

# Pain remains for sister of murdered 14-year-old

*21 years ago today Karen  
Caughlin was murdered*

By KATHY CAUGHLIN

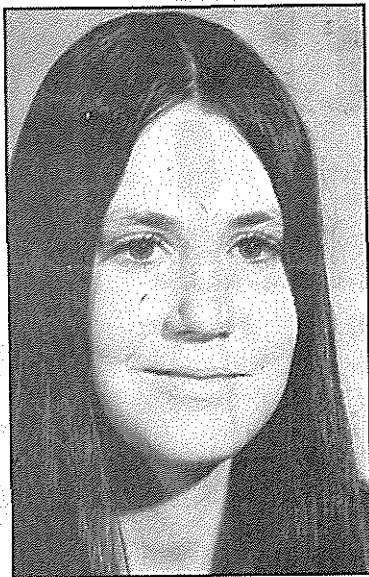
My sister, Karen Caughlin, was murdered at the age of 14 on March 16, 1974 in Sarnia. I want my mother, Barbara Caughlin, to know how much respect and admiration I have for her, by surviving this horrible tragedy.

Today, I am the mother of two and cannot imagine ever losing one of my children in this way. I do not know if I would survive.

Although it has been 21 years since Karen's death, the pain is, and always will be, part of my family's life. It is triggered daily by either watching the news or reading the newspaper. Murder has become an epidemic in this country and I personally blame the judicial system.

Unless you have lost a loved one to murder, you have no idea of the emotional torture you endure. My prayers are with families going through this and families who will go through this. This senseless tragedy ripped my family apart and, today, we still remain on opposite sides of the fence.

A part of my family never survived the hate and revenge. These two emotions are part of the grieving process when you lose someone to murder. They



**KAREN LEE ANN** Caughlin was 14 years old when police found her body alongside a back road in Enniskillen Township 21 years ago. Her murderer has never been found.

still feel the same way they did 21 years ago, and it saddens me to say they live very unhappy lives. This is perfectly normal for survivors of violent crimes, but you will never be happy unless you deal with the hate.

It took me 12 years to finally seek counselling, something that was never offered to my family. It became the emotional battle of my life; the day I found out someone murdered my sister. I suffered a nervous breakdown, along with an attempted suicide, shortly after Karen's murder. However, many unhappy years later, the rest of my family began to learn how to live with Karen's death and the hate slowly left our lives. We now draw strength from the emotional torture we once endured. I know Karen would be proud of us all.

Today we face another possible battle — if the person or persons responsible for Karen's death will ever be brought to justice. My family is also torn on this issue, but we will stand by each other.

My mom would like to know who did this and why it happened to her beautiful daughter. Before she dies, she wants justice.

I personally do not want to know. I am scared of being swallowed up by the hate, the same hate that almost destroyed me 21 years ago. What will it do to my family, if the judicial system fails us?

After Karen died, my mom hung onto a hope. She was confident that the person or persons responsible for murdering her daughter had a conscience and

they would come forward with the truth. Giving them this benefit of the doubt, and with 21 years gone by, has only proved to my family that the justice should be death. These kinds of people snuff out a human life and don't even blink an eye.

Today, my children know what happened to their Aunt Karen, hopefully to help protect them from a society that is out of control. It makes me wonder, though. I teach my children about bad strangers: does Karen's murderer teach his or her children about strangers... strangers who are just like them?

I have a picture of my beautiful sister on my mantle. Karen would be 35 years old today — maybe a teacher, maybe a nurse, maybe a mother, or maybe just Aunt Karen. These maybe's will always be just maybe's.

I am certain of one thing, though. Someday Karen and my family will meet again.

*Editor's note: According to The Observer microfilm, the body of Karen Caughlin was found alongside a back road in Enniskillen Township. She was the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Caughlin of Sarnia. She died of internal hemorrhaging caused by multiple injuries because of a severe beating. According to Petrolia OPP, the case is still open and no one has been arrested for her murder. Her sister, Kathy Caughlin now lives in Calgary.*