

Cabbie had plan for life but not robbery

By SHIELA TOOMEY
Daily News reporter

A taxi driver shot to death in his cab last week might well have risked death rather than knuckle under to a thief, his widow says.

Jawed Ahmed, 32, was shot in the side, apparently by a passenger who called shortly after midnight for a taxi at an East Northern Lights Qwik Stop.

The person who knows for certain

what happened that night has not been arrested, but Ahmed's widow, Janie, knew her husband well and thinks she can guess.

"I can't help but feel he attempted to get the gun," she said Friday. "I feel sure Jawed talked boldly to this person or tried to reach for the gun."

"He wouldn't have given the person the money, not even for his own life."

Jawed (pronounced Jah' vid), was a man with a plan for his life. That plan

did not ever include giving his hard-earned money to a stranger just because the stranger demanded it.

"I was always the kind that if we were comfortable, if we were getting by, I was satisfied," Janie said. But Jawed was ambitious, driven — perhaps even obsessed. "He wanted to make it fast. He had a drive to make something of himself, to be something"

Jawed was born in a village in

Pakistan and grew up in the city of Rawalpindi — not rich but not particularly deprived. He was 20 when he left and he didn't go back for 10 years, not until he could afford to return in style.

"He had programs in his life," Janie said. "My first program, he used to say, 'is that I go to Pakistan and that I take my family some nice

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Murdered cab driver had plan for his life, but that plan did not include being robbed

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gifts so people can see that Mr. Ahmed is someone."

In 1982, after he had begun driving a cab but before he and a partner bought a permit of their own, Jawed fulfilled his first program.

Laden with clothes for his brothers, perfumed soaps and yards of shiny fabrics for the women and expensive shirts for his father, Jawed returned to Rawalpindi. He stopped first in Karachi to buy his father a new car. It cost about \$7,000, Janie Ahmed said.

"And here he goes, in his car driving home, to let his family know he was doing well — to let him be Mr. Ahmed and to let his mother and father be proud of him, to let them say to the neighbors: 'Hey, see what my son's done for me.'"

Sitting in a downtown Anchorage restaurant, dressed in black and sipping an iced tea, Janie smiled — even when she had to admit Jawed cleaned out the couple's savings to accomplish his first "program."

"I know he was putting his needs before mine, but there's a time in a relationship when you let someone do that." Going home that way was something he had to do.

Janie and Jawed first met in Mississippi in the late 1970s. He had been sailing the world as a merchant marine for nearly eight years. She was from Russellville, Ark., in Mississippi for a vacation when his ship docked there.

They met in a restaurant, struck up a conversation, started to see each other.

"I was pretty much taken with him," Janie said in her soft Arkansas drawl. "When he left, he called from overseas. Finally we decided to marry."

The couple settled in Arkansas and Jawed became what was most likely the only Pakistani tugboat engineer plying the Mississippi River. But he soon began dreaming of Alaska, of the high paying jobs on the North Slope everyone was talking about.

The couple, plus Janies' 7-year-old son by a former marriage, moved to Anchorage in 1979. "Jawed got Slope jobs, but not the high paying one he dreamed of. He began to look for something else. He didn't care what the job was, just so he could make money."

He became convinced that he could drive a taxi down the yellow brick road. "He thought if he had a taxi permit, he could really make good money."

"I said please don't do this. For one thing, a lot of people really look down on taxi drivers and I had problems with that. I didn't want anyone looking down on Jawed."

The family lived in Inlet View. Jawed started walking or riding his bike to the Yellow Cab garage, which was then on Spensard Road near Fireweed Lane. He began by filling in for absent drivers but soon had leased a cab for himself for about \$600 a month.

"He drove 12 hours a day, seven days a

week," Janie said. And owning his own cab became his second "program."

All during this time, Janie was working full time, first in a bank, later for the telephone company. Jawed thought she should drive a cab weekends, so she tried it for a few months.

"My family thought I was crazy. They said it was too dangerous. They said, what are you going to do when you get shot in the head?"

Soon she had had enough. "I didn't want to be a taxi driver. I thought, well, golly, I work eight hours a day and I've got my cleaning to do. And, you know, when he put me in the driver's seat, I had no idea I had to lift the luggage."

The marriage started to come apart. Janie felt there was more to life than working all the time. Jawed thought Janie wasn't doing her share.

