

Wish You Were Here

Book review by Nancy Coggeshall

John Allore and Patricia Pearson's second collaboration *Wish You Were Here: A Murdered Girl, a Brother's Quest and the Hunt for a Serial Killer* is a compelling read. It details the consequences of Theresa Allore's death, which resonate through time. The murdered girl, John's older sister, was street smart, independent, and witty. Earning A's in all her science courses, her overall average was in the eighties. She liked extreme sports and owned an Italian racing bike. She had regularly and safely hitchhiked to Montreal. Although she smoked pot, Theresa and her closest Montreal friends pledged not to indulge in anything stronger, unless one of the others was with her. A student at Champlain Regional College in Lennoxville, Quebec, Theresa was two years older than fellow residents at Gillard Hall, fifteen kilometres from the main campus. She had lived on her own and held a job at a ski factory in Pointe Claire.

On November 3, 1978, Theresa disappeared. The following spring a trapper discovered her body along the Coaticook River. Twenty-three years later the National Post ran a three-part series "Who Killed Theresa?" It was the first collaboration for John and Pearson. They concluded that Theresa had been murdered. (Full disclosure: I have known Patricia Pearson for more than thirty years.)

Stacking meticulous reporting, investigative skills, and splendid writing, their deeper research in *Wish You Were Here* provides pertinent context surrounding Theresa's murder culturally and politically. Besides relating a family's descent to Hell and John's search for justice, they unearth the criminal history of battering, murder, and rape by Luc Grégoire, the man suspected of killing Theresa.

Raised in Sherbrooke, he left victims in Quebec and Alberta.

In 1981 Grégoire was sentenced for a year in Quebec after pleading guilty to a lesser charge of indecent assault against a Quebec woman whose trauma was so great it choked any verbal expression of the horror she endured. Her marriage was ruined, and she left the city. A year later he was granted day parole, and in January 1983 he was fully paroled. That was revoked. He returned to prison until 1984. In 1986 in Edmonton he was convicted for armed robbery and served seven years in prison. Grégoire was sentenced to life for a murder he committed in Calgary in 1993 and was transported to Archambault Institution in St-Annes-Des-Plain in Quebec. He died there on March 17, 2015.

The Parole Board of Canada cited his criminality as "polymorphic and persistent since adolescence. [His] violence seems often impulsive, encouraged by intoxication. [His] crimes are associated with the presence of grave danger for your victims."

Two forces mitigated a timely, thoughtful investigation of Theresa's murder. Dismissive, misogynistic attitudes held by the police across areas-jurisdictions squelched any immediate effort to find her. The Sûreté du Québec shared no information with the family. Theresa's father Robert Allore conducted door to door interviews near the site where his daughter's body was found. One policeman told Theresa's boyfriend that she was a prostitute. The College, offering no sympathy at all, posited that the 19-year-old student was a runaway. Was she adopted and looking for her birth parents? The two authorities' indifference and gaslighting cast aspersion on Theresa and more deeply traumatized her parents Robert and Marilyn Allore, their oldest son André, John, and Theresa's boyfriend Vlad

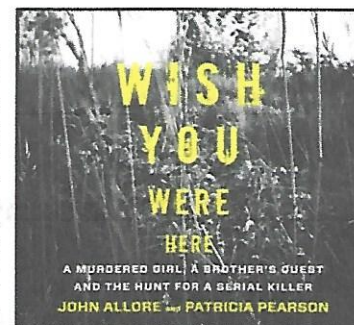
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The Sûreté du Québec theorized that Theresa was pulled under by the "riptide of seventies party culture." In the Sherbrooke area biker gangs distributed drugs to surrounding communities. At Compton's two dormitories drug use was unchecked. Two adult staff members supervised more than 200 16 and 17-year-old residents. Adding to a situation signaling possible mayhem in pulsating neon, night-time transportation between campus and the Compton dormitories was limited to two buses: one at 6:00 p.m. and the second at 11:00 p.m. The route followed a lonely, dark country road. The student handbook included tips on how to hitchhike safely.

Enlarging the focus of Theresa's death, the authors skillfully include strides in criminal investigation techniques, marginal progress in attitudes toward women, and amended parameters of rape. Accounts of other victims of sexual predators reveal the anguish common among victims' families.

Pearson's relationship with the Allore family is a plus. Her tough mindedness precludes smarm. She and John were high school sweethearts, later "wary friends." John's narrative unspools from confused grief in adolescence to his hope for clarity after the National Post article he and Pearson wrote. It hardly soothed him though it deepened his commitment to activism. He earned the Senate of Canada Sesquicentennial Medal for his podcasts, blogging, and victim advocacy.

Pearson attended CrimeCon, a convention for fans of "true-crime and armchair detective work," noting all the folderol and sensationalizing. When Quebec filmmakers Stephane Plante and Ugo Fredette wanted to



make a documentary about victims of sexual predators, John shared his research with them. Because of their misleading, sensationalistic approach to the subject, however, John severed all connections long before an unhinged Fredette killed two people. As Pearson notes, "In popular culture and politics, we dance with evil, sexualize it, experimentally venerate psychopaths." She knows from her own crime reporting experience that the "end result of violence is annihilation."

The "alchemy of grief" and the weight of guilt waft through this story. At the age of fourteen John felt guilty. Somehow Theresa's death was his fault. Not surprisingly, Robert and Marilyn Allore shoulder the heaviest load. Trapper Robert Ride experienced guilt because he found the body.

John's statement about closure is telling. He'd never heard a crime victim use the word though journalists or inexperienced justice activists favor its use. He believes "they don't want to ask the question they should really put to themselves: My god, faced with that experience, what would I do?"

A virtual book launch will be streamed live on Monday, Sept. 21 at 5 p.m.

Anyone interested in attending can follow this link to join the discussion: <https://www.youtube.com/>