

McMenamin case remains open

By **JOSH FUNK**
Senior Reporter

Back to square one.

The ordeal began anew last month for Lincoln Police and the family and friends of Martina McMenamin after new DNA evidence cleared the man accused of brutally stabbing McMenamin, then a UNL sophomore, on July 25, 1995.

McMenamin's roommate, Sarah Bognich, found her lying in a pool of blood in their south Lincoln apartment.

Almost a year after the crime, police arrested a suspect in June 1996 on suspicion of murder, and preliminary DNA testing matched his blood to a blond hair found at the scene.

The past two years have been filled with preliminary hearings and competency evaluations to prepare for trial.

But new DNA test results cleared the suspect, and he was released in mid-July.

Now, a month later, McMenamin's friends and family want to keep the case in the public eye in the hope that new evidence may surface, and the killer will be found.

"We want people to know we are not going to let Tina's (Martina's) case die," Lou Friend, a friend of the family, said.

McMenamin and Bognich

baby-sat Friend's children for two years before the murder.

Friend said the hardest part of dealing with the murder was explaining to her kids why someone would do this.

McMenamin's family has established scholarships in her name at both Omaha's Gross High School and UNL.

The Tina McMenamin fund has also been established through NBC Bank, 1248 O St., to help pay for the murder investigation. Donations can be sent to the bank.

After the McMenamin case is solved, any remaining money will help pay for other murder investigations in Lincoln, Friend said.

As part of the investigation, police established a small database of DNA samples from people connected to the case to rule them out as suspects.

With nine murders in 1998 alone, Lincoln Police must concentrate their funds on more current cases, Friend said.

Bognich and Friend released a video tape to local news media Tuesday of McMenamin and some friends at a Husker football game.

McMenamin, Bognich and the others donned their Husker red, painted their faces and went to Memorial Stadium to celebrate the team.

Their spirit landed them on camera and later a local news-

cast. When Bognich recorded the footage that night it was just for fun. Now it is the only footage Bognich has of McMenamin alive and smiling, she said.

"The tape is one of my favorite things to watch," Bognich said. "To see her alive brings back memories."

McMenamin's mother, Bernadette, still vividly remembers how Tina followed the Huskers that year to their first National Championship in the '90s.

Tina never saw the second championship.

"I don't want anybody to forget her (Tina)," Bernadette McMenamin said. "And if anything can be done to help the police, that would be great."

Bognich said she wants the public to see McMenamin, the person, not the victim.

"We hope the public remembers something when they see the tape," Bognich said.

Crimestoppers is offering a reward of \$15,000 for information leading to an arrest.

At this point all those involved want the investigation to move along quickly so they can continue with their lives.

If the person who did this is still out there, Friend said, she believed it would happen again.

"Remember that this could have been anybody - anybody's daughter, any college student."

Rebels, government fight for loyalty in Congo

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week.

Uganda and Rwanda were major backers of Kabila when he ousted longtime dictator Mobutu Sese Seko last year. But they have been angered by the Congolese president's failure to contain attacks on their territory by renegade groups based in eastern Congo.

With the fighting in remote areas inaccessible to journalists, independent confirmation of battlefield developments is next to impossible. The public is largely at the mercy of state- and rebel-controlled news.

To believe their reports, however, both sides control the strategic town of Bukavu in the east, both are advancing in the west near the Atlantic coastline.

Rebel commander Jean-Pierre Ondekane in the eastern city of Goma says he has 60,000 troops, the support of the people and an unstoppable drive to oust Kabila.

For Kabila, the war of words may be as important to his survival as the war on the ground. Increasingly criticized at home since he took power, Kabila is maneuvering to win the support of the people through patriotic appeals and nationalist fervor.

Using phrases like "savage

aggression" and "premeditated attacks" to characterize Rwanda, Kabila is painting a picture of Congo as victim.

"Rwandan leaders are holding Congo as a colony," Kabila says in an often repeated broadcast on state television and radio. "They now think of conquering this country to subjugate your independence as a sovereign people."

In Kinshasa, Kabila's words seem to be having the desired effect.

Simmering anger at Kabila over economic stagnation and mass unemployment, a crack-down on dissent and unfulfilled promises of democracy seem to have been set aside, while the capital apparently rallies to his support.


On a state television talk show, whose guests are a panel of local police officers, one speaker describes Rwanda as "a disobedient dog."

But for all Kabila's readiness to demonize Rwanda, the rebellion may be traceable to his own ineffectiveness. Congo's continued economic malaise and inequity have created widespread resentment in the country. On top of that, he stands accused of doing little to increase security in Congo's turbulent eastern border region.

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