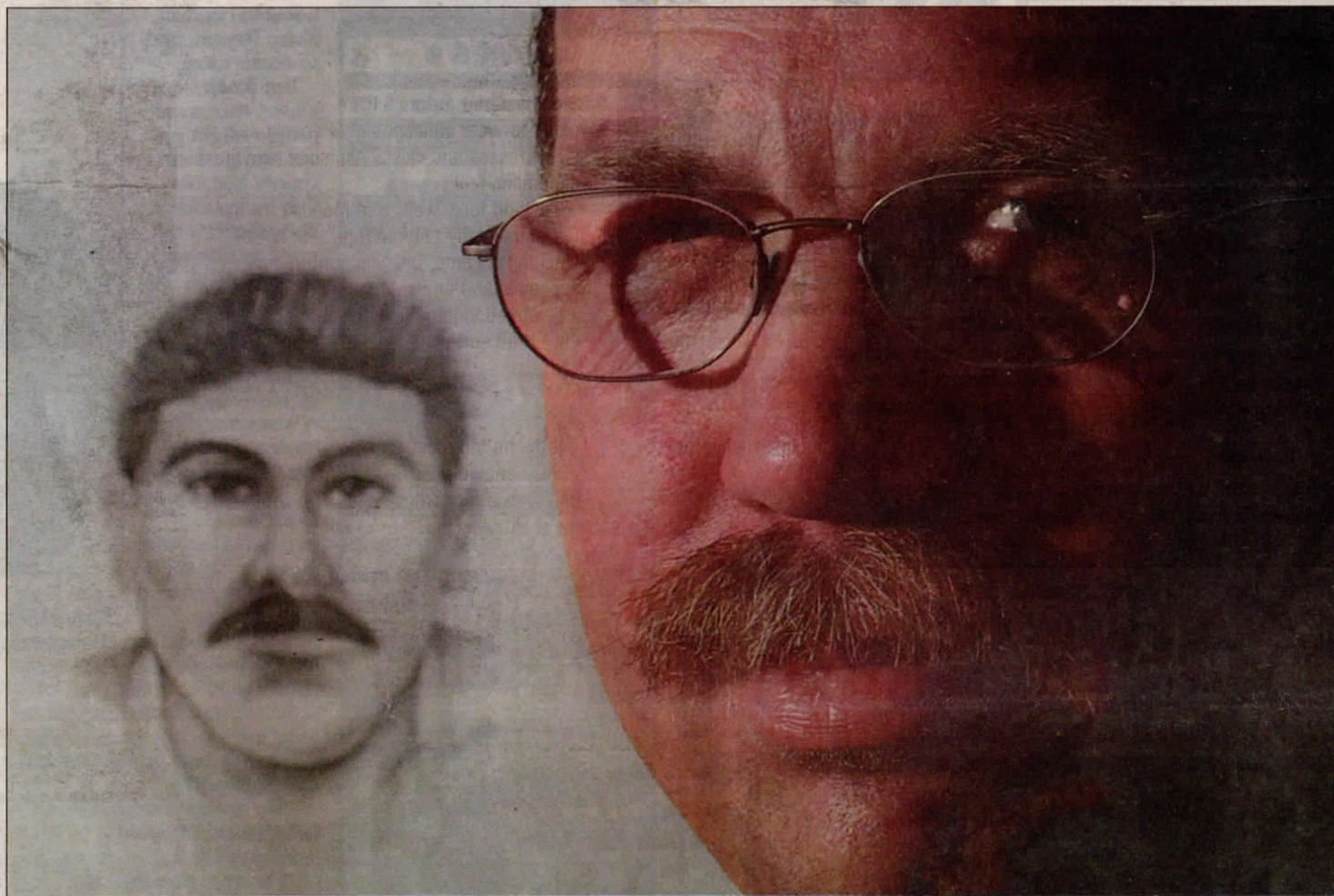
Staff Writer

WHEN 10-year-old Anthony Martinez was abducted in Beaumont on April 4, 1997, and found murdered 11 days later, the police sketch of the suspect introduced the nation to every parent's worst nightmare.

