

Minnesota Coalition for Battered Women



590 Park Street, Suite 410
St. Paul, MN 55103
Voice/TDD: (651) 646-6177
Fax: (651) 646-1527
Email: mcbw@mcbw.org
Web: www.mcbw.org

1990 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 1990:

At least 16 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.

WOMEN MURDERED:

1. Mavis Eagelman, 37

Minneapolis

March 5, 1990

Mavis was stabbed to death in her Minneapolis apartment. Her 31-year old husband, Dean Martin Hunter, was arrested and charged with two counts of second-degree murder in her death. He pled guilty to manslaughter in the first-degree and was sentenced to 93 months in prison.

2. Rita Ziehwein, 42

Wright County

March 9, 1990

Rita died of a gunshot wound to the chest. She was shot in her rural Wright County home. Her 48-year old husband, James Edward Ziehwein, was arrested and charged with first-degree murder. He pled guilty to second-degree murder and was sentenced to 20 years in prison.

3. Colleen Buckley, 23

Richfield

April 21, 1990

Colleen was found beaten and strangled to death in her home. Her boyfriend, Lionel Washington, 29, was arrested and charged with third-degree assault on a friend of Colleen's, Mary Kay Ekmark, 22, of Minneapolis. While walking together, Washington began striking Ekmark with a sharp object during a quarrel. She was treated for puncture wounds to the head and a fractured hand. Police were called and Washington fled. After talking with Ekmark, police went to check on Colleen and found her dead. He remains a suspect in Colleen's death. Washington was found guilty of third-degree assault against Mary Kay and was sentenced to five years in prison.

4. Dawn LaMere, 27

Parkers Prairie

April 22, 1990

Dawn was shot with a .22 caliber pistol by her husband, Jeffrey LaMere, 31, who then committed suicide. Dawn was hospitalized in critical condition with severe head injuries, and died on April 24th. Their two children, ages 5 and 9, were home at the time of the shooting.

5. Bethany Muller, 16

Roseville

June 10, 1990

Bethany was stabbed to death in a triple stabbing which left her sister, Laura Muller, and her sister's friend, Kristin Salyers, both 22, injured. Laura Muller's former boyfriend, Michael G. Lee, 31, was convicted of premeditated first-degree murder and sentenced to life in prison. He was also found guilty of two counts of attempted first-degree murder for attacking Laura and Kristin. Lee broke into the home of his former girlfriend and stabbed the three women. Bethany was stabbed 22 times in the head, neck, and chest. She died wrapped in a blanket on the sofa. Laura Muller was awakened by her sister's screams and was stabbed repeatedly in the breasts and abdomen. Her friend Kristin, who rolled over in bed to shield her 3-year-old son, was battered on the head and neck until she stopped screaming and feigned unconsciousness. The next day police found messages in blood along a nearby railroad line which they attribute to Lee which read, "I love my family and I am very sorry, but I wasn't happy without Laura." In March, Lee had been charged with domestic assault and criminal damage to property and was ordered to stay away from Laura Muller after he allegedly smashed his fist through the windshield of her car. After Laura ended the relationship in April, Lee made repeated attempts to contact her, threatened several people who he thought were keeping her from him.

6. Kate Herbert, 37**Lakeville****Missing on June 19, 1990
Body found Dec. 17, 1990**

Kate disappeared from the home of her estranged husband on the evening of June 19, 1990, following a domestic dispute. Her husband, Ricky Herbert, 37, was the last one to see Kate and claimed she walked away from the residence, leaving behind her purse, house keys, vehicle, and six-year-old daughter of whom she had legal custody. Ricky Herbert left the state of Minnesota the day after Kate was reported missing. He remained a suspect with the Lakeville Police Department for six months and finally returned from Louisiana on December 17th to lead authorities to the site where he had allegedly buried her, about 30 miles south of her home. Ricky has since been charged with second-degree murder. The case is scheduled to appear before a Grand Jury on January 25th, where the charge could either be changed to first-degree murder or dropped. Kate had previously received a court order for protection to protect her from abuse by Herbert. She was survived by two children ages 6 and 10.

7. Beverly Newell, 35**Minneapolis****June 20, 1990**

Beverly was killed in downtown Minneapolis outside the Hennepin County Government Center, where she worked. Her throat was slashed as she arrived for work. She told police and court officials that her former boyfriend, Hayden Taylor, 45, had been threatening and harassing her, and she went to court the day before she died to get a court order for protection to keep him away from her. The order was signed by a judge two hours after she died, before her identity was revealed. Taylor was convicted of intentional second-degree murder and second-degree murder while committing a felony, but acquitted of first-degree murder. Taylor was sentenced to 25 1/2 years, the maximum penalty for intentional murder. According to court records, there was a history of violence by Taylor against Beverly dating to 1987. Beverly's co-workers said Taylor threatened her the week before she died, saying he would kill her if she ended the relationship. Taylor said he had been drinking heavily and using drugs throughout the night before Newell was killed.

8. Cynthia Schegel-Wilson, 42**St. Louis Park****July 2, 1990**

Cynthia was found beaten and stabbed to death in her home after obtaining a court order for protection barring her estranged husband, Ron Wilson, 34, from contacting her. Ron Wilson turned himself in to police and has been charged with first-degree murder. Cynthia's daughter, Christina Schlegel, 24, reported being aware for a long time that her mother was being abused. Three days prior to her death, Cynthia had obtained a court order for protection because her husband had beaten and harassed her. She had also sought information and support from the Hopkins Project battered women's program. Police say a flammable liquid had been poured onto the floor of her home, apparently in the hopes a pilot light or some other spark might cause a fire and disguise the murder.