Her son never got to see his stepfather. "He was never there. Making money just consumed his mind." Still, Janie was delighted when Jawed fulfilled his second program — his own taxi permit. He and a partner bought one in 1983. A short time later, they leased a second cab. That was the cab Jawed was driving when he was killed.

Instead of relaxing a little with his success, Jawed moved on to another program — buying a piece of property — and Janie moved out. But the couple never divorced. They remained friends.

"I still cared for Jawed so much. Maybe a

lot of people can't understand how you could have a long distance relationship for a year and a half."

The possibility that a baby born three weeks before his death might be his has caused her pain. "It's selfish, I know. But I didn't want him to have children with someone else."

The day he was killed, Jawed called Janie. There was nothing unusual about the call. "He complained of mechanical problems. He would call me every 10 days or so. He always said he was lonely."

Jawed had recently fulfilled his third program by buying a duplex — a fixer-upper on West 30th Avenue. And he was already planning his next program — saving enough money to open a pizza restaurant.

"That's how it is so often," said Janie. "When things come together, they come apart."

Jawed Ahmed went back to Pakistan this weekend, back to Rawalpindi, accompanied by his brother. And Janie Ahmed went back to Dallas to grieve. "He used to laugh at me," she said. "I was afraid of dying. But he believed that your time is written. When your time comes you will go, no matter where you are or what you are doing."

"He gave me so much — attention, affection, the looks, the laughter shared between two people, a special emotional attachment ... He was the best friend I had in the world."

Murder remains mystery

By GREG GADBERRY
Daily News reporter

Anchorage police investigators have pieces of bloody clothing they think were worn by the killer. They have 110 leads and fingerprints from an unknown person.

What police don't have in the May 28 shooting death of Jawed Ahmed is a firm suspect, a person they can single out as responsible for pulling a gun on Ahmed and then shooting him dead in his cab.

Now, more than a month after the killing, police are going back to the beginning. Investigators are trying to find the handful of witnesses who saw a lone man running from the murder scene near Muldoon Road.

Police want those witnesses to give them a picture of the suspect, a picture they hope will spur the investigation closer to an end, said Capt. Del Smith, chief of investigations.

"We really don't have a witness yet who got a face-to-face look at the man," Smith said.

Police want the witnesses to try to make a drawing of that man's face, he said. But some of the witnesses who saw the running man that Tuesday morning are now proving hard to find, Smith said. Some are not returning police messages or can't be located, he said.

In a plea to Anchorage residents, Ahmed's widow, Janie, also asked that witnesses or anyone with information contact police.

"My husband, Jawed Ahmed, never deserved this type of death, just as your loved ones would not deserve such a fate," she said.

Investigators still believe the shooting was an act of violence by a nervous or angry thief, Smith said. Ahmed and his killer probably did not know each other, he said.

Ahmed's last ride began a little after midnight May 28 when an unknown man phoned the Yellow Cab Company dispatcher and asked that a taxi be sent to the Qwik Stop at 5450 E. Northern Lights Blvd.

"He didn't ask for a specific driver," Smith said. Ahmed was in the area and arrived moments later.

The man who called for a cab apparently climbed in the front seat next to Ahmed, who then called his dispatcher to say the cab was heading for Muldoon. It was the last call Ahmed ever made.

Police are still not sure

No firm suspect in murder of cab driver

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what happened during the next few moments. The passenger apparently pulled a pistol and perhaps demanded cash, police said. Ahmed's widow, Janie, said in an interview her husband may have refused such a demand or fought with the thief. Whatever the case, the bandit shot Ahmed several times in the stomach as the car rolled down Muldoon Road.

After he was shot, Ahmed jammed his foot down on the

accelerator. The car careened into a fence.

Several witnesses saw a dark-haired, dark-skinned man sprint away from the accident scene and disappear into the dusk, police said. Two witnesses were driving by in a car, Smith said. One lived nearby.

Police and police dogs searched the area the next two days. In a wooded area near the crash scene, police found the bloodstained sleeve of a T-shirt and a blood-covered sweater.

Since May 28, police have had plenty of leads, Smith said. There have been calls to the Crimestoppers hotline. There have been tips from police officers who believe they recognize the killer from descriptions given by witnesses.

Several fingerprints in the cab did not match Ahmed's or the people who pulled him from the vehicle after he died, Smith said.

None of those leads has unearthed a real suspect, Smith said.