

# Minnesota Coalition for Battered Women



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## 1992 Femicide Report Women and Children Murdered in Minnesota

The Minnesota Coalition for Battered Women monitors information about women and children murdered in our state to educate the public about the lethality of woman abuse and child abuse. We pledge to remember the women, children, and family members and/or friends who die each year from domestic violence and the woman and children who die while being used in prostitution - a system of violence against women and children. Women used in prostitution are battered women in need of protection from abuse. We also remember the women and children who were murdered by acquaintances, strangers, or unknown perpetrators.

*We challenge communities to respond to battered women and their children by providing safe shelter and advocacy services, prevention education for all elementary and secondary students, laws to protect women and children, effective enforcement of those laws, and aggressive prosecution of all domestic assault crimes and all prostitution crimes targeting perpetrators, pimps, and "johns".*

### **In Minnesota in 1992:**

**At least 31 women were murdered in cases where the suspected, alleged, or convicted perpetrator was a current or former husband, boyfriend, intimate partner or household/family member of the woman.**

**At least 8 children were murdered in cases where the suspected, alleged, or convicted perpetrator was their mother's husband, boyfriend, or intimate partner, or was the parent, foster parent, guardian, babysitter, or household/family member of the child.**

**At least 2 family members or friends were murdered by a woman's current or former husband, boyfriend or partner.**

## **WOMEN MURDERED:**

### **1. Rhonda Fairbanks, 22**

**Minneapolis**

**January 1, 1992**

Carl Fairbanks, Rhonda's 25-year-old brother, was charged with stabbing her to death following an argument between Rhonda and his girlfriend. He was found guilty and sentenced to three years in prison.

### **2. Debra Lynn Porter, 36**

**Duluth**

**January 23, 1992**

Debra's body was found by police in her apartment after an unidentified caller dialed 911 from a nearby store, saying a woman was bleeding in the apartment. Debra was fully clothed, lying face up on her bed. She had been stabbed once in the chest. A Duluth police officer who lives in the next apartment heard arguing in the apartment earlier in the night. Debra's live-in boyfriend, Terrance Kemper, was arrested and charged with second-degree murder. He pleaded guilty to second-degree murder and awaits sentencing.

### **3. Patricia Mullaney, 40**

**Brooklyn Park**

**February 4, 1992**

Patricia was found dead on a couch in her uncle's living room. Her body showed evidence of trauma but no signs of gunshot or stab wounds. Patricia's boyfriend, Mark Brown, 23, reported that earlier in the evening he became very angry because "she had intentionally put the car in the ditch," and that he struck her a number of times in the head and abdominal area. He pleaded guilty to a reduced charge of first-degree manslaughter and awaits sentencing.

### **4. Gwendolyn Lewis, 52**

**Minneapolis**

**February 8, 1992**

Gwendolyn was found in a bathtub at her apartment with several stab wounds. She had also been sexually assaulted. Her friend, Scott King, 39, told police he did not remember whether he killed Gwendolyn because he sometimes has blackouts from using drugs and alcohol. He was charged with second-degree murder, but was later indicted on first-degree murder charges for committing homicide during the commission of a criminal sexual assault. He is scheduled for trial in December.

### **5. Melinda Neumann, 18**

**Coon Rapids**

**February 24, 1992**

Melinda's body was found between two dumpsters with an electrical cord wrapped around her neck. She also had numerous injuries to her face and head. Melinda's friend and former schoolmate, Gary Goehring, 18, told police he killed her after the two began to have sex in his car and she changed her mind and accused him of rape. He admitted strangling her with his hands and to eventually strangling her with a piece of electrical cord. Then he hid her body between two dumpsters and covered it with some pallets and a piece of carpet. Melinda died from strangulation but had also been beaten on the head with a blunt object. Goehring had several fresh scratch or gouge marks on his face and neck. He was arrested and charged with second-degree murder and indicted for first-degree murder. Both Melinda and Gary were deaf and communicated through sign language.

