

DNA evidence prompts police push for help to solve murder of Canberra grandmother Irma Palasics

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John Mikita was taping posters bearing the image of his beloved grandmother, Irma Palasics, to telegraph poles all over Canberra as police prepared to reveal major developments in her cold case murder at the weekend.

Mr Mikita was 25 years old when two men wearing balaclavas stormed the McKellar home of Irma, 73, and her husband Gregor, 74, on the night of November 6, 1999.

The couple was bound, gagged and savagely beaten.

Their attackers ransacked the Grover Crescent house over two hours and stole cash and jewellery.

Mr Palasics freed himself once the offenders left, and called police.

But his wife's injuries were too severe and Mrs Palasics died at the scene.

Police have revealed [one of two DNA profiles they recovered from the murder scene was linked to a previous robbery at the pair's house, while the other was connected to a seemingly unrelated prank at a Phillip putt-putt business](#) more than a decade later.

The new developments prompted Mr Mikita to put up 600 posters with his grandmother's photo and a plea for the public's help, hopeful renewed interest in the case will flush out key information.

"It's just a matter of reminding people what happened," he said.

"We're not raising our hopes that anything will come out of this because for so long it's been going on.

"It will be positive when police knock on our door and say they've got someone. But until then we'll just continue to live with it."

But Senior Constable Jarryd Dunbar, the officer in charge of the murder investigation, believed the fresh forensic evidence meant it was "inevitable" police would find the attackers.

In an interview with *60 Minutes* on Sunday, Senior Constable Dunbar said a new forensic search, which picked up "familial DNA", proved one of the couples' attackers was a "close family relative" to one of five young men who broke into Pitch and Putt at Phillip on May 16, 2010.

Police said CCTV footage led them to believe the group was among a 200-strong crowd at an 18th birthday party at the nearby Slovenian-Australian Association earlier that night, and someone who was there should be able to identify them.

Police had also suspected two previous burglaries at the couple's Red Hill home in 1997 and 1998 were linked to the fatal attack.

Senior Constable Dunbar said hair from a balaclava Mrs Palasics pulled off her attacker's head in the second home invasion showed "conclusively" that at least one of the men involved in the 1998 burglary was present at her murder.

Police released a partial "facefit" image of a man they believe was one of the attackers that night, as well as another image of a man seen walking his dog in the area at the time who they believe could have seen the offender flee.

Senior Constable Dunbar said Crime Stoppers received an anonymous phone call on October 20 from a person who claimed to have information regarding the identity of one of the five men from the break-in, but the caller hung up halfway through the conversation.

Investigators involved in the case will hold a telethon on the 15th anniversary of Mrs Palasics' death, this Thursday, November 6, and have encouraged anyone with information to phone in.

Detective Superintendent Paul Shakeshaft said the crime was "abhorrent" and those responsible for Mrs Palasics' murder needed to be brought to justice.

"I would reinforce the message, particularly around those five individuals involved in the Pitch and Putt incident, not to hide, to come forward and give us the information that we need so the family can put this matter behind them.

"They have been grieving for the past 15 years and that grieving continues today, and they can't move on until they know who did this and why."

Mr Mikita said his gut feeling was that the offenders were from Canberra and still lived in the community.

"The hardest thing for us to deal with is the fact there are people out there that know the people who have done this.

"If the same thing happened to them, what would they expect of anyone else in the community? Ring and just give the information."

Anyone with information can contact Crime Stoppers anonymously on 1800 333 000, or go to act.crimestoppers.com.au.

This story was found at: <http://www.canberratimes.com.au/act-news/dna-evidence-prompts-police-push-for-help-to-solve-murder-of-canberra-grandmother-irma-palasics-20141103-11g3cb.html>