

Minnesota Coalition for Battered Women



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1991 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 during 1991:

At least 12 women and 6 of their children were murdered in cases where the suspected, alleged, or convicted perpetrator was a current or former husband, boyfriend, intimate partner, household or family member, or friend or acquaintance of the woman.

At least 2 family members, friends, or neighbors were murdered in cases where they acted to protect or defend a woman and the suspected, alleged, or convicted perpetrator was a current or former husband, boyfriend, intimate partner, household or family member, or friend or acquaintance of the woman.

WOMEN MURDERED:

1. Mary Ann Johnson, 41

San Francisco Township

April 21, 1991

2. Jodi Johnson, 15

Mary Ann and her daughter Jodi were found dead in bed in the family home. Mary Ann was shot in the chest and Jodi in the head with a 12-gauge shotgun by Mary Ann's estranged husband, Ralph (Red Dog) Johnson, 56, who then committed suicide. Another daughter, Kimberly Johnson, 16, was sleeping in another bedroom and was awakened by the gunshots. She rushed to her mother's bedroom, and then ran away when her father warned her by saying, "I just shot your mother and I'm going to off myself." Kimberly returned to her mother's bedroom after hearing another shot and discovered the bodies of her mother, sister, and father. The Johnsons had been married for 20 years but had not lived together for two years. Mary Ann had filed for divorce four month earlier. Court records filed in the divorce contain allegations of threats and assaults by Ralph against Mary Ann and violent behavior toward his family. A restraining order had been filed against Ralph when the divorce papers were filed.

3. Pamela Sweeney, 35

Andover

May 31, 1991

Pamela murdered in her home: struck on the head, shot in the head with a .22 revolver and stabbed four times in the chest with a butcher knife. Patrick Walsh, 39, of Coon Rapids, was convicted of first-degree murder in her slaying. Pamela and Walsh were acquaintances and coworkers. He was characterized during the trial as a would-be suitor who was rebuffed by Pamela. They had carpooled to work until Pamela stopped because of her apprehensions about him. She told her minister that Walsh called her repeatedly, came to her house at night, and harassed her in other ways. She had told her coworkers that she feared Walsh but did not report him to police because she feared what he would do. Walsh was sentenced to life in prison for Pamela's murder. He will be eligible for parole in 30 years. Before the age of 25, Walsh had attacked 8 people, all but one of them women or girls, injuring 3 seriously. Walsh is also the suspect in the 1980 disappearance of a Roseville woman and the 1984 stabbing death of a Minneapolis woman. Pamela is survived by a 5-year-old son.

4. Ruth Munden 61

Minneapolis

June 6, 1991

Ruth's body was found in her room at a Minneapolis group home. She had been strangled and had bruises on her wrists and around her mouth, suggesting she might have been bound and gagged. She was found nude with her nightgown on the floor beside her bed. John Petee, another group home resident, said that two had watched television and drank beer the previous evening, then had gone into Ruth's room and began "fooling around." He said they later returned to the living room to watch television. The next morning, another resident who is physically disabled, asked to have his breakfast made, a duty usually performed by Ruth. Petee told him that Ruth was not feeling well, and made the breakfast himself. John Petee was indicted by a grand jury on charges of third-degree murder and is awaiting trial.

5. Jo Carrol Reed, 29

Minneapolis

June 15, 1991

Jo Carrol was shot in the head in her apartment that she shared with her boyfriend, John E. Allen, 42. Allen was charged with second-degree murder in her death. He said they had been arguing in the kitchen when he pushed her and that Jo had grabbed a butcher knife. He went into the bedroom, got a handgun, and returned to the kitchen, where he shot her in the head. Allen was convicted of second-degree murder and was sentenced to 25 ½ years in prison.