### **6. Patsy Dillard, 37**

**St. Paul**

**March 1, 1992**

Patsy died in her bedroom from a stab wound in her chest. She was killed by her estranged husband, Preston Dillard III, 34, just days before she had planned to move with her teenage children to Illinois to escape his violence. Patsy's nine-year-old niece witnessed the stabbing. Patsy's stepmother said. "In the

last two weeks she kept saying, 'He's gonna kill me, I just know it.'" Patsy had reported at least four domestic assaults by Dillard to police: two assaults with his fists, one with a gun to her head, and one with her car. Charges were only filed in two of the cases and only one conviction resulted, for disorderly conduct. She also obtained three orders for protection in the past year to keep her husband away. A restraining order was in effect at the time of her slaying. In the past Dillard had broken into her home, stolen possessions and clothing, threatened her with a knife, flattened tires on her car and warned her, "If you call the police, I'll kill you." Dillard was charged, and pleaded guilty to, second-degree murder as part of a plea bargain in which prosecutors agreed to drop plans to seek a first-degree murder indictment. He was sentenced to 25 years in prison. The judge added nearly nine years to the sentence called for by state guidelines because of the violation of a protection order and because Patsy was killed in her own home in the presence of children. Patsy is survived by three children from a previous marriage.

**7. Pa Nhai Lee, 59**

**St. Paul**

**March 20, 1992**

Pa Nhai was beaten to death in her apartment with a hammer. Her son, Kong Meng Lee, 20, was charged with second-degree murder, but was found not guilty by reason of mental illness. He was committed to the Minnesota State Security Hospital.

**8. Gloria Letness, 57**

**Moorhead**

**Disappeared March 25, 1992**

Five days after her disappearance, Gloria's body was found in an industrial park in Granger, Indiana, by a passerby. She died from massive blood loss due to multiple stab wounds and had been beaten. Neighbors report hearing a disturbance from Gloria's apartment the night she is believed to have been killed. They report being awakened by someone banging on the walls and hearing a female voice calling out "help me" several times. The voice reportedly became weaker each time. Police arrested a man Gloria had been dating, Ronald Brodell, 47. He was apprehended on a highway in Wisconsin driving a car owned by Gloria. He was charged with two counts of first-degree murder and one count of second-degree murder. He pleaded guilty to one charge of second-degree murder and awaits sentencing.

**9. Dorothy Walters, 48**

**Fairmont**

**March 27, 1992**

Dorothy and her husband, Dennis Walters, 57, were found dead in their bed when their sons returned home from school. The police investigation determined that Dorothy had been shot in the head with a .44 caliber handgun by her husband who then committed suicide. Dorothy is survived by two sons.

**10. Gladys Lange, 68**

**St. Cloud**

**April 3, 1992**

Police determined that Gladys was shot in the head with a pistol by her estranged husband, Raymond Lange, 70, who then committed suicide. Both bodies were found inside a car in a downtown parking lot. The Langes had been married for a long time, but had recently separated.

**11. Catherine Bliss, 39**

**Golden Valley**

**May 20, 1992**

Catherine was stabbed to death in her home. She was found dead in the kitchen by a renter who shared the home with her and her boyfriend, Joseph Jakubik, 34. She had been stabbed repeatedly with a kitchen knife. Catherine's boyfriend was found in a car that was running in the garage. He was overcome by carbon monoxide poisoning, but was revived at a medical center. He was arrested and charged with second-degree murder.

**12. Susan Yach, 44****Winona****July 4, 1992**

Susan was admitted to the hospital on July 2nd. Hospital officials notified police that she had been admitted with what appeared to wounds suffered during a beating. She had a blood clot on the left side of her brain and was in a coma. Two days later she died. At the time of her death, Susan's husband, Edwin Yach, 52, was serving one year of probation for conviction of a 1991 domestic assault against Susan. In October, Edwin Yach was charged with second-degree murder, first- and second-degree manslaughter and third- and fourth-degree assault in the death of his wife.

**13. Lelia Johnson Smith, 74****Minneapolis****July 10, 1992**

Lelia was found dead in her apartment. She had been stabbed more than 36 times in the face, chest, left hand and legs. Her body was covered with a tablecloth, blanket, clothes and trash. Her head was covered with a plastic garbage bag. A utility knife was found underneath the body. A neighbor said she had heard smashing, thumping and dragging noises coming from the apartment during the night. Lelia's daughter, Alona Ahmen, 45, admitted to stabbing her mother and then calling police to report the homicide. Another daughter told police that Ahmen had assaulted her mother on July 5th and had moved away for a few days. The family was in the process of having Ahmen committed as mentally ill. Ahmen was charged with second-degree murder.

**14. Carol Abelseth, 26****South Minneapolis****July 15, 1992**

Carol's partially clad body was found in a park. She had been beaten severely on the head with a blunt object. She was last seen talking to a man in a car outside of a bar where she had been visiting with friends. First-degree murder charges were filed against an acquaintance, Mark "Ace" Harris, 27.

