On Sept. 8, 1985, 12-year-old Raymond Fife went fishing with his dad. Besides being a practical joker, fishing was one of the things the Warren Western Reserve seventh grader loved to do most. And after bumping into his older sister and her husband on the way, they spent that day with poles in their hands at Mosquito Lake.

"It was a fun day for him," recalled his mom, Miriam Fife. "And on the way home, he said to my husband, 'this is the best day of my life'."

Dressed in a black Wrangler T-shirt and his white high tops, Fife, just two days later, hopped on his BMX bike and headed to his friend Billy Simmons’s house before a Boy Scout meeting. He made it as far as a field near a well-traveled shortcut routinely used by neighborhood kids behind the Palmyra Road Valu-King Supermarket.

It was there, in the pouring rain, where his father and brother-in-law found him brutally beaten, raped and tortured nearly four hours later. Raymond later died on Sept. 12.

The Crime, the Community and the Arrests
Now with the Trumbull County Sheriff’s Office, Major Tom Stewart was one of Warren Police Department's lead detectives in the case and was working that night.
"Everyone was upset and in arms," he said. "Especially people on the West Side. It was a brutal homicide. Everyone was concerned about the well-being of the kids."

In the days after, community members banded together to help police look for evidence in the field where Raymond was found. His own brother spotted the red tire on his bike, which had been missing in the field. A bloodhound used the bike's scent to find other evidence and leads.

The community donated money toward a $5,000 reward fund for information on Raymond's killer. Local attorney Ned Gold was a member of the local Boy Scout council at the time.

"We were just so disturbed that one of our little kids had that happen," said Gold.

It was that reward money that brought in one of the killers.

Stewart said Danny Lee Hill headed to the police station just a couple of nights after the attack asking about the money. Hill was 18 at the time and unemployed after dropping out of Warren Western Reserve High School after the 9th grade.

Stewart recognized Hill, who he said had a history of problems.

"He wanted to know if there was a reward, that he had information," said Stewart. "We didn't get a lot of calls from the community with information. If Danny Hill wouldn't have come down, we'd have probably never have solved it. I could tell he was scared and not telling the truth."

While Hill's mom claimed he was at home sleeping during the time of the attack, Hill eventually admitted to what happened and was arrested at the police department four days after Raymond's death. Timothy Combs, then 17, was arrested at his own school.

Combs, who was not eligible for the death penalty because he was a minor, was sentenced to life in prison for the crimes and is being jailed at Allen Correctional Institution in Lima. He'll be eligible for parole in 2049.

Hill, who is at the Ohio State Penitentiary in Youngstown, received the death penalty. He's been fighting his sentence since, claiming mental retardation.

**Raymond's Life**

Despite the investigation, arrests and the years of courtroom hearings that came with Hill's appeals, Miriam Fife said her husband, who has passed away, always had his and his son's last fishing trip in the back of his mind.

"My husband always had that great memory," said Miriam.

It's memories of her son and the good things that have come from the tragedy that Miriam wanted to focus on this week.

At a memorial service held Friday, several speakers honored his memory by telling stories of Raymond and what he was like. One of those speakers was Curtis Shavers, who had been friends with Raymond since they were seven or eight years old. He was in Raymond's Boy Scout troop.

One of Shavers's fondest memories was Raymond playing practical jokes. Raymond called Shavers Mr. T because of his temper.

"I would get so mad, and he just had a way of putting a smile on your face regardless of the mood you were in," said Shavers.

He also remembered Raymond's love for fishing. He remembers one day in particular when the two were fishing at an old Boy Scout camp.

"I was just there, he was the fisherman, that was his deal," said Shavers. "He turns to me, and out of the blue tells me that he loves me. At that time I really didn’t understand it and what it meant. As I got older, I realized how important it is to love somebody.

Miriam said she often got calls from Raymond's school about his sense of humor, which not only made his classmates laugh, but also his teachers.

**Good from Tragedy**

In the years since she lost her son, Miriam has used the experience to help others.

