

# Twin Cities Reader

May 24-30, 1995

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## Serial Secrets



**No one  
wants to  
admit it,  
but a serial  
killer may be  
stalking Twin  
Cities women.**

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# Serial Secrets



No one wants to admit it, but a serial killer may be stalking Twin Cities women.

By Nick Bryant

The Small Guys with the Big Service.

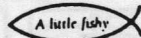


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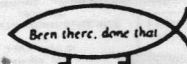
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 could be related."

— Lt. Mark Ellenberg,  
 Minneapolis Police  
 Department



that case, Green is charged with first-degree murder for the death of Karen Kulick of Bartow, Florida. Save a pair of tennis shoes, Kulick was nude when she was discovered stabbed and strangled to death in the middle of an intersection.

Because Green's general demeanor exuded a rarefied strain of venality that would have made him an immediate front-runner for the FBI's post-office poster boy of the month, his newfound status as "serial killer" immediately achieved credibility.

But Michael Campion quickly dismissed the whispers of "serial killer" that rippled through the local media. Campion, assistant superintendent of the Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension (BCA), stated unequivocally that Green was suspected in only two Twin Cities homicides. Without providing particulars surrounding Green's alleged Minnesota murder victims, Campion revealed that they were women between the ages of 25 and 35.

At least one person well-acquainted with many of the

unsolved local homicides believes that Green is responsible for more than two Twin Cities killings.

The BCA's denial has done little to silence suspicions among street prostitutes working the shadowy recesses of Broadway Street in north Minneapolis all the way to the fractured sidewalks of East Lake Street in south Minneapolis. Here, fear that a killer is targeting hookers persists. Marilyn, who puts in a hard day's night on a dank, decayed stretch of Lake Street, says that on her nocturnal rounds, rumors of a serial killer abound.

"Although we don't talk about it, the other girls know there's a psycho," she says. "It's always in the back of your mind, because it's so negative. . . . We think the guy picks you up and might be nice to you for the first or second time, and all of a sudden — he wigs out. . . . An acquaintance of mine had a certain spot where she would smoke rocks, and they found her dead in that spot. I think that the person who killed her must have known that's where she did her stuff."

Marilyn sighs pensively after disclosing the fate of her colleague. Investigators are cognizant of a serial killer stalking the streets of Minneapolis, she says, but have opted to badger prostitutes instead of hunting the perpetrator. "Too many women be getting killed and the police don't be doing shit about it," Marilyn says. "We're getting killed and they don't give a fuck. . . . They should come to the women and tell us what's going on and let us decide; instead they harass us."

Lt. Joe Corcoran, commander of the St. Paul Police Department's homicide division, dismisses accusations that cops go slow when homicide victims are prostitutes. Rather, he says, detectives often face difficult odds in their pursuit of

(continued on next page)

The head of an unidentified woman was discovered bobbing near the shore of Bone Lake in Washington County in June 1993. The woman had been in her 20s or 30s. She had brown eyes and short brown hair. Her ears were pierced. Her macabre homicide remains an unsolved case.

Between April 1986 and September 1992, the nude, strangled bodies of Willie May Harding, Felicia Fonda Williams and Lee Ann Bloomquist were found in or near watery graves in Minneapolis. Their grisly demises weren't extracted from an episode of the *X Files*, but rather from the unsolved homicide files of Twin Cities police departments.

The mutilated bodies of Sharon Ann Lingor, Virginia DeCoursey and Gloria Dean Clay were found between September 1986 and March 1993 on desolate stretches of Minneapolis railroad tracks. Once again, their slaughters weren't the fictitious products of Hollywood, but a trio of unsolved Twin Cities homicides.

The ominous images of these 34 young women who have endured premature, hideous deaths within a nine-year period prompt a disturbing question: Is a serial killer preying on Twin Cities women? Although such a query seems anathema to Minnesota Nice, a cherished conviction held by many denizens of the Twin Cities, the preceding images merit its exploration.

