

## THOUSAND OAKS

# Software Aids Police Drawing Crime Portraits

Computers, not pencils, will soon become the tools of choice for police sketch artists in Ventura County's law enforcement agencies.

Detectives in every law enforcement agency in the county have been learning how to draw criminals—warts and all—with the new FaceKit software sketch program the county recently bought with state funds.

Soon after being trained on the program, sheriff's detectives in Thousand Oaks used the digital drawing tool Thursday to piece together a portrait of a Moorpark robbery suspect. Within hours, every east county sheriff's patrol unit had a copy of the computer sketch showing the suspected gunman's mustachioed mug.

In the past, the detectives had to wait until the day after a crime to have a police sketch artist dispatched from the sheriff's crime lab in Ventura, Sheriff's Lt. Bill Montijo said.

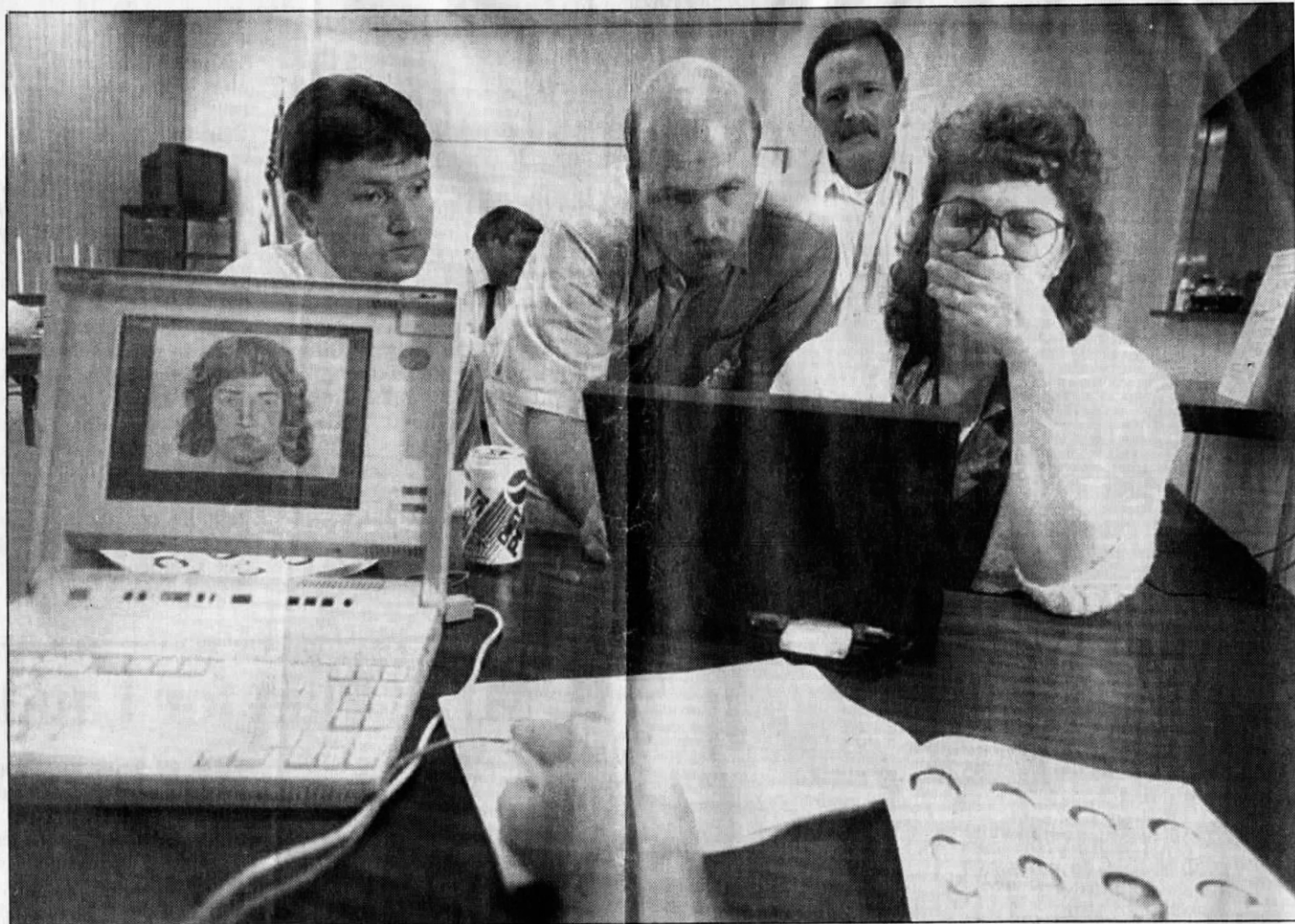
Now, detectives will be able to meet with crime victims immediately and produce quick, computerized sketches of suspects, he said.

Montijo said it is too early to determine how effective the procedure will be, but "we're hoping that it's a time-saver."

Detectives can even take FaceKit on a laptop computer to the hospital for bedside interviews with assault victims, said Detective Sgt. Cliff Troy, who has been trained in the program for the Oxnard Police Department.

"It's not going to be perfect, not like drawing a composite, but I think it's going to be the next-best thing," Troy said. "I think it's going to be a great tool."

Officer Michael Streed, the police fo-



WENDY LAMM / Los Angeles Times

Michael Streed, center, teaches sheriff's crime analyst Dana Trottier on new software sketch program at East Valley Station

rensic artist for the city of Orange who has been training officers, said some of the computer sketches can match or surpass hand-drawn sketches because the victim helps choose a suspect's eyes, nose, ears, mouth and hair from an FBI book of mug-shot characteristics.

"It works off the notion that a person's ability to recognize is stronger than their ability to recall," said Streed, who is teaching the program to investigators in

the Sheriff's Department, district attorney's office and all six city police departments in the county.

The software and training costs about \$5,000 for each department, but the Cal ID program will pay the bill.

Cal ID is the state's fingerprint computer system that contains records from criminal suspects who have been fingerprinted in California.

—MACK REED