6. Julie Everson, 29**Minneapolis****Body found June 26, 1991**

Julie's body was discovered in a 3-foot deep grave next to the triplex where she lived. She is believed to have died from suffocation, possibly due to strangulation. The owner of the house, Russell Swart, 30, and another resident, Keith Bullock, 28, were arrested and charged with her death. Her family had tried to convince police for 6 months that something had happened to Julie after she disappeared. Police told the family that Julie had probably just walked away. Keith Bullock had been charged with fifth-degree assault in December 2000, after Julie reported to police that he had beaten her. That was the last time she was seen alive. The assault case was dismissed in January 1991 when Julie failed to show up in court. Bullock shared a bath and kitchen with Julie. According to the police report filed in the assault case, he had stormed into her bedroom, accused her of stealing money, threw a cable box at her, threatened to kill her, dragged her into the living room and punched her in the face. Neighbors said they saw Russell Swart and Keith Bullock digging in the yard in late February during a period of warmer weather. Swart was charged with second-degree murder and was acquitted by a jury. Bullock was charged with second-degree murder and is awaiting trial.

7. Wanda Mobley, 23**Mankato****July 4, 1991**

Wanda was shot once in the back of the head with a twelve-gauge shotgun in a Mankato motel by Darrell Misar, 25, of Brookings, South Dakota. The couple had checked into the motel at 3 a.m. Investigators believe Misar slipped out of the room to retrieve the shotgun from his pickup truck after Wanda had fallen asleep. He then returned to the room where he shot Wanda while she slept and then turned the gun on himself. The couple had been dating since February. Wanda lived with her mother in Burnsville and is survived by 2 children. The deaths were ruled a homicide-suicide.

8. Geraldine (Geri) O'Meara-Steinbuch, 38**St. Cloud****July 17, 1991****9. Jessica O'Meara, 12****10. Ashley Steinbuch, 3**

Police found the bodies of Geri and her daughters, Jessica and Ashley, in their home. Geri had been beaten with a blunt instrument and had been struck several times on the upper torso and head. She was found on the floor next to her bed. Jessica and Ashley were strangled. Both girls were found with rope around their necks. Geri had been missing from work for several days before a coworker notified police. Authorities believe Geri, Jessica and Ashley were killed 3 or 4 days before they were found. Geri's husband, Dale Steinbuch, 34, has been charged with first-degree murder in the deaths of his wife, daughter and stepdaughter. Geri had volunteered at St. Cloud's battered women's shelter after escaping an abusive first marriage by fleeing to the shelter. From 1984 to 1987 she served on the shelter's board of directors and assisted with community education programs. The night before her murder, she had called the shelter to say she needed help because her marriage was disintegrating. She explained that her husband, a recovering alcoholic, was drinking again and she was going to leave him soon, taking the children with her. The advocate who spoke to Geri had asked her if she was afraid or needed to come to the shelter. Geri said no, she just needed someone to talk to.

11. Brenda Seykora, 48**Rural Mankato****July 24, 1991**

Brenda's husband, Richard Seykora, 49, first shot her with a 12-gauge shotgun as she was standing behind the front door of their home. She was hit in the left shoulder. Their 13-year-old daughter Tanya had already called the sheriff's office for help. Minutes later, with her father pointing the gun at her and telling her to hang up, Tanya called again and screamed, "Dad has just shot my mother!" When Brenda fled to the bathroom, Seykora followed her and shot her in the face at point-blank range. He then grabbed the phone from Tanya and hung it up. After Tanya persuaded her father not to hurt her, he shot his wife a third time and left the house. He was found in the front yard, dead from a self-inflicted gunshot wound to the head. The deaths have been ruled a homicide-suicide. The Seykoras had been married for 16 years.

12. Matt Zaharris, 19**Cottage Grove****July 24, 1991****13. Ronnie Singer, 11**

Police found Matt and Ronnie murdered in their home, shot multiple times with a handgun. Ronald Singer, 41, father and stepfather of the boys, was found at the same time, injured from a self-inflicted gunshot wound to the head. He died the next day. Police had intended to file two counts of second-degree murder against him. The boys were half-brothers who lived with their mother, Garda Singer, who was at work at the time of the shootings. She had divorced Ronald after filing for an order for protection against him in 1989, due to his threatening to kill her and the two boys. Under the protection order, Ronald was allowed to visit his son on weekends or have him stay over on Saturday nights at his home. Ronnie had told a friend he was afraid of his father and that he was so uncomfortable during his visits with his father that he usually tried to bring along a friend. Garda Singer said her former husband hadn't made any threats recently, although he stopped paying child support in January and she had taken legal steps to garnish his wages.

