

THE JANE CREBA STORY

On December 26, 2005, a fifteen-year-old girl was killed on one of the busiest streets in Toronto. It was the day after Christmas, a day when stores offer big sales on their leftover holiday products. Tens of thousands of shoppers mobbed the streets. Jane Creba was one of those shoppers.

Not everyone who went downtown that day was shopping. Andre Thompson and a 16-year-old friend went downtown to meet Thompson's brother. They were joined by a group of friends from the Martha Eaton Way housing projects.

As security cameras would show, their group surrounded a man named Richard Steele. "Ante up," they told him. "You want to get merked?"

Steele looked at the gang and counted four guns. He quickly gave them his cash and his cellphone.

The Martha Eaton crew headed back to the Mall. At the same time, Richard Steele called a bunch of his buddies from the Oakwood and Vaughan neighbourhood. That group came downtown, found Thompson and his friends, and a fistfight began. The brief fight settled nothing.

The Martha Eaton crew then went into a store just up the street. One of the Oakwood kids walked in. There was some talk, and both groups stepped outside.

Outside was Yonge Street – the busiest shopping street in Toronto. Thousands of shoppers were walking up and down the snowy sidewalks. They did not expect violence. Downtown Toronto rarely had any violence, and certainly not gunshots.

But shortly after five o'clock, shots rang out.

One of the Oakwood and Vaughan crew stuck his hand inside his shirt. Across the street, Jeremiah Valentine, one of the Martha Eaton crew, pulled out a gun. One of them – it's still not clear which – fired a shot. The other one shot back.

More guns came out. Eighteen-year-old Tyshaun Bennett fired off his entire clip of bullets. Another member of the Martha Eaton crew, Ralph Louis Woodcock, fired his gun and handed it to a 16-year-old.

Despite all the gunshots, only one person was hit by a bullet. Jane Creba. The teenage girl was shot in the back, the bullet exiting at her throat. She fell to the ground and bled to death in less than a minute.

Within 40 minutes, two arrests had been made. But it took months to complete the investigation. Finally, four people were convicted. Jeremiah Valentine was sentenced to life in prison.

To this day, detectives aren't sure whose bullet actually killed Jane Creba. But, they say, it doesn't really matter. In their view, everyone involved in the gang fight that day was guilty.

