

SILENT NO MORE Family of slain cop 'Jimmy' Grimes hires outside expert to help solve 11-year-old case

By [MARCIA GREEN](#), Valley Breeze Editor

CUMBERLAND - There's an urgency police officers bring to the pursuit of cop killers.

In the unsolved, 11-year-old case of Cumberland Det. James Grimes, family members say they feel that's been missing.

Now, after living all these years with only rumors, they say they won't wait silently any longer.

"We're tired of not having information," Marianne Grimes Ezovski, one of "Jimmy" Grimes' sisters, told *The Valley Breeze* this week.

"We're trying to get the public to focus on this case even though it's cold. We're trying to thaw it out, if you will."

Members of this Cumberland family say they are no longer afraid to speak up and demand answers from police officers in Providence, where Grimes was found dead in a parked car, and from local officers whose role in the investigation seems to be blocked.

Says Ezovski, "Cumberland didn't know anything, Providence wouldn't talk. It was too much for my parents, so we just stopped."

Leading the new search for answers is private investigator and former Massachusetts police chief, Thomas Shamshak and his staff.

Shamshak, who headed departments in Somerville, Winthrop and Spencer, specializes in cold and missing persons cases and is a familiar face to cable TV viewers, especially CNN's Nancy Grace show.

He describes himself as "incredulous" that the Grimes case has gone unsolved.

"Somebody killed a cop and that person is still free," he said. "This cold case is begging for resolution."

Two family members contacted Shamshak independently after seeing him on TV discussing a missing persons case.

Why now?

Ezovski says the family just settled both parents at Mount St. Rita Health Centre where each suffers from Alzheimer's disease. Until now, they were reluctant to expose their parents, John and Ellen Grimes, to the public chatter they hope will dislodge new information.

Siblings are a brother, John Grimes of Massachusetts, and two sisters, Mary Ellen Grimes of Cumberland and Ann Marie Grenier of Maine.

Two more, Maureen and Walter, have died.

Known to all as "Jimmy," Grimes was a 1981 graduate of Cumberland High School and 1991 graduate of the University of Rhode Island in criminology.

A popular officer known for his devotion to his work, he was found dead in a rental car parked in a lot at 122 Mathewson St. just past midnight on Monday, Aug. 26, 1996.

Grimes, 33, single, and a member of the Cumberland Police Department for more than five years, was off-duty that Sunday evening after attending a barbecue for the local Fraternal Order of Police.

Several days passed before officials ruled the death a homicide but even then, the cause of death was withheld.

A smattering of subsequent news stories over the years continued to refer to the mystery surrounding his death and investigators' failure to make an arrest.

A Providence police spokesman said at the time that 13 detectives were assigned to the case and that Grimes' death was not considered a random act that should worry downtown Providence visitors.

It was also noted that Grimes had rented a car because his own was in the shop.

The family is not without new evidence that Shamshak says may be more valuable 11 years later thanks to improved technology.

A surveillance camera was posted in the parking lot that evening and family members have

seen a grainy image that they believe may be the suspect.

There's also a partial hand print, they say.

Shamshak says the simple passage of time may be enough to allow someone with information to feel he or she can step forward.

"We'll re-interview people the police spoke to 11 years ago and we'll interview people the police did not speak to, including most members of the Cumberland Police Department.

"We're looking at this with a fresh set of eyes.

"We have the luxury of no pressure," said Shamshak.

Says Shamshak associate Jennifer Dionne, "We want to rattle some cages."

Cumberland's police chief, John Desmarais, was a Central Falls officer when Grimes was killed.

He said this week he and his officers stand ready to assist "in any way we can."

He says he's seen arrests in cases this old.

"For a police officer to die as he did, you want to solve it," he said.

This effort is all about spreading information far and wide.

First step for the family was putting together a Web site, detjamesgrimes.com.

The site features a familiar photo of Grimes, news clippings and memorabilia.

Shamshak, drawn to the case because it involves a "brother" officer in a case he says he had trouble believing, is charging only a small percentage of his usual fee. The family will have hefty laboratory fees to cover and hopes the community will pitch in to support a future fund-raiser.

"I see this as a fallen comrade," said Shamshak. "I was not his police chief but we were brothers.

"The death of a police officer catches the eye of most police officers; the killing of a police officer catches every cop's eye," he said.

"I was incredulous when I heard the initial story," Shamshak said.

The suave, TV-ready Shamshak said, "I enjoy working on investigating challenging and cold cases. And this is a unique challenge when a police officer is slain. As I sat with them it struck a chord with me."

Marianne Evozski, a third-grade teacher at Mercymount Country Day School, says she's felt isolated by the information void for 11 years.

Suggests investigator Dionne, "No one has validated their feelings, they've just patted them on the back and say 'there, there.' It's awful people have been so ignorant.

Marianne says he's told them more about this case in six weeks than they've learned from police officers in 11 years.

Adds Dionne, "It's like no one talks about it, almost taboo. It an unusual atmosphere. Very weird."

News reports always note that Grimes was off duty that night in Providence but the family is not so sure.

Their brother, say the siblings, had specifically told his commander, while at the FOP party, that he was excited about having information about a new informant.

Says Shamshak, "Detectives are paid for 40 hours a week but typically log 70 to 80 hours. People can't understand that level of commitment that goes with being a detective. They live it and breathe it 24 hours a day.

"Detective Grimes was a go-getter," he said.

Ezovski's husband, Keith, was a friend of the family long before marrying Marianne a year ago.

"He was always 'Jimmy the Cop,'" he said.

Marianne Ezovski jokes, "I used to get grounded by my brother, not my parents, my brother."

Says Shamshak, "People we've interviewed are as emotional today as the day it occurred 11 years ago. This is a wound that never healed."