In March, that question invaded area living rooms when local TV stations splashed the face of Curtis Green all over the evening news. Dense, black brows lurched over Green's sunken, obsidian eyes. His gaunt, sallow countenance, framed with tufts of unkempt black hair, was snarled with sharp, jagged features — the facial equivalent of 20 miles of bad road.

Green, a Florida native who drifted to Minnesota in 1989, recently had fled back to Florida, where he has been indicted for the 1988 slaying of a 24-year-old woman. In

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these cases.

"Prostitutes are 'good' victims, because obviously they'll get into a car with a stranger, and many times they work in the evening when visibility by other people is limited," Corcoran says. "And typically they distrust the police, and other prostitutes that are working with them generally don't trust the police, either. Because of those circumstances, prostitute homicides are the most difficult to solve."

Given the everyday hazards of street prostitution and the growing fear that there is a killer at large, why don't Marilyn and her fellow workers get out of the life? "Once you start doing this [hooking], it's addicting. . . just like smoking cocaine or drinking," she says. "For some, it's the money. For some, it's the sex. For some, it's the thrill of being out here. I quit for awhile, but I was driven back. . . just like a drug."

**W**HISPER, a Minneapolis-based advocacy group devoted to women entangled in prostitution, has issued warnings since the early 1990s about the presence of a serial killer in the Twin Cities. Evelina Giobbe, director of WHISPER, has called for the formation of a task force to investigate the slayings of at least eight prostitutes in the Twin Cities since 1992. Giobbe maintains that local police have been less tenacious in pursuing these murders than in other homicides because prostitutes are "disposable women."

Giobbe's contentions were taken seriously for a short time last fall, after the hand and forearm of Martha Ann Bacon, a Minneapolis prostitute, were discovered in October 1993 in rural Wright County. Officials from numerous local law enforcement agencies, along with the BCA and the FBI, met to contemplate the formation of an inter-agency task force to coordinate the hunt for a possible serial killer. Officials decided to share information across jurisdictions; they did not create a task force, however. Investigators were skeptical of a single suspect in the prostitute slayings because of what they see as dissimilarities involved in their deaths, says Bill Jones, deputy police chief of Minneapolis.

Despite Jones' skepticism over the existence of a serial killer, there is evidence to suggest the contrary. Eight prostitutes killed here in four years is one thing; the Reader was able to compile a much longer list by examining records for open homicide cases involving women victims going back to 1986. The following list has been cross-referenced between anonymous, coded case entries from the BCA database and news reports of individual murders. It is limited to Twin Cities-area females between the ages of 12 and 40, who were strangled, stabbed or beaten to death or mutilated since 1986, and whose homicides remain unsolved.

Women are represented in disproportionately high numbers among those homicide victims whose cases remains unsolved; though 27 percent of all the state's homicide victims in the past 10 years were female, 35 percent of the state's unsolved murder cases involve a female victim. This discrepancy could be attributable to other causes, including under-investigation of prostitute killings, but it also could shore up the case for a serial killer who has so far eluded capture. Although a number of the victims on this list were prostitutes, most have no history of prostitution.

**April 1986:** Willie May Harding, 34, a St. Paul woman with a history of prostitution, was found nude and strangled to death in Theodore Wirth Lake in Golden Valley.

**June 1986:** Faye Ann Erickson, 20, of Minneapolis, was found strangled to death and nude at Crucible Steel Works in Minneapolis.

**June 1986:** Louise Flysjo, 28, was severely beaten and

stabbed to death in her St. Paul apartment.

**September 1986:** Sharon A. Lingor, 37, of Minneapolis, was found dead of multiple stab wounds on the railroad tracks near 29th Street and Columbus Avenue South in Minneapolis.

**November 1986:** Virginia DeCoursey, 36, of Minneapolis, was found beaten, strangled and nude, lying against the pillar of a railroad trestle spanning the Mississippi River near the University of Minnesota.

**May 1987:** Dorsel Hopkins, 26, of St. Paul, was found stabbed to death in Washington County near Highway 36 and Interstate 694.

**December 1987:** Armongene Mason, 40, of Minneapolis, was found stabbed to death and nude along a rural road in Columbus Township, Anoka County.

