

# METROPOLITAN

THE KANSAS CITY STAR

Saturday, December 21, 2002

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Review Monday in FYI  
From Friday night William Baker  
Festival Singers



Bill Tammeus  
Cultures and traditions should be choices, not requirements. Opinion, B-7



Hey guys, LOOK, we made  
the front page of the  
Kansas City Star  
Metro Section

## Jail term finally closes old case

Man, 70, guilty in 1974 murder

By MARI ROSE WILLIAMS  
The Kansas City Star

One of the oldest criminal cases in Jackson County was closed Friday when Billie Joe Buster was sent to jail for 10 years for the killing of Gable Skurlock in 1974.

Some people left the courtroom unconvinced of Buster's guilt, but Skurlock's daughter, Dee Adkins, was not one of them.

"I'm very happy about the sentence," Adkins said outside the courtroom. "If this had happened 20 years ago, it (the sentence) would have been nothing. But now it is something."

Adkins was 23 when her mother was beaten, stabbed and strangled in an apartment at the old Knight's Inn Motel on U.S. 40 in Independence. Adkins said she's been haunted by her mother's death ever since.

"I'm not OK. But, now I'm in a position to start healing," she said. Independence police and county prosecutors said Adkins tirelessly pushed them over the years to stay on the case and find her mother's killer.

Buster, 70, was arrested last year to killing Skurlock. A motorist charged, who was his lover. He originally faced a second-degree murder charge, but pleaded guilty to manslaughter. He received the maximum sentence for that crime.

Independence Police Sgt. Marty Cavonah testified Friday about a second man with whom Skurlock had a volatile relationship for several years.

Cavonah testified that the man had told police he was not in the

See MURDER, B-7

## Fun on a string



They exhibited Friday at Blue Ridge Hall as the Communist McCreas Peppercorn Co. took the stage. Allison McCreas (left) worked a dog puppet as her

father, John McCreas (center), and mother, Mary Susan McCreas, operated the other figures. Performances continue today at 1, 2:30 and 4 p.m.

## County prosecutor quits, two days after sex charge

The Kansas City Star

Morgan County, Mo., Prosecutor Steve Cavonah resigned Friday, two days after he was charged with offering an undercover police officer legal services in exchange for sex.

Attorney General Jay Byrum also had filed a petition in Morgan County Circuit Court seeking to

resign. My resignation is, however, a resignation that the office has become distracted from its purpose," Cavonah said in the letter. "Even though the position is part-time and there is only 10 days left until my term expires, it is in the best interests of the people of Morgan County not report that I resign."

Cavonah, 51, has not publicly resigned.

## Three charged in killing of man, 45

By ROBERT S. CRONKLETON and JAMES E. FIZZENTRICK  
The Kansas City Star

The Wyandotte County district attorney filed first degree murder charges Friday afternoon against three persons in connection with the death of a 45-year-old man who was found dead in his driveway Wednesday night.

Jul R. Harris, Jr. of Kansas City, Kan., had been shot in the chest, stabbed in the back and

By and Richard D. Thomas, 44. According to Wyandotte County jail officials, Hook and Blood are from Kansas City, Kan.; Thomas is from Fairview.

They were being held in the Wyandotte County jail on Friday. Bond for each was \$250,000.

A friend and former neighbor of Hook's said in a telephone interview Friday night that Hook had told her many times that the man she had been living with was physi-

cal according to the police report was white, about 5 feet 9 inches tall and about 170 pounds.

Mattie said her last conversation with Hook was last week. Mattie said she suggested, as she had before, that Hook and her three children -- a boy, 8, a girl, 6, and a girl who is a toddler -- go to a domestic violence shelter. Hook would not go, she said, because she did not want her children to live in a shelter.