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## WHERE IS BRIAN KENT MARTIN?

By MARGARET BAKER

BILOXI For the past 10 years, Robyn Martin has kept in constant contact with South Mississippi authorities investigating the disappearance of her son.

Shes made repeated trips to coastal cities over the years, passing out pictures of her missing son, Brian Kent Martin, to anyone she could find.

I have ridden the streets asking about him, and Ive gone to bars to see if I could find him, said Robyn Martin, a Georgia resident. I think I hit every bar on the (U.S. 90) strip, just about, after this happened and asked people if they knew of him. Nobody ever said anything. The last time I saw him was at his brothers graduation in May 2000.

Biloxi police crime-scene investigator Mike Manna is taking another look at the case, which as baffled authorities since Martins disappearance at the age of 24.

Martin, Manna believes, is likely dead, the victim of a homicide. Manna is relaunching the investigation to see what leads come up. Hes hoping someone who knew Martin will come forward with information.

We know there has been no activity on his drivers license and any other employment history since the time he was reported missing, Manna said. We believe him to either be deceased or out of the country, but hes definitely not the type to join the Foreign Legion. He didnt have passport, either. We dont think he left the country at all.

Martin is listed as a missing and endangered adult on the National Center for Missing Adults website. The report indicates Martin disappeared in December 2000, though Biloxi police investigators believe he went missing months earlier, possibly some time over the summer after he attended his brothers graduation.

Little to go on

All we know is the kid lived here, Manna said. In April 1999, I actually wrote this kid some tickets. I believe it was for reckless driving and speeding.

From what Ive been able to gather, it looks like he bumped around from friend to friends houses. His last known address was supposed to be with a friend in Saucier at an address we havent been able to find. Im still looking into it.

Martins sister, Brandi Watson, feels in her heart her brother is dead, though her mother is still holding out hope he will be found alive someday.

As a mother, I think I'd keep hoping and praying that he was alive, Watson said. But we were very close. Brian loved his family very much. For him to just up and disappear off the face of this earth doesn't make sense. I would love to see him again, but in my heart I don't feel like it will ever happen on this earth. I love him. I miss him, but I don't believe he's alive. I think he got mixed in with the wrong crowd somehow and something happened.

A big man

At 6 feet tall and 240 pounds, Martin always was able to take on just about anybody in a fist fight, and he often did.

In his early years, his sister said, he was taunted for misbehavior and less-than-average grades in school; she said he acted out of frustration because he didn't know what was wrong with him. Only later did he learn he was suffering from dyslexia.

I always felt like he was cheated, early on in life, Watson said. Nobody knew for a long time what was wrong with him, so he wasn't treated very well.

Martin quit high school, and by the age of 17 he'd joined a street gang in his home state of Georgia. The gang's symbol was branded on his arm.

Brian always was kinda the outcast, his mother said. He felt like he was the black sheep, so I guess he ended up in the gang because he was looking for love in all the wrong places. It got to the point where his gang family meant more to him than his own family.

Ganged up on

Martin's parents made him move out of their home during that time because they feared his activity would have a negative impact on his three siblings.

His relationship with the gang ended, his mother said, after other gang members beat him so severely he nearly died. A fellow gang member, his mother said, secretly nursed Martin until she was able to call his family to come get him without jeopardizing her own safety.

They (apparently) beat him because he refused to commit murder, his mother said. That's what the girl told us. His head had been split open. After that, we told him he had to fly right

The family left Georgia to live in South Mississippi in summer 1997. Martin's father was a brick mason then, also working in the landscaping business, and his son served as his laborer while his father also tried to teach him the trade.

The family moved in summer 1999, when Martin's parents separated and later divorced. Martin moved with his siblings to Georgia with their mother, though a short time later he returned to

South Mississippi, where he ended up mostly staying with friends, bumping around from home to home.

#### A friend remembers

Erick J. Majano, now a member of the Army National Guard and stationed in El Paso, Texas, considered Martin a friend, though he'd lost touch with him.

Majano said he met Martin at Barracudas, a former beachfront club in Biloxi that had changed hands before Hurricane Katrina destroyed the building in 2005.

Majano had a friend working as a disc jockey there; he said Martin was a bouncer there, serving mostly in a bodyguard-type capacity.

The two, he said, eventually started clubbing together. I called him Big Brian, he said. He was a pretty mellow guy. Really, he was like a big teddy bear, but if anything happened, he was there to back you up.

Martin, Majano said, usually broke up fights at the club, though he said the two of them also got into a few fights of their own at Studio 90, another U.S. 90 club.