9. Linda Simmons, 40**Sunfish Lake****July 22, 1990**

Linda was killed by a gunshot wound to the head. Police say the shooting occurred two days after Linda had called police to report that her husband was drunk and breaking dishes. Police responding to the call took Simmons to the Dakota Co. Receiving Center for detoxification. Police reported there was no evidence of physical violence at the time, but decided to remove him from the house, and Simmons consented to go to detox. Detox authorities could have held Simmons but he was released by court order less than three hours after admittance. Dakota Co. District Judge William Thuet signed the order at the request of Attorney James O'Connell, who represented Simmons. O'Connell took Simmons to a motel and it is not known how he got home after that. On Sunday, Simmons called a friend to report that he had killed his wife. The couple's three children, two boys, ages 5 and 7, and an 18-month-old

daughter, were home at the time of the shooting. Investigators reported Linda was leaving her home with her two sons when her husband grabbed her arm, put a gun to her head and fired from two inches away. When the shot was fired, the 7-year-old was holding his mother's hand. The 5-year-old had just stepped outside. Both witnessed the shooting. According to police, Simmons was heard telling the boys, "Life is going to change. Mom won't be able to nag you anymore. Dad's going to jail for a long time." He also told police, "She just wouldn't stop bugging me." Simmons, 41, has been charged with first- and second-degree murder. He has pleaded not guilty by reason of mental illness, intoxication, temporary mental illness, and temporary mental illness induced by intoxication. He is free on bail and living in a halfway house in St. Louis Park while awaiting trial. He must refrain from consuming alcohol and take a drug that causes illness when alcohol is consumed. He must also wear an electronic monitoring device.

10. Barbara Dokotah-Littlewolf, 31 **Cass Lake** **July 27, 1990**

Barbara was pushed from a car and then struck and killed while walking along the old Bemidji highway that runs between Cass Lake and Bemidji. Her husband, Ted Littlewolf, has been arrested and charged with second-degree manslaughter in her death. Barbara had previously sought shelter as a battered woman. Ted Littlewolf served time previously on a reduced sentence for the axe-murder of his first wife.

11. Nicole Christine Johnson **Crystal** **August 5, 1990**

Nicole was found with multiple stab wounds in the waterbed of her home. Neighbors living in the apartment below her reported to the apartment caretaker that "rusty" water was dripping through their ceiling. Upon investigation, he discovered Nicole's body lying in a pool of bloody water on top of the waterbed, which had been punctured during the assault. Eric Koskela was arrested and convicted of first-degree murder. He is serving a life sentence. She is survived by her children.

12. Kimberly Marie Leyde, 24 **Little Falls** **August 17, 1990**

Kimberly's body was found when sheriff's deputies responded to a report of a fire and possible domestic dispute at a Little Falls home. Daniel Joseph Croteau, 26, of Little Falls was charged with second-degree murder in Kimberly's beating death. When police arrived at the apartment they shared, they found smoke coming from a fire in a couch. They later discovered Kimberly's body in a partially filled bathtub. She had bruises on her face and upper body and an autopsy showed she died of multiple blows to the head. She was identified through dental records. Daniel Croteau was observed hitting Kimberly the previous day. When he was arrested his hands were cut and bruised.

13. Mindy Wright, 23 **Owatonna** **September 26, 1990**

Mindy was shot to death in her home, allegedly by her boyfriend, Thomas Boettcher, 42, who then committed suicide.

14. Michelle Warren, 23 **St. Paul** **October 7, 1990**

Michelle's boyfriend, Timothy Gosselin, 23, apparently shot Michelle four times in the head with a 9mm handgun before shooting himself to death in his home. Both bodies were discovered by Michelle's mother when she went to the home because she had not heard from her daughter for two days. The couple had lived together in the home but Michelle had moved out about two weeks earlier. Neighbors who live next door said they frequently heard loud arguments coming from the home. A

cousin said, "He was just a normal guy as far as I know." A relative said Gosselin at one time threatened to kill Michelle and himself if she dated anyone else. Police found a calendar in the house with a note written on September 29th saying the couple had "broken up for the last time." Gosselin had suffered from alcoholism and drug dependency and underwent treatment for the addictions several years ago.

15. Magdaline George, 32

St. Paul

November 10, 1990

Magdaline's teenage daughter found her strangled to death in a closet of her apartment. Neighbors said there were frequent sounds of fighting coming from her apartment. One evening, a neighbor identified "sounds of someone choking and being thumped around." Four days prior to her death, another neighbor stated he heard a woman screaming for someone to call police. Police never came. Police records do not show any calls to Magdaline George's apartment. A former boyfriend, Ray Charles Vaughns, 38, was taken into custody. Charges were dropped due to insufficient evidence. She is survived by her 3 children.

16. Karen Casarez, 37

White Oak Twp.

December 27, 1990

Karen was pronounced dead at the hospital after being shot at twice. Her daughter, Corrie Casarez, 18, reported the shooting after her parents had a verbal altercation, where her father chased her mother around, then got his gun. Her Husband, James Casarez Sr., 42, was charged with second- degree murder. According to the Hubbard Co. Attorney in charge of the case, there were no incidents of previous domestic abuse reported since the family moved there four years ago, though James Casarez Sr. had been arrested in Ramsey County for prior incidents of domestic assault. According to the complaint, Casarez admitted shooting Karen Casarez, but said hitting her was accidental. She is survived by two adult children.

"1990 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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Minnesota Coalition for Battered Women
1821 University Ave. W., Suite S-112
St Paul, MN 55104**