**December 1987:** Felicia Fonda Williams, 36, of Minneapolis, was found strangled and nude along the shore of Theodore Wirth Lake in Golden Valley.

**December 1988:** Cheryl Ann Prokop, 23, of St. Paul, was found strangled in her apartment on St. Paul's West Side. She was apparently strangled in the presence of her 4-year-old daughter.

**December 1988:** Nancy Stueber, 38, of Minneapolis, was found partially clad and stabbed to death under a railroad bridge in south Minneapolis.

**May 1989:** Catrina Gentry, 14, was found strangled and sexually assaulted in her St. Paul home.

**September 1989:** Brenda Lee Pikala, 29, of Minneapolis, was stabbed to death; her body was found beneath a Minnehaha footbridge.

**November 1989:** Heather Lamperd, 26, of Minneapolis, was found beaten and strangled in Chisago County's Sunrise River.

**February 1990:** Deltrece Marie Benson, 12, was found nude and strangled in her parents' Minneapolis home.

**August 1990:** Nicole Christine Johnson, 30, of Crystal, was found stabbed to death in her apartment.

**September 1990:** Linda Blakey, 38, a St. Paul woman with a history of prostitution, was found strangled and sexually assaulted in the courtyard of a St. Paul apartment building.

**November 1990:** Magdaline George, 40, was found stabbed to death in her St. Paul apartment.

**April 1991:** Sharon Marie Gorecki, 39, was found beaten to death in her south Minneapolis home.

**May 1991:** Theresa Johnson, 20, was stabbed to death in her Bloomington apartment complex.

**December 1991:** Belinda Thompson, 20, was found stabbed to death in her south Minneapolis apartment.

**July 1992:** Annette Seymour, 39, of St. Paul, was found partially clad and stabbed to death near the Cathedral of St. Paul.

**August 1992:** Carol Abelseh, 26, of Minneapolis, was found beaten to death in Bassett Creek Park.

**September 1992:** Lee Ann Bloomquist, 19, who had a history of prostitution, was found nude and strangled along Bassett Creek in Minneapolis.

**September 1992:** Linda Priebe, 40, of Minneapolis, who had a history of prostitution, was found stabbed to death in the basement entrance of Falconer's Cleaners at 1229 E. Lake St. in Minneapolis.

**December 1992:** Laura Ann Lamotte, 35, of Minneapolis, was found strangled in her basement.

**March 1993:** Gloria Dean Clay, 35, a Minneapolis woman with a history of prostitution, was found murdered on the railroad tracks near Washington Avenue North in Minneapolis.

**June 1993:** Jeanie Ann Childs, 35, a Minneapolis woman with a history of prostitution, was found stabbed to death at 3121 Pillsbury Ave. S. in Minneapolis.

**June 1993:** The head of a woman in her 20s or 30s was found floating near the shore of Bone Lake in northern



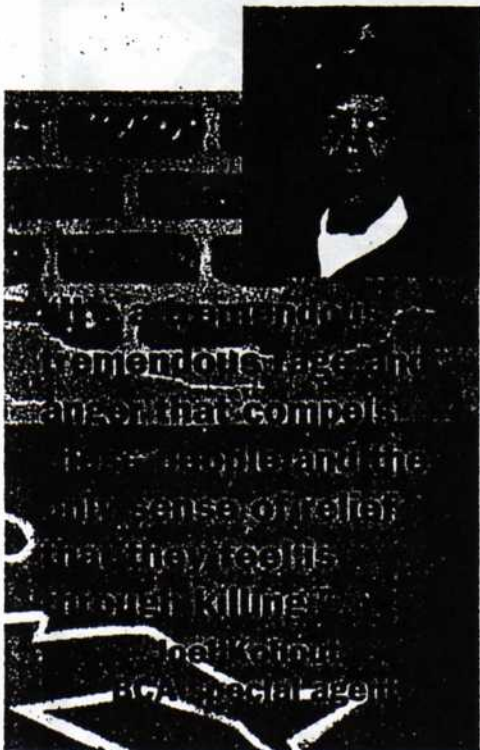
Washington County.