**15. Barbara Lund, 55****Minnetonka****August 5, 1992**

Barbara and her boyfriend, Kevin Kelly, 49, were found dead from gunshot wounds in the home of her estranged husband, Russell Lund Jr., 59. Barbara was shot in the shoulder, chest, and head. Her body was found at the foot of the basement stairs. Kevin Kelly was shot in the shoulder, finger and twice in the head. On the day of the murders, Russell requested a meeting with Barbara to discuss their pending divorce. Russell Lund Jr. was charged with first-degree, premeditated murder in both of the deaths. On Halloween night, Russell Lund committed suicide in the psychiatric ward of a local hospital where he was being held pending trial.

**16. Leslie Perkins, 30****Minneapolis****August 6, 1992**

Leslie was found dead in her bedroom. She had been strangled. Her boyfriend, Verdell Shannon, 30, apparently strangled her, then called a friend in tears and asked her to come over. The friend notified police who found Shannon hiding in a nearby garage. He admitted to police that he choked Leslie. Earlier in the summer, Leslie had moved into a battered women's shelter to escape abuse by her boyfriend. She left on June 25th to move into transitional housing. Two young children were asleep in another bedroom when she was killed. Shannon was charged with second-degree murder. Leslie is survived by four children.

**17. Angie Kelker, 15****St. Paul****September 2, 1992**

Angie ran in to a bedroom of her home where her brother was watching television, fell to her knees and then collapsed face forward onto the floor. Her brother thought she was kidding around so left the room. He returned after a few minutes and found her in the same spot on the floor. He shook her and when she didn't move, rolled her over to discover she had blood running from her nose. Paramedics were unable to save Angie. She died from a gunshot wound in her back. Her 17-year-old boyfriend, Michael "Mookie" Hill, surrendered to police four hours later, stating he accidentally shot her. He was charged with second-degree manslaughter. Police believe he may have used the same gun on August 11th when he allegedly shot a Minneapolis man in the leg. Charges were not filed in that case because the shooting victim refused to cooperate with police. Witnesses told police Hill is a member of a street gang. Family members and friends believe the shooting was a malicious act and say Hill was abusive to Angie in the past and had threatened her. Angie would have been a Highland Park High School freshman this fall.

**18. Pamela Smude, 28****Pine Center****August 17, 1992**

Pamela's body was found in the bedroom of her home. She died from multiple wounds from a sharp instrument. She had numerous lacerations to the neck, arms and lower body. Her roommate, Jennifer Hickman, 38, was charged with second-degree murder.

**19. Pamela Lindstrom, 42****South St. Paul****September 23, 1992**

Pamela was reported missing by her family. Police found her body in the bedroom of her apartment. She died from multiple stab wounds to her chest, which punctured her lung. Patches of skin and her liver had been removed. Police arrested Thomas DeWayne Schultz, 41, a recent acquaintance whom Pamela had dated after they met through a singles dating service. He has been charged with first-degree murder.

**20. Holly Schwerzler, 35****Osseo****Body found October 1, 1992**

Police went to Holly's home to check on her safety after she did not report to her job on Monday morning and having not been seen since Saturday. They discovered Holly's boyfriend there, Mark Stutelberg, 38, who was wanted on a charge of probation violation. Stutelberg refused to surrender to police for eight hours. Holly was not found in the home she shared with Stutelberg and their 12-year-old son. Her friends and relatives feared she had been harmed or killed by Stutelberg, who has a history of abusing her. Police had responded to numerous domestic assault calls to their home. Stutelberg faces three domestic abuse charges, two pending, and one in which he failed to make a court appearance. One neighbor reported that Holly's son once came to their house asking for nails so he could nail the door shut to keep Stutelberg out. Holly's body was eventually found wrapped in a sheet in the woods of Goodhue County. Stutelberg remains in jail for alleged probation violation. The murder is under investigation, but family members were told by authorities that Stutelberg is a suspect in this case.

**21. Otha Brown, 59****Minneapolis****October 4, 1992**

Otha's body was found in an alley. She died of stab wounds. Her daughter's boyfriend, Michael Scales, who was living with Otha at the time of the slaying, was arrested and was expected to be charged with her murder.

**22. Christine Hecker, 23                      Carlton County                      October 20, 1992**

Christine's body, and the body of her husband, Jody Hecker, 29, was found inside their rural home. Both had been shot in the head. Christine was found on the living room floor and Jody Hecker was found in the bedroom. Police believe Jody Hecker shot and killed his wife, then committed suicide.

