

## **Rick Lee Patterson – November 4, 1951-October 21, 1985**

### **School Stunned by Killing**

PAT GILLILAND - Published: Mon, October 28, 1985 12:00 AM – Oklahoman

MOORE For six years, Central Mid-High School was like a home away from home for Rick Patterson. Its teachers and students were his family, his colleagues say.

When the 33-year-old math teacher did not report to work last Monday, people knew something was wrong.

Wednesday, their fears were confirmed. Police identified Patterson as the victim of a shotgun blast to the head.

His body had been found Monday by two hunters in a wooded area near Interstate 40 and Rockwell in Oklahoma City.

While police look for clues to the apparent murder, Patterson's colleagues are groping with what they say is a void at Central Mid-High.

"Rick was the shining part of just about everybody's day. He always had a smile on his face," said Becky Berg, a Central science teacher for seven years.

Principal Gene Burr said Patterson was an exemplary teacher. He also worked as a custodian at Central.

"He was one of those teachers who would do extra things in the classroom to help his students. His classroom was a bright, cheerful place. Kids like to go there," Burr said.

Now, the classroom, with its personal trappings, is hard to visit, said Pam Westbrook, an English teacher at Central for 11 years.

School walls and bulletin boards also display posters with Patterson's creative touch. Most were done on his own time, teachers say.

"Our school is going to go down a notch," said Bill Shoaf, a Central math teacher for five years. "I don't know who can do those things that he had been doing."

Shoaf expects some students' grades to drop, at least temporarily.

"It will be hard for another teacher to follow him," Shoaf said.

Patterson was honored as Central's teacher of the month last spring.

The violent and seemingly random nature of his death is hard to accept, Westbrook said.

"We always said he was a man of no vices. His fun was doing what he did for others at the school," she said.

The Moore Association of Classroom Teachers is attempting to establish a reward to help police obtain information about the slaying.

"We want to find out who was responsible for this senseless act," said Westbrook, association vice president.

Patterson was single. His parents and family lived in Ponca City.

The funeral was Saturday in Ponca City.

"I can't think of how many times he said to us that we were his family," Westbrook said. "It's hard for any of us to believe Rick won't be back."

Shoaf said a tree will be planted at the school in Patterson's memory. A scholarship and math award also are being considered, he said.

## **Suspect Found Guilty in Slaying**

**NOLAN CLAY** - Published: Fri, March 6, 1987 12:00 AM - Oklahoman

A jury Thursday found Mikell Patrick Smith guilty of first-degree murder, but he said afterward, "I ain't killed no schoolteacher."

Jurors Thursday night began deliberations on punishment after hearing an emotional plea from Smith's mother, Levada Casey, 44, of Oklahoma City. She cried, "I don't want my son dead. I want him to live."

Smith, 21, was convicted in the slaying of Moore schoolteacher Rick Lee Patterson despite testimony from a friend that he wasn't present.

Roger James Berget, who pleaded guilty to murder in January, told the Oklahoma County jury during the trial that he alone killed Patterson.

But two witnesses said they heard Smith boast of killing the teacher, and Berget, 26, had told police in August that it was Smith who shot him. Jurors heard a tape recording of Berget's statement.

Smith did not testify.

District Attorney Robert Macy argued both men shot the teacher and Berget now was taking all the blame "to save his buddy." Berget is to be sentenced next week.

Patterson, 33, was shot twice in the head with a 12-gauge shotgun on Oct. 20, 1985, after he was abducted from a parking lot. Berget said Patterson, who taught math for six years at Moore Central Mid-High, was kidnapped for his car.

## **Moore math teacher's murderer is executed**

- AP Wire Service • June 8, 2000 • Tulsa World

McALESTER (AP) -- Roger James Berget was executed early Thursday for the 1985 murder of Moore Central Mid-High math teacher Rick Patterson.

Berget, now 39, and Mikell Smith had carjacked Patterson from an Oklahoma City supermarket parking lot and forced him into the trunk of his car before driving to a deserted area near Interstate 40. There, they ordered him out of the car and shot him.

Berget pleaded guilty to first-degree murder, first-degree burglary and being a convicted felon in possession of a firearm. He also confessed to killing James Meadows in Hughes County near Holdenville.

For his last meal, Berget had two bacon cheeseburgers, a large order of onion rings, an extra large root beer and a pint of plain chocolate ice cream.

None of his family members witnessed his execution, but two attorneys, a legal adviser, an investigator and a spiritual adviser attended for him.

Before Patterson's family traveled from Ponca City to the Oklahoma State Penitentiary to witness the execution, they made sure his grave in Ponca City had fresh flowers on it.

"It's the best-decorated grave there," said Patterson's sister, Diane Newlin.

Newlin, along with Patterson's father, brother, sister-in-law and two nephews, made the trip. Newlin, her brother Lloyd Patterson and their father, Raymond Patterson, witnessed the execution.

The family toured the prison during the afternoon and found it clean and far nicer than they wished.

"They're living in better conditions than some people outside the fence," Lloyd Patterson said of the prisoners.

"To me, there's no suffering."

They said the closure they would get with Berget's execution would not be complete because Smith's death sentence was appealed in 1992 and reduced to life in prison without parole.

"This is only half," said Newlin. "There's still the other half. . . . I hope he gets his in prison."

Earlier in the week, Patterson's colleagues and family reminisced about the slain teacher.

Patterson, 33, had a reputation as a gifted math teacher and practical joker who was beloved by fellow teachers and his students.

"It had so much impact and caused so much pain to so many people, especially his kids," said Lois Evans, the assistant principal at the mid-high when the murder occurred.

Newlin said that when her brother died, it changed everything with the family. Joke gifts such as a bottle cutter that her brother used to pass around the family came to a stop, and family gatherings became somber.

"Rick brought the laughter into our lives," Newlin said. "We're real lost without him."

Newlin said Berget's execution brings part of the justice she believes is due her brother. She said it's been a long 15 years and she's ready.

"He's getting it a lot easier than my brother did," she said of Berget. "There's no comparison with how my brother died," she said.