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THE ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER, FRIDAY, MAY 5, 1995

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Bones matched to lost brothers

CRIME: Artists sketches provide a break in the case of two Huntington Beach men missing since 1978.

By ANNE C. MULKERN and STUART PFEIFER
The Orange County Register

A 17-year-old mystery that started with the kidnapping of two Huntington Beach brothers — and remained unsolved even after a homicide trial — ended Thursday in a Riverside morgue.

Two skeletons found clad in motorcycle boots, leather jackets and Harley-Davidson belt buckles were identified as the remains of missing brothers Allan G. Taylor, 22, and Charles D. Taylor, 20.

"I just can't believe it's really them," said Dona Robinson, 63, who knew the brothers in 1978 and helped investigators solve the case. "Isn't it something after all this time?"

The discovery of the bodies and new evidence found with the remains could help prosecutors with their still-open homicide case, attorneys said.

Three years after the Taylors disappeared, and without their bodies as proof that they were dead, a jury convicted Thomas Floyd Pugh, then 33, of killing the brothers after a dispute over stolen motorcycle parts. All three men belonged to motorcycle gangs.

An appellate court overturned the verdict in 1985 after learning that two key witnesses had been hypnotized. Pugh was freed.

"There's no statute of limitations on murder," said Deputy District Attorney Rick King, head of Orange County's homicide unit. "We will take the information from this, analyze it and see how the case should proceed."

Prosecutors, police and coroner's officials will meet next week to discuss the case.

The attorney who represented Pugh at trial, however, said the bodies wouldn't alter anything.

"The issue wasn't whether they were killed, but who killed them," said Los Angeles attorney Harland Braun.

While prosectors believed they had solved the case, the missing bodies had baffled investigators for nearly two decades.

Investigators had searched the state for the brothers' remains. Authorities thought the bodies might have been hidden in concrete at a motorcyle shop in Santa Ana. They sent a spelunker into caves near Inyo-Kern, off

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MELISSA BALMAIN

Free of drugs and hooked on farming

Richard Womeldorff faced the Phoenix House farm and guffawed. "For a bunch of drug addicts," he said, "we've made it pretty nice!"

Have they ever. Amid sooty buildings and streets, traffic cones and train tracks, this almost-acre of Santa Ana is a countrified crescendo. Songbirds and earthworms love it. So do beet plants, fruit trees and carrots with perfect, feathery tops. Grapevines twist. Bougainvillea spills. Mounds and ridges of earth promise watermelons, herbs, tomatoes, radishes and black-eyed peas.

Beside it all: the buildings of Phoenix House, which shelter 85 men and women recovering from drug habits. (Separate buildings and grounds for 50 teen-agers lie nearby.) Residents stay up to two years. They do chores, get counseling, seek paying jobs. Money from Orange County and private donations keeps the place going. So does produce from the farm; residents eat it year round — and give what they don't need to other Phoenix Houses.

I've driven past the farm for years, admired it through a chain-link fence that separates it from Santa Ana Boulevard. On Thursday, I finally stopped by for a visit. Richard, Tammy Pritchard and Chris Perez gave me a tour. And they talked about the farm's biggest crop: men and women like them.

Richard is 34, with a smile as bright as his red hair; when we met, the first thing he did was hand me a gardenia. Tammy, 26, looks and acts as if she could be Richard's sister. (She's not.) Chris, 20, is quieter, with a serious face and a fierce way with a hoe.

Not long ago, all three assured me, they were very different. Angry. Jumpy. Richard sold "all kinds of drugs" and took them, too. Tammy was hooked on speed. Chris made and sold methamphetamines.

Then — one after the other — Richard, Tammy and Chris came to Phoenix House. And they came to farm work. It has given them a sense of accomplishment, they said, a sense that they matter.

But not right away. Tammy, for instance, spent her first weeks on the farm feeling about as healthy as worm-eaten corn. She resented being forced to hoe, plant and rake. She made a scarecrow that resembled a nasty witch. Soon, though, she saw the farm looking nicer be-

NEWS FOCUS

CHARLAINE BROWN/The Orange County Register

DOCUMENTING THE PAST: Eddie Grijalva, who has traced his ancestry, displays a historical map Thursday at the Bowers Museum in Santa Ana.

DELVING INTO HISTORY

CULTURE: Hispanics learn genealogy to discover more about themselves and their roots — finding in the process self-identity and a renewed sense of pride.

By ELIZABETH CHEY
The Orange County Register

Like Sherlock Holmes looking for a clue. Like '49ers digging for gold. Like archaeologists trying to unlock the secrets of cultures buried by the earth.

Many Hispanics are searching for their roots. The Society of Hispanic Historical and Ancestral Research could be called the CIA of such exploration.

Linked to the latest technology, SHHAR members — they pronounce the acronym "share" — are digging up a perspective of history that they contend has been ignored and silenced.

They haunt sophisticated libraries and archives, flipping through microfilmed death, marriage and birth records to decipher centuries-old documents. They network with genealogy professionals and beginners, comparing surnames and pedigrees. Some members surf the Internet and post notices, seeking distant cousins.

The society's members vary in profession and interests. Eddie Grijalva is a custodian at Spurgeon Intermediate School in Santa Ana. John Senteno is the director of the St. Mary Medical Center emergency room, in Long Beach. Elma Valdez is a bilingual kindergarten teacher at Cesar Chavez Elementary School in Norwalk. Mimi Lozano Holtzman is a retired teacher from Huntington Beach.

Though their life stories are different, they're all hooked on the thrill of solving a good mystery and unearthing a piece of history about themselves.

Grijalva, 62, of Orange, searched for 10 years before he stumbled over something that has changed him. Grijalva, a recovered alcoholic, said he replaced drinking with genealogy.

Tracing back five generations, Grijalva discovered that he is a distant cousin of the first Spanish settler of Orange County. That

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Trying to Net a girl

TECHNOLOGY: Fifth-graders' online thoughts are of love.

By STEPHEN LYNCH
The Orange County Register

GARDEN GROVE — Ryan Grimes has this Internet thing down cold.

It's not about a virtual community, or discussing grand ideas, or even about the wonders of technology. It's about girls.

Five minutes into his first foray into Internet chat, Ryan, 10, is flirting with women around the world, even if he isn't really serious.

"You can't get a girlfriend on here," he whispers, leaning over conspiratorially, "unless you know what they look like."

Ryan swallows his laughter as resource specialist Vonnie Phillips looks over suspiciously. Sure, to Ryan it looks like three days of kids from 34 sites in 14 nations are picking each other up online. But for his teacher, it's all in the name of technological awareness.

Ryan and his classmates at Clinton-Mendenhall Elementary School in Garden Grove jumped into an international chat room Thursday morning and will again today as part of an international effort to teach children how the Internet works. The goal was noble even if the conversation wasn't always — talk of going steady was the most common topic, causing the fifth-graders to twitter.

"They're still kids, so they tend to talk about things they're interested in," says Phillips, bustling among a computer, kids and a video screen. "Especially if they're 12 to 14, it's usually the opposite sex."

So it didn't take long for the cyberspace novices to turn the fifth annual event into something very close to an America Online chat room.

"We want to talk to BLOND girls," a student from England

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