

'She was a perfect daughter'

Parents keep memories of Doris

By PAUL McGRATH
Managing Editor

Doris Lynn Armstrong was petite, beautiful and talented. She possessed a vivacious attitude towards life; she loved it and for 27 years it seemed to love her.

Doris was the epitome of the phrase "she's got it all." Nearly everyone talked about her bright future.

But on Aug. 10 that future was brutally ended. Doris was found stabbed to death in her plush Houston townhouse. Her body was found about 9 a.m. the next day by an exterminator scheduled to clean the townhome. The 27-year-old former Lockhart woman had been stabbed a number of times in the chest and her throat was severely slashed.

There were no signs of forced entry, and there have been no indications of sexual abuse or theft. A small trail of blood led out of her town home, but Houston detectives have been unable to locate the murder weapon.

Doris had last been seen alive at 9 p.m. Thursday. She was wearing leotards, a loose fitting blouse and jewelry when police investigators arrived.

But the horrible moments which brought Doris' life to a close do not erase the memories of her left in the hearts of her parents. Bob and Fay Armstrong, the days following her death were wracked with pain and heartbreak for the Lockhart couple. Phone calls from friends to express grief have brought tears, not solace as the Armstrongs await word

from Houston detectives that Doris' slayer has at last been apprehended.

Although their daughter is gone, the impressions she left on the lives of her parents remain strong. Perhaps, that is why the hurt is so great.

"She loved people," said Mrs. Armstrong. "Her face was beautiful. She saw a love of life and a love of art and a love of people. She loved music, art, dancing, photography... anything beautiful."

Doris' father recalled a poem she had written once.

"I found it written inside her car. It said 'The sky is beautiful for everyone to love.' She always enjoyed her sun roof because she could look up and see the sky," he said.

Armstrong was training his daughter to fill his shoes in the beauty supply business he had built up. Not long after Doris' death came news of another tragedy, the death of Armstrong's long-time associate, Dean McCall.

"She was a perfect daughter to me," Armstrong said.

Doris' aunt, Maxine Goodman, said, "I never saw Doris unless she was happy."

Doris was born on Jan. 13, 1952. She was the second oldest of the four Armstrong girls. Linda Fay is the oldest and the twins, Palma Zell and Pamela Sue, came after Doris.

Her early childhood was spent much like her later college career: on the road. The Armstrongs resided in Corpus Christi until 1963 and then moved to Austin in 1969. Eventually they settled

into a quiet corner of Lockhart where Doris completed her high school education in 1971, placing in the top 10 percent of her class.

Doris then spent a year each at both Texas Christian University and then Southwest Texas State. But it was hard to keep Doris in one place for very long, and in 1973 she began a two-year stay at the University of Texas.

Doris was like the proverbial rolling stone, however. In 1976 she transferred to the University of Houston where she majored in office supervision. She obtained a bachelor's degree in Business Technology in 1977 and later managed to obtain a license as a certified industrial audiometric technician from SMU.

"We thought she would never get out of school because she changed her majors so much," Mrs. Armstrong said.

While still in college, Doris worked as a professional model for the Cover Girl agency in Houston, a role her 5-3, 96-pound frame seemed suited for. Her curly blonde tresses and disarming blue eyes made her the welcome subject of fashion photographers.

Although highly fashion conscious, Doris didn't stay with modeling. She later was employed by Biological Testing Inc. in Houston, a firm which studied environmental factors, such as noise levels, in modern industrial plants.

While she changed colleges and jobs frequently, Doris never differed in her affection for the arts. She was an accomplished artisan who could weave the

vitality of life into her work. She enjoyed landscape painting, pottery and jewelry making.

Doris often told her aunt that her most cherished goal was to surpass her mother in artistic skill. Creation seemed to be the guiding force in her life.

Her departure leaves an emptiness for the Armstrongs much larger than her former bedroom in their home, which now houses some of Doris' artwork. The hanging baskets, paintings and weavings, which previously brought joy, now contain grimness and despair.

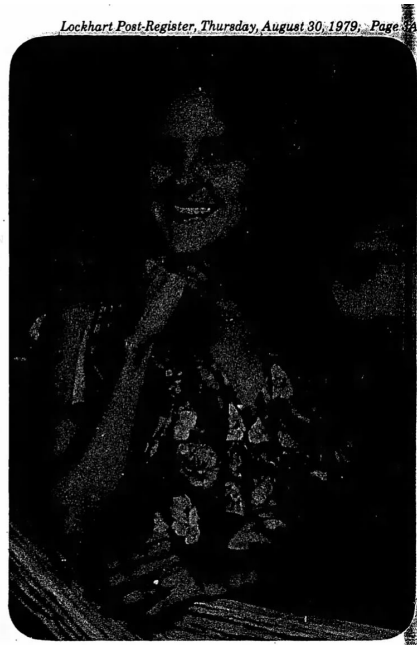
"To lose them is enough, but to not know who did it makes it even worse," said Mrs. Armstrong.

Houston police keep in contact with the Armstrongs and every time the telephone rings it arouses hope that the killer has been subdued. For the moment, their emotions are strained by a desire for justice and a sense of hopelessness, a feeling that there is nothing they can do to help erase the nightmarish events which took their daughter's life.

The police are working on "a few hot leads," said Armstrong, but they have arrested no suspects. The murderer is believed connected in the stabbing deaths of three other Houston women as well.

Armstrong and his wife said their daughter's life blossomed much like her artwork; slowly, painstakingly, and eventually beautiful.

However, he did find one fault in Doris and it may have proved to be a fatal one. "She trusted too much."



DORIS LYNN ARMSTRONG