**June 1993:** The foot of a woman was found floating in the Mississippi River.

**July 1993:** Holly Spangler, 19, of Minneapolis, was found stabbed to death in a Bloomington park.

**October 1993:** Body parts of Martha Ann Bacon, 31, a Minneapolis woman with a history of prostitution, were found in Wright County.

**October 1993:** The body of Brenda Quadon, 24, a Minneapolis woman with a history of prostitution, was found near the railroad tracks at 29th Street and 13th Avenue South in Minneapolis. Although the medical examiner initially said Quadon's death was the result of blows from a blunt object, her death was later amended to a suicide.



**October 1994:** The badly decomposed body of an unidentified woman was found along a roadside ditch in Wright County.

**October 1994:** The decomposed bodies of a woman and her 1-year-old baby were found in a north Minneapolis apartment building. The woman had been stabbed to death; her infant had died of neglect and dehydration.

**B**CA special agent Joel Kohout specializes in profiling serial killers and rapists. A 23-year veteran of law enforcement, Kohout is one of 24 officers nationwide who has graduated from the FBI's Profiling Program based in Quantico, Virginia, the class made famous by Jodie Foster in *Silence of the Lambs*. Kohout won't comment specifically on the cases listed above, but she says those who assert lackadaisical police work on behalf of the prostitute slayings are wrong. "I know that some of these groups are upset because they don't think enough attention has been paid to these homicides. But a lot of times what's being done isn't always real visible, which doesn't mean that

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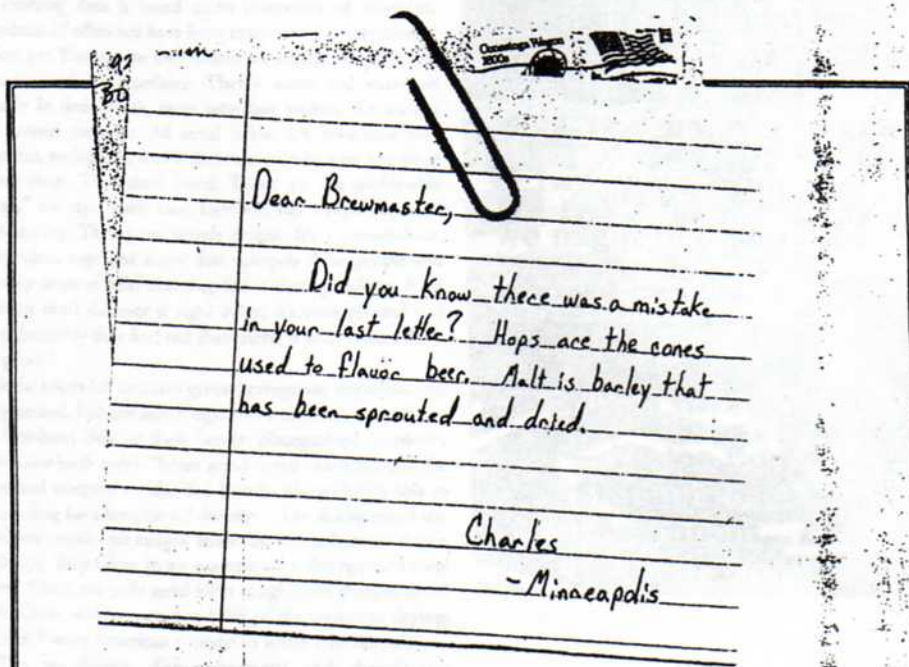
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nothing is being done," she says. "The hard thing about prostitutes is that they're such high-risk victims. It's like you're putting your life on the line every time you're working. By that nature alone, they're difficult cases to solve. It's much easier to solve cases where there's not millions of suspects."

**W**hether or not there is a serial killer flourishing in the metropolitan area, Kohout says that the times are producing many such murderers. "We're raising a generation of psychopaths in the United States," she says. Since 1940, there have been 165 acknowledged serial killers in America. A number of noted criminologists estimate that between 200 and 300 serial killers are active in the United States.