14. David Geissler, 14**Minneapolis****Body found August 7, 1991
in Polk Co., WI**

David's body was found in a sleeping bag in a Polk County, Wisconsin, lake. His feet were bound and his hands tied behind his back. He had been strangled with a rope. David had not been seen since July 26th when his father, Dennis Geissler, 41, supposedly took him on an out of state vacation. Dennis and his roommate, Jeffrey Mell, 29, were found dead together on August 3rd in Arizona, apparently a dual suicide. Police said they believed Dennis killed his son out of anger over his divorce two years earlier from Teri Geissler. On July 29th, Dennis mailed letters from Arizona to his adopted son, Hultman, and parents, which stated, "We won't be back. Mom took the divorce too far." The letters do not admit responsibility for David's death. Terri Geissler had been granted an order for protection in 1989 because of threats and assaults by Dennis. At a hearing she said, "My children are afraid of him; my 16-year-old son told me, after we moved out, he's been sleeping with a knife under his bed for the last two months. My little one has told me that he's very frightened of him when he flies into those rages."

15. Ruth Joanna Greenfield, 76**Albert Lea****September 9, 1991**

Ruth was found in her bedroom, shot to death with a shotgun. Police received a call from her husband, Lester Greenfield, 80, stating he had shot his wife and believed she was dead. Afterwards, he wrote a suicide note and shot himself in the head. In the note he stated he shot his wife because "she wasn't trying to get better." Ruth had undergone knee surgery recently but she was not suffering from a terminal illness and her medical problems presented no threat to her life. Friends and family stated that Lester had been in a deep depression for several days prior to the murder-suicide.

16. Georgianne Dieson, 57

Minneapolis

October 19, 1991

Georgianne was found beaten to death inside a storage room at the South Minneapolis service station where she worked. She died of head injuries. Police originally believed she was murdered during a robbery, but currently have one suspect in custody and it is someone with whom Georgianne was acquainted.

17. Elma Karsiko, 57

Cloquet

November 23, 1991

Elma was found strangled to death in her room at a hotel where she had lived for many years. She also had stab wounds to the neck. An 18-year-old man, Daniel Bailey, confessed to strangling and stabbing Elma. He told authorities that he and Elma were drinking beer together in her apartment when they began arguing. He said he pushed her onto a bed, grabbed some wire, and strangled her. After she was dead, he stabbed her several times in the neck with a steak knife and then tied her hands behind her back. Daniel Bailey was charged with second-degree and first-degree murder.

18. Joan Green, 40

Chaska

December 19, 1991

Joan was slain in her home by a single shot from a 12-gauge shotgun. Edward Blitz, 39, her live-in boyfriend, was arrested and has been charged with first- and second-degree murder.

FAMILY, FRIENDS OR NEIGHBORS MURDERED:

1. Perotta Thirkfield, 32

Minneapolis

June 16, 1991

Perotta was stabbed and killed by his brother, Keith Thirkfield, when he attempted to prevent him from stabbing Keith's girlfriend, Daphne Prince. Keith had grabbed a kitchen knife and put it to Daphne's neck, then threw a second knife at her. He then grabbed a third knife and was chasing Daphne when Perotta tried to stop him. They struggled and Perotta was stabbed in the side. Keith Thirkfield was charged with second-degree murder. These charges were dropped when he pled guilty to charges of second-degree manslaughter and second-degree assault.

2. Julian Segura, 35

Eagan

August 30, 1991

Julian was shot to death as he attempted to intervene when John Falvey shot his estranged wife, Bonnie Falvey, in the hip. Julian was a friend of Bonnie's and was helping her load a moving truck for a move to California. Falvey showed up and shot Bonnie, which caused Julian to come to her rescue by striking the assailant in the head with a two-by-four. Falvey then fired his pistol at Julian and killed him. Bonnie told neighbors that she was afraid of her husband and had left him because he was abusive and violent. She had petitioned the court for a protection order against him 5 years earlier. John Falvey was charged with second-degree murder in Julian's death and attempted first-degree murder in the assault on Bonnie.

"1991 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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