

SYDNEY STAR OBSERVER

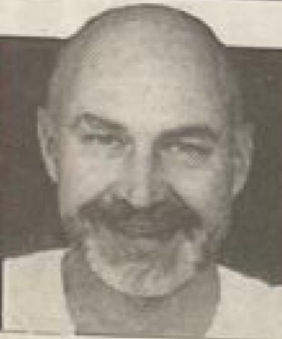
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GAY HATE MURDER?

BASHED TO DEATH



STARRING HIMSELF

Sydney diva and mistress of soul and song Paul Capsis contemplates the future after a brilliant Mardi Gras season. See: *The Shimmering Voices Within* in Pink. ▶

PHOTO JAMIE DUNBAR

KIRSTY MACHON

A mystery person seen with a Surry Hills gay man two nights before the man was brutally bashed to death may be the key to police investigations into the murder.

Surry Hills Police are keen to speak with the person, (pictured below right) believed to be in his late teens, who was seen in the victim's flat.

The body of James Meek, 51, was found in the hallway of his 12th floor Housing Commission flat on the morning of March 8. It was first thought Meek, who was HIV positive, may have died from a heart attack, as there were no signs of forced entry or a struggle.

But an autopsy revealed he had died from a series of severe blows to the head and chest, probably after being punched and kicked. A tiger's eye style ring and a watch, which he habitually wore, were missing from his body.

Police, who believe they could have a gay hate killing on their hands, would like to interview a young man understood to have been in Meek's flat late on the Monday evening before he died. They have provided an identikit sketch. The man was wearing baggy dark grey shorts and a dark sloppy joe, and was of medium height. Meek's friends have been unable to confirm his identity.

It is understood Meek was last seen entering the Northcott flats in Belvoir Street at Surry Hills, at about 8.30pm on Tuesday March 9. He had been walking his dog.

Police are anxious to determine his movements

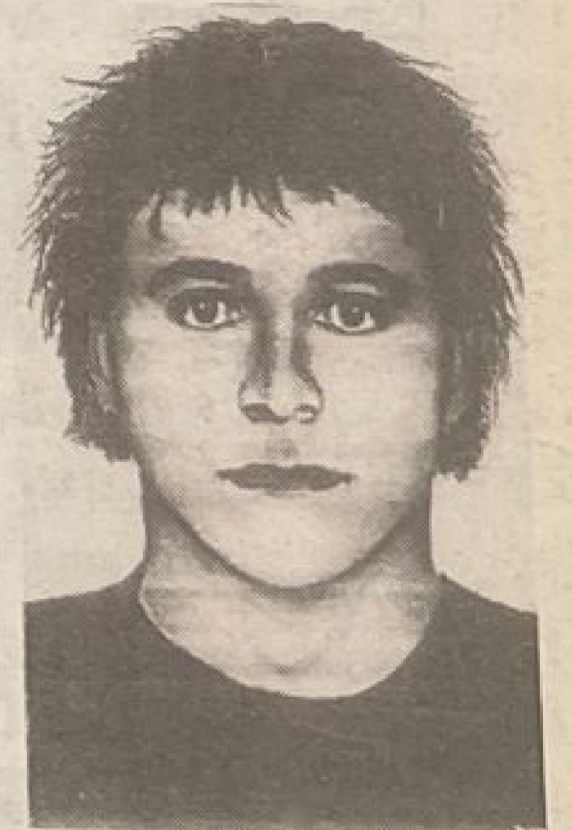
later that evening.

Carol Anne King, a close friend, said she had spoken to Meek for an hour on the phone on the Monday night before he died. He had been expected at King's house the following day — but didn't show.

"That was vitally important," King said. "He was so reliable, you could set your watch to it. I started calling at about 2.30 in the afternoon — no answer."

King, and the manager of the apartment block, who was friendly with Meek, raised the alarm on the Wednesday morning.

Police gained entry into the unit, where they found Meek's body.



Detectives say they remain particularly puzzled by the apparent absence of a struggle. They are working on two possible theories — that Meek was bashed in the flat and died there, or that he was beaten elsewhere, and managed to return home before collapsing from his injuries.

Sergeant Tanos, from Surry

(continued page 5 ▶)

devastating infection: patients may have been speeded by

► **from page one**

Hills Police, told the *Star Observer* police were keeping their options open on whether they were investigating a gay hate killing: "probably more so than not at this stage," he said. They also say it is possible he was the victim of a random assault and robbery.

"He was apparently very active sexually," Tanos said, "so perhaps it was someone he knew."

King described Meek, a volunteer for the People Living with and Affected by HIV and AIDS Luncheon Club, as "a beautiful man". She was devastated by the news of his murder.

"He had such a wonderful attitude to [his HIV infection]: don't give up," she said. "He was one of those elders of the community, so dearly loved by the young ones."

"He was a treasure — and now, the world has one less good person."