

How to Catch A Criminal:

THESE BOOTS WERE MADE FOR MURDER

This month, a strange find at a crime scene proves invaluable decades later.

By Brendan Rodela

During a homicide investigation, you can expect crime scene investigators to pore over the scene for hours and hours identifying, photographing and collecting anything that might be related to the crime. Be it a fingerprint, a drop of blood, clothing, potential weapons, cellphones, scraps of paper or just about anything else. It is always better to be cautious and take everything, even if it doesn't matter later. Investigators simply can't risk leaving anything behind, because it may be crucial later, and you only have one chance to process a crime scene. There is no way of knowing how a case will play out, or what evidence left behind could end up being a linchpin for the defense. On the other hand, there is no way of knowing what seemingly unimportant collected item could become the smoking gun for the prosecution.

On Oct. 30, 1984, while the rest of Torrance, California, made last-minute preparations for their Halloween celebrations, 21-year-old Robin Hoynes was burning the midnight oil. She was working the late shift as a manager

at Kentucky Fried Chicken. Though Robin was the daytime manager, she had swapped shifts with a friend so she could enjoy a date with a new boyfriend. Part of Robin's duties closing the restaurant that night included counting the money from the register and securing it in the safe before she went home. Robin took her job seriously and always made sure the doors were locked before she began handling the cash after hours. When the other manager working that evening was leaving, Robin was finishing up the count and presumably wouldn't be far behind him. On Halloween morning, the coworker Robin swapped hours with arrived for the morning shift to find a scene straight from a horror movie. Unfortunately, this gruesome sight wasn't the work of makeup and costumes. Robin Hoynes was face down in the backroom, in a pool of blood, with multiple stab and slash wounds to her back and neck.

Robin's murder initially looked like a robbery, and whoever came for the money didn't want any living witnesses. Oddly, there was no sign of forced entry, which means Robin would have had to unlock the doors while

she was counting the cash drawer. Given the kind of person Robin was, nobody was going to be allowed near the money she was responsible for. Sure enough, a check of the restaurant's safe determined all the money was accounted for. Robin had the forethought to secure the money before letting the robber inside. The lock on the safe had been scraped, but the robber gave up on trying to force it open before fleeing the scene. The leading theory was that someone Robin knew had come to the door, and she locked up the money before letting them in. When the acquaintance turned robber realized Robin would be able to identify them if they tried anything, they attacked, stabbing her twice in the back and slicing her throat. This

also accounted for the lack of defensive wounds or signs of a struggle. Robin never thought this person would do her any harm. However, the halfhearted attempt to break into the safe after going through the trouble of killing Robin was a bit baffling. There was another thing about this scene that puzzled investigators. While processing the crime scene, they came across a small misshapen piece of foam rubber lying near Robin's body. There was nothing around the restaurant that the foam could have fallen off, meaning whatever object the foam came from was brought with the killer, or taken with them when they left. Investigators thought perhaps it came from a backpack's lining or a briefcase's handle.