Less than a year after Raymond's death, she organized her first -- and now annual -- Victims Witness Vigil. She now works out of the Trumbull County Prosecutor's Office as a victims' advocate, helping victims and their families deal with crime and tragedy and guiding them through the court system.

Shavers said Raymond's death not only impacted the community, but also the nation.

"A lot of laws and programs have been implemented, and a lot of it is a direct result of his tragic death," said Shavers.

Trumbull County Prosecutor Dennis Watkins said in the last 25 years, victims' rights have become more important. The Amber Alert System has been developed to help locate missing children. Sex offenders are also required to register with the state.

Miriam and Watkins said even the media more often covers the victims' point of view, rather than just focus on the defendants.

"The rights of victims have taken hold in Ohio and the U.S.," said Watkins. "Their voices are being heard."

And Miriam and the county's programs have helped thousands of victims of crimes and their families.
Miriam said she hoped Friday's event showed people in situations similar to hers that time will heal some of their wounds.

"You can get to the place that I am at," said Fife. "If you allow yourself, you can get a peace within yourself and come to only recognizing the good things about your loved one that died and not remember necessarily the bad thing that happened."

Click the Raymond Fife Crime Timeline link to the right for an outline of the the crime, resulting arrests and court dates, along with corresponding photos.

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Here are the most recent story comments.

**jhzb** - 9/10/2011 3:32 PM  
I can forgive someone for picking on me back in high school, I can forgive the guy who stole my car stereo, I would not and could not forgive that *** low life *** idiot!!! I can't believe he's still alive!! 25 years later? Our justice system in this country is worthless, it's only good if you are a criminal, not a victim. If only I could make the laws, Danny Hill would have been shot in the head the day they arrested him.

**mlmfamilyof5** - 9/10/2011 9:25 AM  
I have lived in the area for 17 years, 14 on the west side of Warren, I always heard things about Mr. Hill but never knew what he had did. I know have a son that is 11 years old and I could never even think about how Ray's mom felt. My heart goes out to her. Losing a son to this monster? Yes, I know she can forgive but not forgotten. Ray didn't know you but you will always be remembered in my heart. Mr. Hill will be forgotten quickly. I think you should be put to the death!

**obxgrabs** - 9/20/2010 12:54 PM  
I remember that day. I lived on Hamilton street at the time and me and a bunch of other kids were playing with Raymond at Quimby Park and he left to go home to get ready to go to his boy scout meeting. At the time I was only 11 and didn't understand why he wasn't around for the week til my mom told me what happened to him. I will never forget Raymond he always had a smile on his face..

**charlieo168** - 9/13/2010 6:50 PM  
I did not know Raymond, however, growing up in Youngstown I was the same age as he was, 12, and we were both 7th graders and boy scouts. It is for these reasons, this is one of those cases that I have never forgotten. I've always felt a connection with him, and it feels just like yesterday that this horrible tragedy took place. Now 37 years old, I have two boys of my own, one of which is approaching the same age as Raymond was when he died. It is now that I can only begin to comprehend the sheer and utter horror this family has gone through over the years, because now when I think of Raymond I see my own children. I have never forgotten that day, as it seems like just yesterday. Not a day goes by when I don't think of Mrs. Fife and what a courageous and giving woman she is. She has used her own hell to help others. She is an angel from heaven and a beacon of strength. She and her family have always and will always be in my prayers.

**BossHawg** - 9/11/2010 2:42 PM  
I remember that day like it just happened. I was almost 9, living on the north side in the Warren Heights. I was playing outside and my mom yelled for me with a shreek I never heard her make before. The rest of the next 2 days were spent with my entire family glued to the TV. Now I have kids and can only hope and pray that I never have to go through something like this, but if I do I hope to have a small fraction of the strength and grace that Mrs. Fife has. What a wonderful woman. God bless the Fife family and friends.

**mvsportsdotorg** - 9/11/2010 2:09 PM  
Your a better person than me because I could never forgive s***ing like that...

**cshavers3** - 9/11/2010 1:49 PM  
I can forgive, but I can never forget! I love you always brother!