

Staten Island Adventure

Rand convicted, but mysteries remain

By DEAN C. BALSAMINI

ADVANCE STAFF WRITER

The conviction of Andre Rand of the abduction of 12-year-old Jennifer Schweiger may close the book on that case, but questions remain about his possible role in the disappearance of three other Staten Island children.

Was the 43-year-old drifter also responsible for the disappearances of Holly Ann Hughes, Alice Pereira and Tiahese Jackson?

Detectives are puzzling over more than two dozen cases of murdered or missing persons, which include those of the three Island girls.

"Those cases are active. They will never close them," said a police detective, who asked to remain anonymous. "That may sound like a cliché, but it's

true."

Investigators have singled out the three girls' cases due to the common thread running through each disappearance: Rand's name has turned up in each case, and he was somehow placed in the area at the time each girl disappeared.

Many of the connections may be coincidental or circumstantial, but one mother said Rand's conviction will "allow her to sleep at night."

Missing: Alice Pereira

Alice Pereira has been missing for 16 years. Alice was 5 when she vanished from a park near her New Dorp home in 1972. Rand worked as a painter in the Tysens Park Apartments, the girl's residence at the time of her disappearance. The afternoon she disappeared, Alice was playing

with friends in front of her home at 675 Tysens Lane, New Dorp. She disappeared minutes later. Police spoke to Alice's friends, but the children gave contradictory accounts of which direction Alice had gone.

Her disappearance touched off an extensive police investigation that included the FBI and stretched to Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic in the Caribbean. The Peretras have relatives in Puerto Rico and authorities believed Alice might be living with family.

Police found nothing.

On Jan. 21, 1972, Rand was conditionally released from prison after serving approximately 17 months on a sex abuse charge. He had been convicted of sexually attacking a 9-year-old girl in May 1969.

Alice vanished July 7, 1972.

Following her disappearance police questioned the Tysens Park maintenance crew. Rand was among those questioned.

"It was if the ground had opened up and swallowed her," a veteran detective said during the investigation.

Alice's parents are divorced, but 16 years later her grandmother, Frances Dendararena, still resides in the Tysens Park apartment where the little girl with pigtails once lived. The telephone number remains the same. Mrs. Dendararena still waits for a call from her granddaughter.

Missing: Holly Ann Hughes

The "beautiful little girl" from Port Richmond

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Andre Rand
Questions remain

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disappeared July 15, 1981, nearly nine years to the day that Alice Periera vanished.

Holly Ann disappeared at 9:30 p.m. while on her way to a delicatessen near her home at 90 Park Ave. Rand reportedly visited his aunt on the day Holly Ann disappeared. The aunt lived in a building that shared an entrance way with Holly Ann's home.

Detectives brought up Rand's name early in the investigation, according to Holly Ann's grandparents, Helen and Sven Cederholm.

A member of the girl's family had said Rand was seen talking with the child earlier in the day. Police reported the girl had been spotted speaking with a man in a Volkswagen that day. Rand was reportedly seen driving a green Volkswagen that same day.

Police said Rand was questioned extensively regarding the girl's disappearance, but they released him for lack of evidence.

The girl's mother, also named Holly Ann Hughes, attended the Rand trial every day, except for the day of the verdict. She has no doubt who took her child.

"Holly Ann's the reason why she was there," said Fran Auriti, a member of the Friends of Jennifer, the volunteer group that eventually found Jennifer Schweiger's body. "If he (Rand) was convicted, she

would feel Holly Ann, along with Jennifer, can now rest in peace."

Missing: Tiahese Jackson

Tiahese has not been seen or heard from since 1983, after leaving her home, the Conca D'Oro Hotel in Mariners Harbor.

Early that year, Rand was arrested and convicted for another child-related crime. On Jan. 10 he took 11 children on an unauthorized bus trip to Newark Airport and was arrested upon returning to Staten Island five hours later.

Two months later Rand was convicted of unlawful imprisonment, charges resulting from the bus trip. He was released from prison Aug. 1 after serving five months of a 10-month sentence.

On the night of Aug. 13, less than two weeks after Rand had been released, 10-year-old Tiahese Jackson disappeared while running an errand. She was on her way to the Crown Supermarket at 933 Richmond Ave.

During a published interview last year, Tiahese's mother Gwendolyn said she had seen a man matching Rand's description "who used to hang around the hotel and the lot across the street.

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Police questioned Rand three days after the girl's

disappearance. The drifter was spotted by detectives
while he was walking out of the Baron Hirsch
Cemetery, where Rand had been known to have a
campsite. The Conca D'Oro Hotel is located less than
a half mile from the cemetery.

Again, due to lack of evidence and witnesses in
Tiahese's case, police were unable to file charges
against Rand.

If the intense manhunt for Jennifer Schweiger's
abductor opened old wounds for the families of the
other missing children, the arrest and subsequent
conviction of Rand brought some consolation.

"I think the families all got a certain amount of
satisfaction (from the verdict)," said Donna Cutugno
of the Friends of Jennifer. "Holly Ann's mother
thinks he did it. This conviction really helped ease
the pain."

"We all feel that it took a Down's syndrome child
to catch up to Andre Rand," Mrs. Auriti said, in
reference to the exhaustive search that followed.

"Although we may never find the other children, I
hope their families are all resting comfortably now.
If he did harm these other kids, I hope he does feel
remorse enough for these other parents (to talk). All
they want to do is put these other fears to rest."