**23. Candis Marie Koch, 31                      St. Paul                      November 1, 1992**

Candis was found dead from multiple gunshot wounds to the head about an hour after her friend, Lisa M. Johnson, 25, walked to a neighbor's house to get help after being shot in the face at her home. Lisa named a mutual acquaintance, Otha Townsend, 23, as the man who shot her and killed Candis. Townsend was charged with two counts of attempted murder of Lisa, who is a pregnant mother of two. Police believe Townsend also shot Candis; however, no charges have been filed yet in this case.

**24. Cassandra Norcross, 16                      Detroit Lakes                      November 5, 1992**

Cassandra was hit in the left temple with a tire iron on October 31st. She was on life-support systems, and died on Nov. 5th. A man she had dated, William Charles Brown, 18, was charged with second-degree murder and first-degree manslaughter in her death. He reported that he and Cassandra had been arguing when he hit her across the head with the metal bar.

**25. Donna Wright, 49                      Minneapolis                      November 11, 1992**

Donna died from a stab wound to the back. She was found by a passerby lying face down in the courtyard of a housing unit a half block from her home. A 29-year-old man who had been staying with Wright in recent months is being sought by police for questioning.

**26. Eloise Davis, 27                      Minneapolis                      November 13, 1992**

Police found Eloise stabbed to death in her home. She died from stab wounds in her face, neck and chest. Her husband, Norman Davis, had called 911 and reported that someone else had hurt his wife. He later admitted that he had stabbed her three times and was charged with second-degree murder.

**27. Marylen Morton, 26                      Duluth                      November 26, 1992**

Marylen was found shot to death, with a deer rifle, in a stairway of her home. A man she lived with, John Florek, 32, was found nearby with stab wounds to his chest and was hospitalized in critical condition. The suspect in the shooting and stabbing was Marian Szczepkowski who apparently shot himself to death after attacking Marylen and John. Police said he had come to the house armed with a rifle and knife and accosted the two victims. John's hands appear to have been tied together with rope. Police believe that Sznepkowski was attempting to tie up John, but he managed to escape. All three worked together at a local food plant. Szczepkowski and Marylen had lived together at a different address previously, but had ended their relationship several months earlier.

**28. Erica Lynn Grothe, 14                      Minneapolis                      December 8, 1992**

Erica was shot to death in a Minneapolis apartment by her 21-year-old boyfriend, Chandler Stephens. Stephens had believed that Erica was 17, and found out her true age the night of the shooting and feared getting into trouble for having sex with a minor. Witnesses said they watched as Stephens pointed the gun at Erica's head and pulled the trigger on two empty cylinders as another juvenile held her head and she

pleaded for them to stop. Stephens then shot her with a live shell. Stephens was taken into custody as he fled the apartment building and has been charged with second-degree murder. An accomplice, Jewell Harwell, 18, has also been charged.

**29. Elizabeth Topel, 86**

**Minneapolis**

**December 15, 1992**

Elizabeth, a resident of a Minneapolis nursing home, and her husband of 60 years, Vincent, were found dead in the bathroom of her room at the nursing home. Police have determined that Vincent shot Elizabeth and then turned the gun on himself.

**30. Paula Sue Danielson, 40**

**Grand Marais**

**December 20, 1992**

Paula was shot by her husband, Kim Danielson, in the bedroom of their home. Their son, Shane, 20, was awakened by the shots and rushed to their room. He saw his father standing at the foot of the bed pointing a revolver at his own chest. As he pleaded with his father not to shoot, his father said, "This is for you, my son," and pulled the trigger. Paula had been shot twice, in the chest and abdomen, and Kim Danielson had been shot once in the chest. The deaths were ruled a murder-suicide. Paula is also survived by a teenage son, Mark.

**31. May Young, 34**

**Minneapolis**

**December 23, 1992**

A police dog that was being exercised by its handler discovered the body of May Catherine Young in the parking lot of Theodore Wirth Park. She had been strangled and was partly clothed. Her boyfriend, Bemand Marcus McAllister, 30, has been charged with second-degree murder. Acquaintances of the couple told police that after an argument between May and McAllister, he was overheard to say he was going to kill May. McAllister is alleged to have said, "I did it I did it...I can't believe I killed her, I did it, I can't believe she made me that mad." An acquaintance also said McAllister said he dumped the body at the park so someone could find it and that he wanted to dig a grave, but the ground was frozen too hard.

## **CHILDREN MURDERED:**

**1. Natasha Helms, 9 months**

**Blue Earth**

**September 17, 1991**

Deniece Helms, 20, testified that she suffocated her daughter after 3 hours of futile efforts to stop her crying. Despite her best efforts, the baby would not stop crying and distraught and frustrated she stuffed toilet tissue in the baby's mouth to stop her crying. Deniece has pled guilty to second-degree murder.

