

## ● REALLY BIG SHOW

## C.S.I.

## Digs up a model murder



The real Linda Sobek

By MICHAEL GILTZ

**D**URING the three years she's been on "CSI" and "CSI: Miami," producer Elizabeth Devine has relied on dozens of real-life cases for inspiration. But she was always reluctant to draw upon the story of Linda Sobek.

A model and former Los Angeles Raiders cheerleader, Sobek was murdered in 1995 by Charles Rathbun, a fashion photographer with whom she'd worked. Devine, a criminologist with the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department at the time, worked on the case, which gained national attention, but she never felt quite ready to bring that particular story to "CSI." Until now.

"I was using a lot of my littler cases, cases nobody would know about," says Devine, 42, who worked for the Sheriff's Department for 15 years before becoming a technical adviser, writer and producer on the hit CBS show, which airs Thursday nights at 9 p.m.

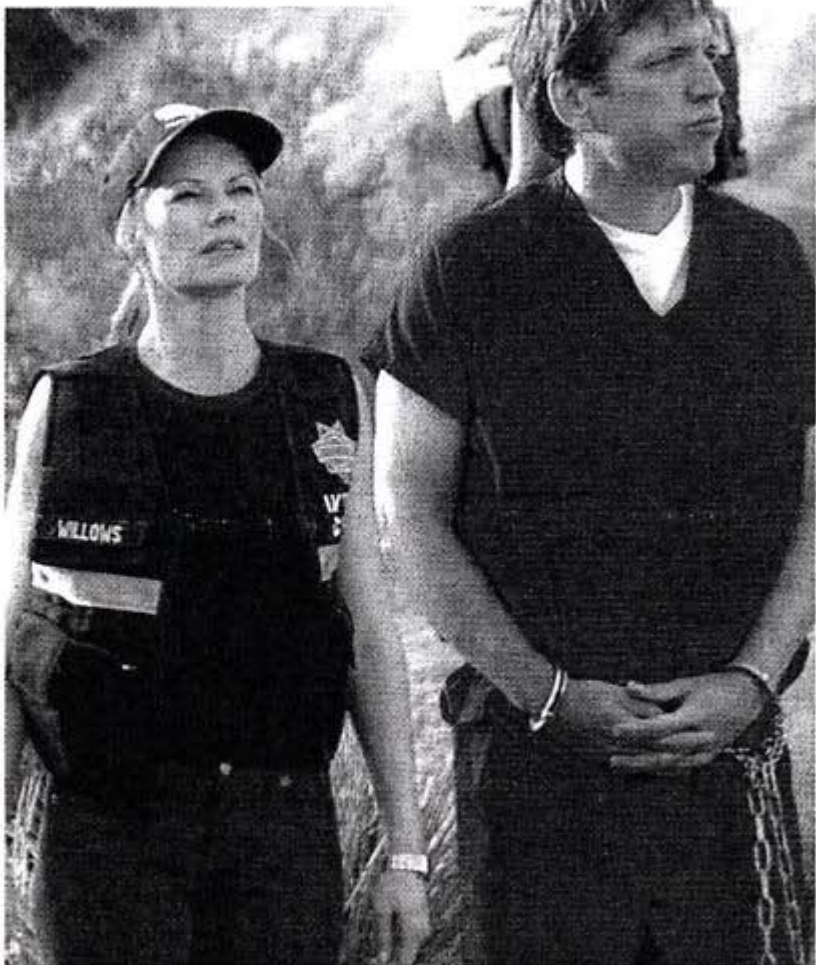
"Big cases are only big because the media picks up on them," she says. "I've worked hundreds of cases with your average moms or African-American women and nobody knows about them. That's just the way things work. I didn't want to start [on the show] by exploiting the cases of people that happened to be beautiful."

For Marg Helgenberger, 45, who plays Catherine Willows, the investigator at the heart of this story, it was a chance to shine on a show where big dramatic moments are few and far between.

"In some of the processing scenes that we have to do, you kind of go through the motions because you're upstaged by the props for the most part," she says with a laugh. "That gets a little bit frustrating and, I must say, a little boring from time to time. But in this episode I drive the story. I'm in almost every scene and had to retain a certain amount of focus, which is always really fun."

Devine says this episode, "After The Show," which she cowrote with Andrew Lipsitz, is faithful to the real-life case that inspired it in ways that she remembers all too well. Producers smartly played up the photographer's (Martin Donovan) attraction to the women working on the case.

"The suspect was attracted to blondes, there was no doubt about it," says Devine. "All of us



On the grisly trail of a murder: Marg Helgenberger busts Martin Donovan on C.S.I. this week.

who were blondes got a little bit creeped out by him."

And, as always, Devine says Helgenberger brought unexpected flourishes to the script.

"She actually kicks him!" says Devine. "I didn't write that and it's really good. When I first watched the dailies I saw that and thought, 'All right!'"

For Helgenberger, who went on "Oprah" to promote this episode, coming face-to-face with the mother of Linda Sobek was a sobering moment.

"We found out the night before [I went on 'Oprah'] that the mother was going to be there," says Helgenberger. "I was very nervous about that, as was Liz. Nonetheless, that's the way they wanted to produce the show. Linda's mother was actu-

ally in the audience. God bless her. I don't know how you recover from something like that.

"At least they caught the guy and he is serving life without parole," Helgenberger adds. "But I don't know; that's not going to bring [Linda] back."

One reason the episode is so effective is that the character inspired by Sobek is a smart woman who is assaulted by someone she knows. Too often, says Devine, people want to blame the victim so they can rest easier by assuming that he or she didn't use common sense.

"Even a smart girl can be manipulated and victimized," says Devine. "You want to think, 'Oh, it had to be someone she

didn't know' and that's not what happened. She knew this guy. She'd worked with him before. He is a professional photographer. He wasn't pretending to be one. And yet he murdered her. It's very disturbing."

For Helgenberger, who plays a character Devine describes as "me after 10 years of experience on the job," the weight of doing this true-life crime justice worked in her favor.

"I felt the need to give this show its proper due," she says. "That was actually inspiring. I know that may sound odd because the story is very sad and tragic. But from an acting point of view, it was inspiring."

**C.S.I.**  
Thursday, 9 p.m., CBS