

Violence Claims Mother

continued ▲ from Front

just hung up the phone with her before the shootings.

"She said, 'Mom, I'm gonna have a smoke,' and then that was it," Perlia said.

Neighbors said they heard more than a dozen shots ring out just before 10 p.m.

Cecilia Banqura, who lives two houses down, said she heard quite a few shots in succession and assumed they were fireworks. A resident of the Humboldt neighborhood for seven years, Banqura said the streets have been quieter in recent years. When she looked outside and saw fire and police vehicles, she assumed there was a medical emergency across the street at the Plaza Apartments, a low-income housing complex with many seniors. It wasn't until she realized how late in the year it was for firecrackers that she realized something was wrong. Her suspicions were confirmed when she saw police putting up yellow tape.

"Those sounds keep coming back to me, 'Pop, pop, pop,'" Banqura said. "It's so sad, honestly. We don't know why this happened and we are all going to listen to what the police have to say."

So far police have released very little information. Upon arrival at the scene officers reported hearing at least one additional shot and assumed it was intended for them.

They found Bell dead and her husband on the ground in pain.

Bullets had shot through the porch's wooden railings into the walls of the house. Armed with assault rifles, police blocked traffic and searched streets and yards for several city blocks. Portland Community College, which is less than a block away from the scene, locked down the Cascade campus to help police and protect students and staff.

Police think a shooter, or possibly two, approached the house from the south side of the house along Jessup. They found Milhouse down the street and detained several others, but would not confirm anyone as a suspect.

Milhouse is on probation and has an extensive record of drug charges and for being a felon in possession of a firearm. Police are investigating whether the shots that killed Bell and critically injured her husband may have been intended for other acquaintances of the couple.

They say there is no apparent connection between this shooting and the two earlier homicide victims - Deaustin V. Duckett, 20, who was found dead in a car in Northeast Graham Street on Nov. 15 and Domingo Lee Gonzales, 25, who was shot dead early Sunday, Nov. 17 outside an after-hours party house on Northeast 22nd Avenue.

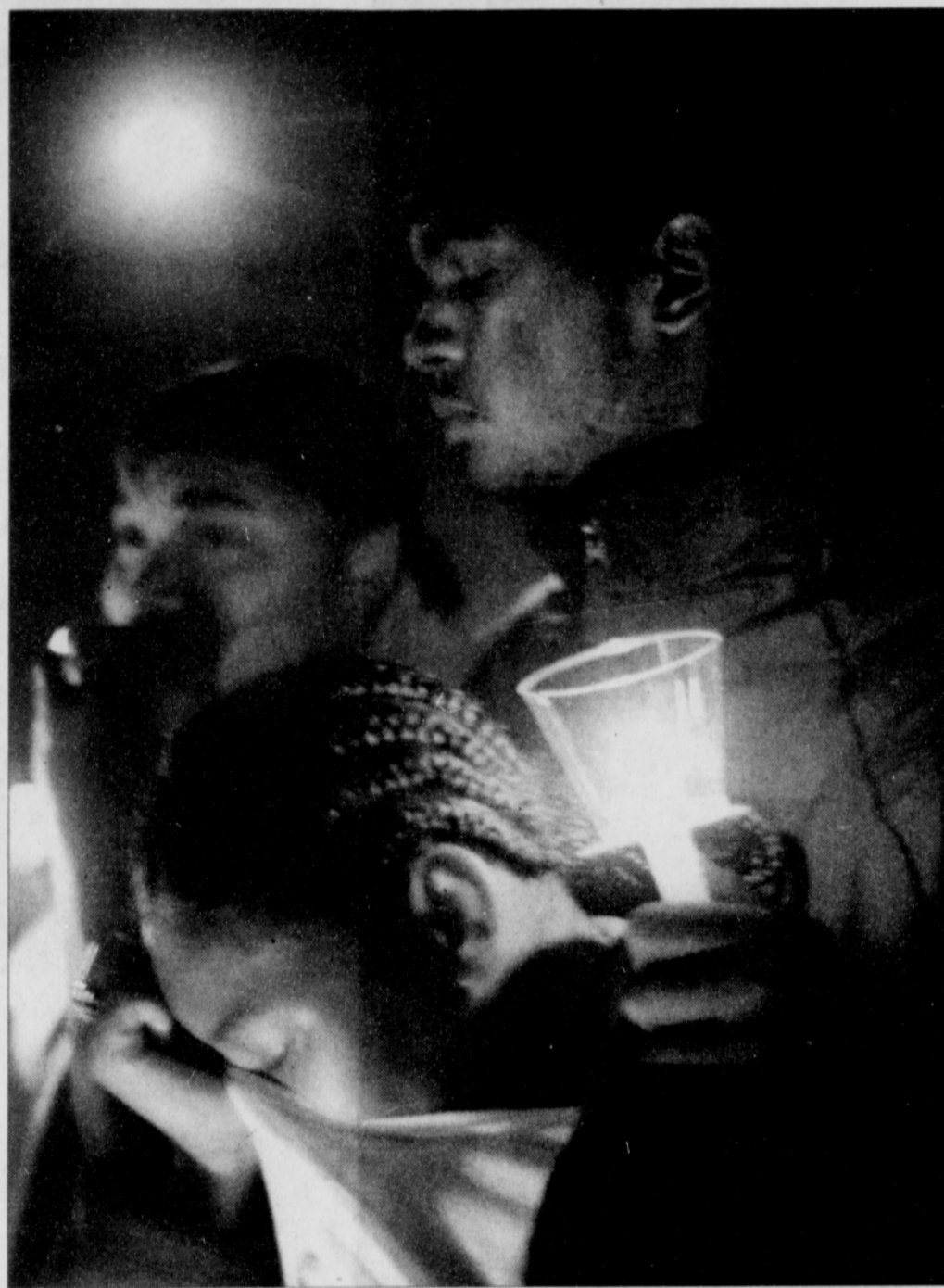
Investigators say Duckett and Gonzales had prior gang connections and suspect that their killings are potentially gang related.