Most contemporary criminologists concur that by definition a serial killer is an individual who murders three or more people over a 30-day (or longer) interval. Someone who murders three or more people in less than 30 days is classified as a spree or mass murderer.

Kohout won't conjecture about the string of unsolved murders of women in the Twin Cities during the past nine years, but she explains what she and others have come to know about serial killers.

"Profiling data is based upon interviews of offenders. Hundreds of offenders have been interviewed — murderers, rapists, etc. The reasons they offend are similar. It's patterned behavior and it's repetitive. There's some real common threads: In their youth, most were bed wetters, fire starters and animal torturers. All serial killers are invariably psychopaths, sociopaths, moral flatliners — whatever you want to call them. They don't bond. Those are the profile-able things," she says. "Each case, however, has a high degree of individuality. There's no simple recipe. It's a tremendous, tremendous rage and anger that compels these people and the only sense of relief that they feel is through killing. A lot of them don't discover it right away; it's through trial and error. Suddenly they find out that killing is what makes them feel good."

Serial killers fall into two general categories: organized and disorganized, Kohout says. Organized murderers typically are the first-born child in their family; disorganized murderers have a low birth order. "Most 'good' serial killers fall into the organized category — like Ted Bundy, where they're able to keep killing for a long time," she says. "The disorganized serial killers usually get caught relatively quick, because they're so sloppy. Billy Glaze in an example of a disorganized serial killer." Glaze, the only serial killer caught and charged in the Twin Cities, was convicted in 1989 of the barbarous slayings of three Native American women in south Minneapolis.

The mutilation, dismemberment and decapitation involved in the deaths of some of the listed victims could be the earmark of a sexual sadist, Kohout says. "Sexual sadists are a rare group and are also very organized. They enjoy the reaction to the pain far more than the killing. It's beyond a power thing. They like the screaming, the pleading, the big eyes — that's the sex to them," she says.

Kohout speculates that she and her fellow investigators are aware of only a fraction of the total number of potential serial killers and sexual predators currently at large. "We have 1,000 sex offenders released in this state every year," Kohout says. "We can't keep track of them — and they're registered. God knows how many people with the urge to kill are running around. . . . I wouldn't have a clue."

Lt. Mark Ellenberg, commander of the Minneapolis Police Department's homicide division, says the number of unsolved homicides involving female victims over a nine-year period in the Twin Cities doesn't automatically point to a ser-

ial killer. "Offhand, I don't have the statistics on homicides of this nature," he says. "But anecdotally, I would say that this isn't unusual."

Though declining to say much about the unsolved murders listed above, Ellenberg will say that, despite the passage of time, not all the cases are cold. "Yes, we do have leads on some of these cases and some individuals that we're presently looking at," he says. "We actually have some strong suspects on some of the cases."

Ellenberg doesn't rule out the prospect that the unsolved homicides are related by modus operandi or suspect. "You're looking at a period of nine years in which these females were murdered. Obviously there are some similarities in these

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cases," he says. "A number of times we have looked at these individual cases and tried to come up with patterns or similarities that would possibly link some of the cases together and one just hasn't been found. . . . Well, I guess the only thing I can say is that we're not ruling out any possibilities. I don't discount the possibility that some of these cases could be related."

The probability of a serial killer operating in Corcoran's jurisdiction is low, he says, although he hasn't rejected the possibility completely. "Some of the St. Paul homicides on your list are definitely not serial killer types," he says. "However, I don't rule out that some of the homicides might be related. It's a double-edged sword. On the one hand, I don't want to say that there's a serial killer. But, on the other hand, I don't want to say that there isn't a serial killer, because six months or two years from now we might find someone who we can link to a series of murders and be proven wrong."



I try to keep an open mind on these situations. I don't zero in on a specific suspect or a set of circumstances unless I have concrete proof. You try to keep your mind as open as possible."

Like a mutating virus that confounds medical researchers, a serial killer doesn't always follow the same path. "We always look for patterns," Corcoran says, "but, on the other side of the coin, people change their patterns. Sometimes you may have a killer that's responsible for more than one death, but he doesn't leave the telltale marks that would indicate that it is him. In other words, if this one [murder] isn't like this one, it doesn't necessarily mean that we don't have a problem with one individual."

