

# Human caring is the only miracle left in the Vicki Lynn Hoskinson case

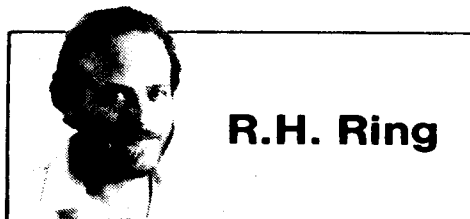
The man on the radio was saying they had identified the collection of bones. It was Vicki Lynn Hoskinson.

I slowed the car as it hit me. So now we know. There will be no miracle. The possibilities are down to one. She is dead. Murdered, most likely, and discarded in the desert. She was 8 years old. So sad.

After I heard, I went to a press conference at the University Medical Center. Journalists from Tucson and Phoenix showed up.

Not long ago, many of the same journalists covered another event at the hospital. A team of doctors was going all out to save a man with a failing heart. Amid the hubbub, the journalists had been wisecracking, gossiping, badgering the hospital people for information.

Yesterday the mood was subdued. The smallest sounds were loud in the room.



## Commentary

Everybody waited for what they knew was coming.

Dennis Douglas, the Pima County Sheriff's major who has been overseeing the Hoskinson investigation, took charge of the unpleasant task. The emotion of the day weighed on his eyes and his face. Every so often he had to stop and press his lips to-

gether. Several times his voice seemed near to breaking.

"Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen," he said. "We do indeed appreciate you coming out."

In a low voice, Douglas introduced the two forensic scientists sitting with him. I listened to these three men explain the developments in the case. They are some of those who work every day to keep society safe and sane. I could see that, even at the hospital, Douglas was wearing a pistol strapped to his ankle.

After the conference ended, I asked Douglas how he and the other officers on the case were feeling.

"We've been living with this case seven months now," he said. "All along I was hoping beyond hope that we'd find her alive. Everyone associated with the case is disap-

pointed. Everyone is feeling low."

I went outside and started driving. It was hot. I wanted to concentrate on the sweat and the driving to escape my feelings.

I found myself heading northwest out of town, along the route probably traveled by Vicki Lynn Hoskinson that last day.

The paloverde trees were blooming in gay yellow, and the ocotillos in bright red and the prickly pears with more yellow. The sun was shining. None of it mattered.

I drove back and made it in time for another press conference. This one was held at the house of Debbie Carlson, the mother of the dead girl. The atmosphere hadn't changed.

Debbie Carlson was trying not to cry, and clutching the hand of her husband, George. Behind the couple a few young geraniums

were blooming in a tiny flowerbed.

The Carlsons thanked the Sheriff's Department and the community for all the support they had.

"You'd never think a town this size would open up like that," George Carlson said.

The journalists were taking pictures and asking questions. But everyone was so quiet I could hear birds chirping and children playing with a dog across the street.

Vicki Lynn Hoskinson's sister, 11-year-old Stephanie, was taking it all in, standing inside the arms of deputy Sandy Rosenthal.

I left thinking about how we seem to devote a great deal of effort tearing at one another over the smallest of disagreements. Yet we all stand together at moments like this.

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