But friends, family and neighbors of Bell and James said the young couple had no involvement with gang life. Banqura said they were quiet neighbors with children who often played in front of her house. A man in the neighborhood said the couple always waved and said hi when he stopped by to visit his mother in the apartments across the street.

"That girl had no reason to die," another neighbor said. "The only thing she ever worried about was getting to her job on time or getting home to her kids."

James was a custodian at Oregon Health Science University and Bell was a medical biller at Legacy Good Samaritan Hospital and Medical Center. She formerly served as assistant manager for the Plaza Apartments.

"I think if Asia was a gang member, it would be easier for me to take this," her mother Perlia said. "If that was her lifestyle, maybe I could understand. But that wasn't the way she was. She worked and she came home. They were married, you don't find a lot of young people making



More than 75 friends, family and neighbors of Asia Bell gathered for a candlelight vigil Saturday night at the house she was shot and killed. They expressed mixed emotions of anger, sadness and pain.

PHOTO BY DAVID PLECHL/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

lies. Perlia is caring for her four grandchildren, ages 10, 8, 5 and 8 months.

"There is a big void when I look into those kids eyes," she said.

As for the void in her own life, Perlia said she is holding up as well as she can. She said she tries to smile and keep her sense of humor through it all because that is what her daughter would have wanted.

"She was my first child, my only daughter and my best friend," Perlia said. "I was blessed."

A funeral will be held at Allen Temple Church, on the corner of northeast Skidmore and 7th Ave., on Friday, Nov. 29 at 11 a.m. A public visitation will be held at Cox and Cox funeral chapel on Thanksgiving from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m.

that choice anymore."

Friends and family gathered in front of the couple's home on Saturday evening for a candlelight vigil. They decorated the front porch where Bell died with photos of remembrance, candles and mementos. Bell's pastor, Dr. LeRoy Haynes Jr. spoke to a crowd of around 75 people and led attendees in a chant of "Stop the Killing."

He said the shooting caused the tragic and senseless death of a young life and was indicative of the violence in our society.

"This is a problem we have to face," Haynes said. "We have a moral obligation to do what is necessary. Asia is saying, 'Let no other person in this community die and let no other children be motherless.'"

Family members expressed mixed emotions of anger, sadness and pain. Bell's cousin Charlene Menefee said the reality hasn't sunk in yet. She keeps thinking that any minute Bell might walk through the front door.

"I haven't accepted it yet," Menefee said. "She was the best mother to her kids and it's too bad the kids had to witness that."

At least one of Bell's four children were at home at the time of the shooting. Crime victims support groups and crisis response teams have been working around the clock to help the fami-

Remodel Boosts Neighborhood

continued ▲ from Front

creative planning, the 37-year-old store was able to remain open during the extensive renovation, even as virtually every department was demolished and rebuilt to new and modern standards.

The new Pedestrian Plaza, leading to a spacious lobby, welcomes customers into the store. Windows along the front wall and along Ainsworth allow natural light into the store while adding interest and connectivity for pedestrians along walkways.

Extensive landscaping and new building materials provide a refreshing new look for the store. The expansion brings 20 percent more sales area and a larger selection of products in all departments. The new interior décor throughout the store provides afresh, clean and comfortable shopping experience.

The expansion allowed for the addition of several new departments, including full service meat and seafood and a natural foods department. Along with the standard Safeway offerings, the full service delicatessen has been upgraded with a made-to-order sandwich bar, China cuisine and a convenient seating area.

The new full service "from scratch" bakery has a large windows to the exterior where production can be visible to passersby. A new pharmacy has been built with a comfortable waiting room and customer restroom.

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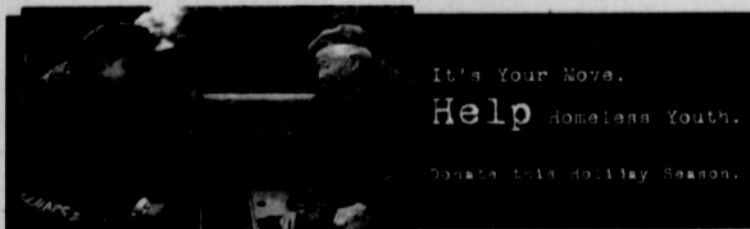
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