Granted, law enforcement officials have a vantage point that isn't readily accessible to the general public. But, given the definition of a serial killer, and the sum of unsolved cases in the metropolitan area where young women have been strangled, beaten, stabbed or mutilated, three scenarios present themselves for contemplation:

A) A number of serial killers are preying on Twin Cities women. (The existence of a single serial killer with this many victims is statistically and historically unlikely.)

B) One or more serial killers and a number of other murderers who have killed once or twice are preying on Twin Cities women.

C) A myriad of nonserial killers who have killed once or twice are preying on Twin Cities women.

Corcoran won't speculate about which of the possibilities he thinks most probable, but after a protracted sigh, he acknowledges the ominous probability that a serial killer could land in our quaint Midwestern hollow. "Because of our location, obviously, a serial killer could show up here just as easy as any other place. . . . Homicide commanders throughout the United States hope serial killers don't show up in their communities, but realistically, they're bound to at some point in time." ♦

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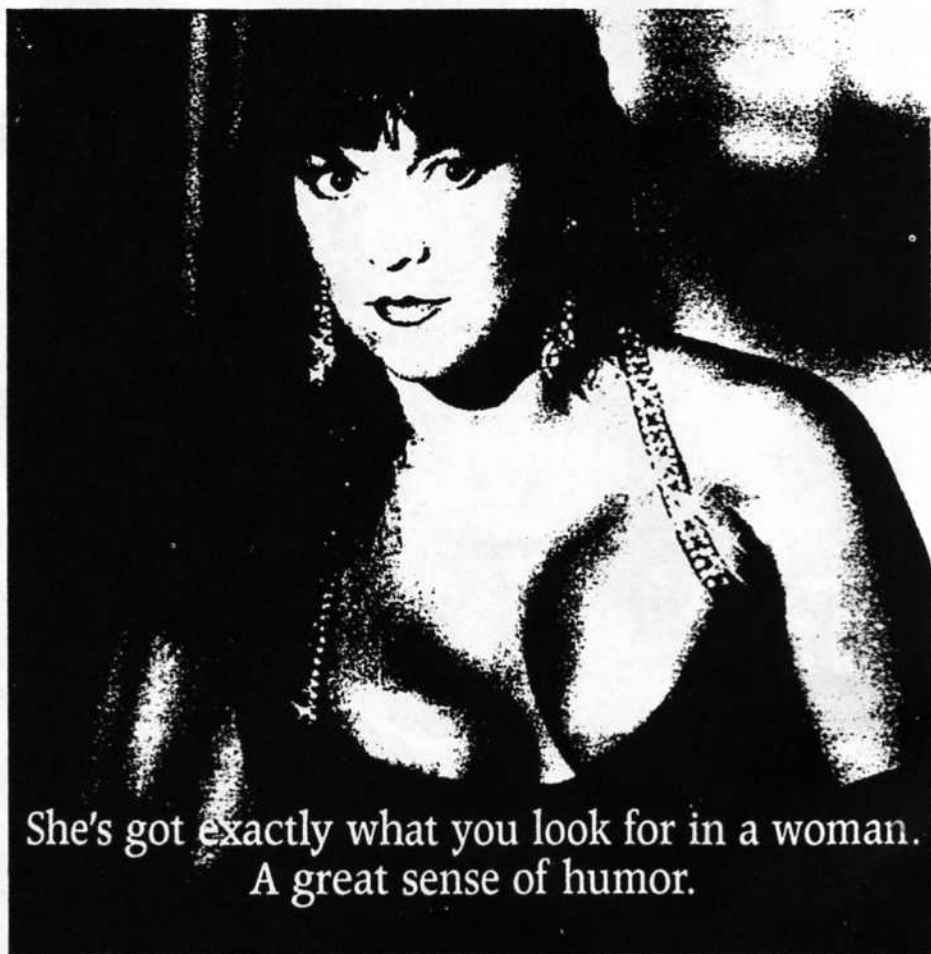
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