The man drawn on the paper was fairly nondescript, except for one menacing trait – piercing blue eyes.

Although the killer was never caught, police sketch artist Michael Streed, 46, of Corona said he would never forget that drawing. He called it the face of evil.

"I carry a copy of the sketch depicting Anthony's killer," Streed said. "Tucked away inside my day planner, I always begin my day by gazing at the sketch. It fuels my passion and reminds me why I push on through so many heartbreaking cases."



Thomas R. Cordova/Staff Photographer

Michael Streed of Corona is a sketch artist and facial imaging specialist for the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children. Streed has worked many high-profile cases with several police departments around Southern California.

During his 26-year law enforcement career, Streed has worked on hundreds of cases, including some of the most high-profile and tragic events.

Now, Streed has compiled the most intriguing cases in a recently released book, "SketchCops: True Stories From Those Who Draw the Line Against Crime."

"I wanted to write a book that wasn't about me, but about people that suffered at the hands of the criminals," Streed said.

The book takes the reader through a range of emotions by telling the story of a different case file in every chapter, including that of 5-year-old Samantha Runion, who was kidnapped from her Orange County neighborhood and murdered in 2002.

"People from the area here will be able to relate to some of these cases," Streed said.

"They're also going to get something for themselves, which is personal protection."

The concluding chapter gives tips on how to avoid being a victim as well as what to do when you are. Besides remaining calm,

victims should concentrate on features that are anchored to the face, such as the eyes, nose and mouth, Streed said.

"They need to remember things on the face that aren't going to be changed," he said. "We want them to know what to be able to see, what to look for, and (how to) hold these observations."

Streed's résumé in law enforcement dates from 1977, with a variety of assignments that include detective work, sexual assault cases, investigations, gang unit, narcotics, burglary and theft.

"But this has been my most satisfying assignment because I can combine all the elements in my career," Streed said. "I'm able to take all the elements of different skills" learned over the years.

As a child growing up in the city of Orange, Streed had the talent and desire to draw.

"I was always the kid that got in trouble for drawing," Streed said. "My dream job when I was a kid was to be in animation."

But in those days animation

was not considered profitable and Streed moved on to another passion – public service, which was passed down from his father, who served as Orange's chief of police.

Streed began his career with the Orange Police Department, and later ventured to the Santa Barbara County Sheriff's Department. He began drawing sketches in 1979 after taking a sketch class offered by the Los Angeles Police Department. He later attended Scottsdale Artist School in Arizona.

"I trained. I drew. I took classes," Streed said. "I just sucked up everything around me."

In 1984, he participated in a symposium that was used to develop the forensic arts sketch class used by the FBI. However, he wasn't able to take the class until 10 years later.

The art skill is important, but you can't begin to draw unless you can get the information out of people, said Streed.

"I could draw like Rembrandt," Streed said. "I could draw like a master, but if I

can't make you comfortable enough to trust me to share your trauma or your experience, where's that going to get me?"

Streed recalled past interviews he spent with the most fragile of victims, children who witnessed the abduction of a friend or relative. He said in some cases they are equal or better than adult witnesses because they are usually unbiased.

Sgt. Dave Hill of the Orange Police Department agreed.

"I don't know if we would have successfully caught Samantha Runion's killer so quickly without the collaboration of an outstanding young witness and Mike, who is a very talented sketch artist," Hill said.

Hill said a sketch artist has an invaluable skill, the ability to put a picture together based on a description.

With the advancement of technology in 1993, Streed decided to improve his techniques.

"If you're only doing composite sketches, you're limited to what you can do," Streed said.

He took courses in facial

reconstruction at the University of Oklahoma and a class in forensic facial imaging taught by the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children. Today, he is the regional facial imaging specialist for the center covering the West Coast.

Streed said sketches are an important part of the investigative process, even if they're not the piece that solves the puzzle.

"Sometimes it may not solve a case, but it prevents further crime in some instances," he said. "I've had cases where as soon as we put a sketch in the paper, crime stops."

He said people should remember that tools that can identify individuals and reunite families with their children are available to police stations.

"Our job is to solve crime whichever way we can," Streed said. "We have to use the tools that are available to us."

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