**2. Trever Kelling, 14 months**

**Dodge Center**

**February 2, 1992**

Trever was found dead in his crib by his mother, Regina Wandrey, 18. He had been strangled. Regina's boyfriend, Matthew Starkson was charged with two counts of first-degree murder, two counts of second-degree murder and one count of first-degree manslaughter. On September 29th, Starkson was found guilty on two counts of first-degree murder, two counts of second-degree murder and one count of first-degree manslaughter. He was sentenced to life in prison, but was released on November 26th pending a new trial.

**3. Steven A. Halliburton, 2                      St. Paul                      February 7, 1992**

Callie Halliburton, Steven's mother, lit two candles in wall sconces and left her apartment. One of the candles fell and ignited a fire in the living room where Steven had been sleeping on a couch. Steven died in the fire. Callie Halliburton has pleaded guilty to second-degree manslaughter, causing Steven's death by negligence that created an unreasonable risk.

**4. Kevin Qunell, 17 months                      Forest Lake                      June 24, 1992**

Kevin was taken unconscious from the home of his mother's boyfriend, William Swanson, 33. Kevin died from a skull fracture. He also had a broken rib, a burned hand and bruises over much of his body. Swanson has been charged with first-degree murder, second-degree murder, first-degree assault and two counts each of third-degree assault and malicious child punishment.

**5. Thomas Hanks, Jr., 8 months                      Minneapolis                      July 11, 1992**

Thomas died of massive, blunt trauma injuries to his head. According to a complaint filed, his mother's ex-boyfriend, Gary Stewart, 22, of Pine City, slammed him into the dashboard of his car, head-butted him, and threw him on the ground. He reportedly was angry at his girlfriend, Jody Waube, for her involvement with another man. While driving with Jody's two children in the car, he reportedly hit the brakes of the car, causing the baby to fly off the front seat, hit the dashboard and fall to the floor. He then, allegedly, hit the baby's head twice with his own head and while a horrified neighbor watched through her kitchen window, hurled Thomas into the yard. The abuse was witnessed by Thomas' three-year-old sister. Stewart was charged with second-degree murder.

**6. Ryan Ford, 1                      Eagan                      August 6, 1992**

Ryan was brought to a medical center by his babysitter. He was not breathing and his heart had stopped. He was resuscitated, but never regained consciousness. He was declared brain dead and taken off life support systems. Ryan suffered what appeared to be head trauma that was not accidental. On December 18, 1992, Ryan's babysitter, Susan Evelyn Roers, was indicted on one count of first-degree murder involving child abuse and one count of second-degree murder while committing a felony.

**7. Christina Gretillant, 4                      Rapidan                      October 3, 1992**

Christina died in her mother's arms from stab wounds. Witnesses said Christina's father, Harlan Gretillant, 47, repeatedly stabbed his adopted daughter and Jody Gretillant, 25, his estranged wife, in front of their home. Jody was wounded in the chest and arm. After the assault, Gretillant jumped in his car and drove away. He turned around and came back through town at a high speed and crashed into Jody's car. He died from the impact. The Gretillant's had recently separated. Neighbors said, "She was really getting her life together. She had just bought the car and she wouldn't let him drive it."

**8. Raquel Crowe, 1                      St. Paul                      December 17, 1992**

Raquel was found unconscious on the floor of her home and was pronounced dead on arrival at St. Paul Medical Center. The medical examiner determined that the child died of asphyxia.



## **FRIENDS AND FAMILY MEMBERS MURDERED:**

**1. Lyle Philblad, 55**

**St. Paul**

**January 25, 1992**

Lyle was found dead in the kitchen of his home. He was stabbed at least 30 times and beaten on the head with a hammer. His daughter's former boyfriend, James Balentine, 21, was charged with premeditated first-degree murder and intentional second-degree murder. He was convicted of intentional second-degree murder and sentenced to 31 years and three months in prison.

**2. Kevin Kelly, 49**

**Minnetonka**

**August 5, 1992**

Kevin and his girlfriend, Barbara Lund, were found shot to death in the home of Barbara's estranged husband, Russell Lund, Jr. Reportedly, Kevin had accompanied Barbara to the home to discuss divorce proceedings between Barbara and Russell. Russell Lund, Jr. was charged with first-degree, premeditated murder.

**1992 FEMICIDE REPORT - Women and Children Murdered"** - is compiled from news accounts and information provided by law enforcement agencies, county attorneys, court administrators, battered women's programs, and family members and friends of murder victims. Please contact us if you have updated or more complete information on any homicide.

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