I remember one time at Studio 90 I was dancing with some girl and this guy kept bumping into me, Majano said. I was like, What's the problem? I remember Brian jumped in and just popped this guy in the face, and there was this big fight. We took it outside, and then we left.

He said his friend also ended up in the middle of a few fights at Barracudas while trying to break up whatever drunken brawl was going on at the time. There was a fight, Majano said, just about every week there.

When the pair wasn't clubbing, they'd usually get together to grill or go to the beach to throw the football. Martin often stayed at a Biloxi home Majano rented at the time.

I love to cook, Majano said. So if I cooked, he would always be the first in line. If I needed something, he would go and get whatever I needed.

#### Losing touch

Majano said not long after he joined the Army National Guard around March 2000, he lost touch with Martin. In one of his last conversations with Martin, he said, he tried to encourage him to talk to an Army recruiter. Martin, he said, wasn't interested, telling him he'd probably return to Georgia.

I mentioned something about me possibly going to this place in Georgia some time, Majano said. I thought maybe wed meet up. I didnt know at the time how this military thing would work out. When I joined I kinda went on and did the military thing.

Majano said he had no idea his old friend was missing until the Sun Herald contacted him on the job in Texas.

Martins family is hoping someone will remember something about him that could help authorities find their loved one, dead or alive.

There is not a day that goes by that I dont think about him, Robyn Martin said. There are nights I wake up with panic attacks thinking something happened to him. We just want to find him. We just want closure.

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Cold Case: What Happened to Brian Kent Martin?

Posted: Feb 28, 2011 2:48 PM CST

Updated: Feb 28, 2011 9:36 PM CST

By A.J. Giardina - bio | email

BILOXI, MS (WLOX) - What happened to Brian Martin? No one really knows. Biloxi investigator Mike Manna took over the case in 2005.

"Missing adults are hard to deal with because of the fact that we don't treat them the same as a missing child," Manna stated.

Martin was 20 years old when he and his family moved from Atlanta to the Mississippi Gulf Coast in 1997.

Manna said, "He had gotten into trouble in Georgia and they brought him here to try and clean up his act. The family stayed for about a year, a year-and-a-half. The family moved back to Georgia and Brian stayed behind."

Robyn Martin, Brian's mom, told me over the telephone that her son had a big heart and a quick temper. She said you didn't want to cross the construction worker who stood 6-feet-1 inch tall, and weighed between 240 to 250 pounds.

Martin was living in the Lexington Apartments off Pass Road in Biloxi.

Investigator Manna says something happened and the end result apparently wasn't good.

"He was a clubber, a night life type person," Manna said. "So he was out in the community a lot. And sometime in December of 2001 he disappeared."

Brian Martin hung out at South Beach nightclub in Biloxi. The building was destroyed by Hurricane Katrina and is no longer standing.

Manna said Brian also spent time at the Biloxi Bombay Bicycle Club and had friends in Pascagoula.

"At this point in time I do believe there is some kind of foul play involved with his disappearance," Manna stated. "I don't think that he was one that would have up and wanted to disappear."

Martin's Mom says her daughter was the last family member to actually speak with him, in March of 2001. She wanted to know if her brother was going to attend her wedding in Tennessee and he said, "No." When asked how he was doing, he said, "I do what I have to to survive."

Months went by and Robyn was unable to get in touch with her son. She traveled to Biloxi and Brian was no where to be found.

On September 4, 2001, the mother of Brian Martin filed a missing persons report with the Biloxi Police Department.

Investigator Manna said since Martin didn't have any type of transportation, he relied on his friends and roommates to get around.

"If they left a place or location, he was right there with whoever was driving. He never stayed at any location by himself without some type of vehicle available. But being the fact that he relied on everybody for transportation, there's got to be people out there that know him," Manna said.

On December 30, 2000 records show that Martin went to a pawn shop in Biloxi and sold a Nintendo game. The Biloxi Police Department has the pawn ticket.

Investigators say that's one of the few pieces of evidence they have. Another is a photo of Martin with an unidentified female.

Manna said he needs help from the public.

"I would like for anybody who had any contact or who knew Brian, give us a call to give us any information that we could possibly use to find out his location, where he may be or any information, if there was foul play involved, to tell us something that we could further this investigation."

Martin's mother wants closure. She's hoping someone on the coast can cast away the clouds of uncertainty, and solve this missing case.

If anyone has information to the whereabouts of Brian Martin, call the Biloxi Police Department at (228) 435-6112.

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