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In Altadena, radicals just ordinary guys

Residents say Ray Boudreaux and Henry Jones, held in the '71 slaying of a San Francisco police officer, were good neighbors.

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In the seven years since the San Francisco Police Department reopened its investigation into the 1971 slaying of Sgt. John V. Young, two of the suspects in the slaying hardly shunned the limelight.?

Ray Boudreaux and Henry Jones became fixtures on the left-wing activist circuit, touring the nation to denounce the Police Department's tactics and gaining high-profile allies such as actor Danny Glover and Harvard professor Charles Ogletree. They were subjects of two independent documentaries, one about their travails with the police and another about the history of the Black Panthers in Los Angeles.?

But in Altadena, the hillside community of 42,000 that both men called home, there was little sense that the two former Black Panthers were anything other than ordinary men.?

Jones, known as "Hank," is a real estate appraiser, whom neighbors often would see barbecuing food and participating in family gatherings.

His 80-year-old next-door neighbor cried Wednesday when she heard of his arrest, saying that the 71-year-old was the type of man who changed her lightbulbs, kept her garden in shape and watched out for her.

Other neighbors said they saw a typical family at the Jones house ? including a young granddaughter who visited frequently ? not a murder suspect.?

"The blinds are always open," said another neighbor, Marianne Bates, who lives a few houses down from Jones and his wife, Annie. "Nothing about their lifestyle seems reclusive in any way."?

Boudreaux, an electrician for Los Angeles County, earned extra money by helping neighbors with electrical jobs. His wife, Phyllis, a retired social worker, sold homemade sweet potato pies to neighbors for \$10 each.

Boudreaux, 64, was a regular at Ms. Dragon Print & Copy in Altadena, where he printed thousands of fliers for political events.?

Recently, he had made copies of a pamphlet titled "Torture Methods Similar to Guantanamo and Abu Ghraib used against members of Black Panther Party."

Despite the pamphlet's serious topic, owner Debbie Collins described Boudreaux as soft-spoken and friendly.

"He's a real sweet guy," she said. "Ray just had a nice peacefulness about him. He was very calm."?

On Wednesday, a stack of fliers sat at the store, waiting for Boudreaux to pick them up.

"I called Monday afternoon to say they were finished. His wife said, 'I'll tell him to stop by and pick them up

tomorrow.' I talked with him Monday night, and he said, 'I'm really tired. Can I come in tomorrow? I get off at 3:30 from work.' I kept thinking he was going to come in."

Boudreaux and Jones were among eight people arrested Tuesday in connection with Young's slaying. Their arraignments are expected soon, and their attorneys said they would plead not guilty.

Ironically, both men lived only a mile or so from Emily Harris, a former member of the 1970s radical group the Symbionese Liberation Army. Harris lived openly in Altadena for nearly 20 years before being arrested in 2002 in connection with the 1975 slaying of a Sacramento-area church volunteer.

Altadena, an unincorporated county area, has a long history of racial integration and a live-and-let-live attitude. It also is where former Black Panther and writer Eldridge Cleaver was buried after his death in 1998.

"I always say that it's all artists and soreheads," said novelist Michelle Huneven, an Altadena native. "So we don't get sidewalks, we don't get incorporated. We don't have parking meters. It's quiet, it's peaceful ? it's just kind of low-profile up here."?

Boudreaux, Jones and three other men were first identified as potential suspects in Young's slaying in 1973, but little came of that investigation.

On the night of Young's killing, four young black men strode into San Francisco's Ingleside police station.

As the officer stood behind bulletproof glass at the visitor's window, one of the men stuck a 12-gauge shotgun in the speaking hole and fired. The buckshot caught Young in the upper body. A female office clerk was struck in the arm but was not seriously wounded.?

In 1975, three suspects ? not Boudreaux or Jones ? were charged with the shooting. A judge dismissed the case, ruling that evidence had been gained through torture. An attorney who represented one man said police in New Orleans had used cattle prods and electrodes to extract a confession.?

Authorities said the probe into Young's death was reopened in 1999, after "advances in forensic science led to new evidence."

But it wasn't until 2005, when state prosecutors convened two grand juries in San Francisco, that the lives of the two Altadena men changed dramatically.

They refused to testify before the grand juries, earning jail time and instant credentials among activists who had long decried government investigation tactics.?

They joined forces with some of those activists, including representatives from the animal- and Earth-liberation movements.?

At forums from Washington, D.C., to the Bay Area, the men shared stages with Glover, Ogletree and others. They equated the police tactics with methods of repression used at Abu Ghraib prison, and with provisions of the U.S. Patriot Act.?

At a news conference in Washington, Boudreaux said that after the 9/11 attack, he knew that the investigation would be reopened and that the tactics would begin again.?

"Once upon a time, they called me a terrorist too," he said.?

After their 2005 arrests, the men helped form their own advocacy group, Committee for Defense of Human Rights.?

Jones told the Washington audience in late 2005 that the committee's goal was "to educate, inform and try to move people to action against the policies that are in effect in the country today?. The same fear climate, the same tactics that were going on in the '60s are prevalent today."

Despite Boudreaux and Jones' activism, many neighbors said they simply saw two men who worked hard and enjoyed their families. Boudreaux worked for several years as an electrician at Martin Luther King Jr./Drew Medical Center in Willowbrook, where co-worker Joe Diaz described him as well-liked and "very down to earth." He more recently worked at a county building in downtown Los Angeles.?

At Ms. Dragon Print & Copy in Altadena on Wednesday, Collins showed off the flier for the Committee for Defense of Human Rights, which Boudreaux had brought in to be printed.?

"I guess he's not going to come in today, either," she said. "Maybe his wife needs to get these to get him out."

In the flier, Boudreaux is quoted on his years since Young's slaying.?

"For the last 25 years, I've lived a pretty peaceful and a quiet life," he writes. "My politics are still the same. It's just that I'm not active. People come to see me sometimes as a peacemaker. And all of that has to do with all of my experience."

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