

# The Metro Section

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MATTHEW PURDY/Our Towns

## *That 70's Show in Connecticut, Sadly Absurd and Full of Extras*

NORWALK, Conn.

**T**HE Martha Moxley murder has already inspired a novel, a miniseries, two nonfiction books and a generation of speculation. The only thing left to do was to hold a trial.

"What's this?" a man asked about the commotion in Courtroom C on Wednesday.

"Skakel trial, Kennedy cousin," said a tall man with brushed-back hair who looked strikingly like Mark Fuhrman, the antihero of another unsolved murder — Nicole Brown Simpson's, O.J.'s wife.

Mr. Fuhrman it was. A former Los Angeles detective, he wrote a book in 1998 that fingered Michael Skakel, now on trial in the 1975 Moxley murder, and added to the snowball of events that revived the inquiry. He is now a Court TV commentator on a case that is dredging up the past for all involved.

Including Mr. Fuhrman. Outside the courtroom, he was explaining how he believed that the Greenwich police muffed the Moxley case when a local lawyer, Lindy Urso, approached. Mr. Urso said that he was a student in California in 1994 when Ms. Simpson was killed and was staying in Brentwood "the night he slit her throat." He told Mr. Fuhrman that the next morning, while walking a friend's dog, he was sur-

prised that the scene of the crime was so accessible. "The dog was licking blood from the cracks in the sidewalk," Mr. Urso said.

Suddenly, Mr. Fuhrman was back in the Simpson case. No lapse, he assured Mr. Urso, happened on his watch.

Mr. Fuhrman is just another extra in the Moxley case, which evolved from a simple, if horrific, murder into an operatic pageant of tragic characters, overshadowing the memory of the victim herself.

On Oct. 30, 1975, Martha Moxley, 15, blond and popular, was beaten to death outside her parents' home in the most exclusive of Greenwich neighborhoods. The weapon was a six iron that matched golf clubs belonging to the Skakels, who lived in a neighboring manse and are related to the Kennedys.

The club's grip was never found, and investigators never had evidence putting "the club in anybody's hands," said Thomas Keegan, a former Greenwich police chief. Michael Skakel's brother Thomas was once a suspect. So was a live-in Skakel tutor who spent the first few minutes on the stand Thursday slowly explaining his psychiatric condition and the six drugs that control it.

The strongest links to Michael Skakel, who was 15 at the time, are people who said he confessed to the murder while at a school

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### A case that overshadowed the memory of a girl, 15.

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for troubled teenagers in Maine. He denies killing Martha Moxley, but, according to court documents, has told people that on the night of the murder, he was masturbating in a tree on the Moxley property near where the body was later found.

Michael Sherman (the lawyer all Connecticut seems to know as Mickey) says witnesses against his client just want in on the action of the Moxley case — a surprising desire, to be sure. "It's a heck of a show," Mr. Sherman told jurors. "You can't deny that. You have best-selling authors, celebrities, satellite trucks, movies, the Kennedy connection, the works."

Then there's Mickey. In Vanity Fair, Dominick Dunne reports that Mr. Sherman was at Liza Minnelli's wedding in March, "dancing by Michael Jackson's table with a beautiful girl." (Mr. Dunne wrote the novel inspired by

the Moxley case.)

There is talk of Kennedy cameos, but who knows if they'll risk it?

**T**HE case has tainted everyone. Prosecutors say the Skakels impeded the investigation. And the police were accused of showing the Skakels undue deference early on.

Only Martha Moxley has remained as she was. A teenager of the 1970's, living in a favored corner of the world where life was as urgent as the yearbook deadline and as exciting as the crush of the week. Where it was possible to sneak a cigarette or a beer at a home without parents. Where the only danger in life seemed to be, as Martha recorded in her diary, that her mother might keep her home from an Allman Brothers concert. "BUMMER!" she wrote in bubble letters.

Martha's mother, Dorthy, has done what she could over the years to keep the death of her daughter a live issue. She looks at the crowded courthouse and the TV trucks outside. "In a way, they treat me like a minor celebrity," she said, a little shyly. Others in the case may be more comfortable with that treatment, but a mother has to do what's necessary for her children. "I'm just trying my best to get justice for Martha," she said.