



STOPPEL

This book is dedicated to the memory of Barbara Gayle Stoppel and all the victims that followed.

Chapter 1

Innocence lost - Barbara Gayle Stoppel

Incident number 81-5-192838

It was Wednesday, December 23 and 16-year-old Barb Stoppel couldn't have been more excited for Christmas to arrive. Everything was falling into place. She'd wrapped a collection of gifts for her friends – salt and pepper shakers, candles, spices and a host of Rubik's cubes – and had dropped them with her friend Jody the day before. She kept a long written list of other gifts she'd purchased for the family:

Grams-stockings and dog calendar
Mom-hydroculture
Dad-Jams
Rick & Bess-cat calendar & London Iowa tees
Roxy & Dave-bird

For Daryl, a new boyfriend she'd met recently at a party, she's bought a football jersey. Two days earlier, on Dec. 21, Barb had marked her calendar with a special note: "1 month me & Daryl". She was in love and looking forward to Daryl joining her family for supper on Christmas Eve at the family's 2-1/2-story house on Ferndale Avenue in Winnipeg's Norwood Flats.

Born in Winnipeg on August 9, 1965, Barb was the third child of loving parents Muriel and Fred Stoppel. Although the youngest of three, she was the only child still living at home. Older brother Rick was 23, and sister Roxanne, 19, were both married and off living their own lives in Winnipeg.

She was a typical teenager focused on school, sports and boys. A Grade 10 student at Nelson McIntyre Collegiate, she possessed both beauty and brains. Barb excelled in academics and was outgoing and popular. She was also kind, friendly and thoughtful – a softhearted girl who saw the good in everyone.

Like most girls her age, her free time was spent roller-skating at Saints Roller Rink and playing basketball. She was also a member of the Nelson McIntyre Girls Volleyball

team. The caption under her 1980 School year book photo read: "If her ankle isn't broken roller skating...its basketball."

She had big dreams and wanted to become a famous actress. She studied acting at the Manitoba Theatre Workshop and after tryouts on December 9 had been given the lead role in her school's annual play.

For the past few weeks Barb had worked part-time as a waitress at the Ideal Donut shop located at 49 Goulet Street, only minutes from her home on Ferndale. Daryl recalled that she was the type of person who would talk to customers for hours without having even met them before. She had an air of confidence about her with a caring disposition that may be interpreted as flirtatious by some although it was not intended.

In 1981 Winnipeg still had a sense of innocence about it. The Winnipeg Jets had a strong team with the likes of Dale Howerchuk, Morris Lukowich, Dave Babych and had just traded a sixth-round draft pick to the Montreal Canadians for defensemen Serge Savard. Gas prices had just exceeded 60 cents a litre and loan rates were a stiff 16.5%. Kim Carnes "Betty Davis eyes" was topping the music charts while Indiana Jones and the raiders of the Lost Ark was the number one box office hit. The mood in the city was positive and geared towards another Holiday Season.

At the Winnipeg Police Department, however, things were not so rosy. The department had suffered a major blow to its reputation earlier in the year and public trust was shaken by the case of Paul Clear, whose canvas-wrapped body, was discovered in a shallow grave outside the city by a man and his son hunting for hazelnuts in a wooded area. Winnipeg Police Constables Jerry Stolar and Barry Neilson were later convicted of his murder. They were also implicated in a series of break ins while they were on duty and shared much of their spoils with unknowing co workers at parties they hosted. It was an era of mistrust that to some extent was much deserved.

Barb was originally scheduled to work December 23 but had agreed to switch days with a co-worker and work the 22 instead. At the last minute, her co-worker changed their mind and switched it back. Also a friend was supposed to meet her at the shop and go out after work but as it happened, the friend cancelled. A synchronized domino effect of tragedy was unfolding.

Barb had been grounded for not doing her chores but she was allowed to work her shift at the Donut shop, which was from 4 to 9 in the evening. She was scheduled to work alone.

As she got ready for work that day, she rushed around the house deciding on clothes to wear making sure that her hair and makeup were perfect. She chose a pair of white pants and a white coloured knit sweater and said goodbye to her mother and left out the back door. It was 3:30 p.m. as she slammed the door behind her, fresh snow from the awning above the door fell on her head, messing up the hair that had taken so long to perfect. It was the last time Muriel Stoppel would see her daughter alive.

At minus 13 C and overcast, it was a moderately cool day by Winnipeg standards. About a half hour after Barb arrived at work, the sun set and despite being the holiday season, traffic slowed at the Dominion Shopping Centre. The peaceful serenity of a Winnipeg winter was about to be forever changed.



At 8:46 p.m., just 14 minutes before Barb's shift was supposed to end, the police dispatcher voiced the high priority call to the Ideal Donut Shop in response to a robbery and possible rape. A downtown cruiser car requested to be assigned - they were seconds away just over the Norwood bridge.

As chance would have it they were denied, per policy, and district 5 units were assigned instead - and so continued a series of haunting "what if's".

When Police arrived there were a half dozen or so people standing outside trying to get their attention.

"She's in there. I think she's dead!" shouted one woman.

Constable Gary Schmidt, a rookie officer, rushed in and found Barb unconscious on her back in the women's bathroom in the Southeast corner of the shop.

Her body was fully outstretched, her left arm pinned under her body in what Gary described as an "unusual position." As he felt for a pulse he discovered a green and yellow nylon twine wrapped twice around her neck and tied in two knots. It was embedded so tightly that it hadn't been seen by those who initially found her. Barb had continued to silently choke as she laid on the floor waiting for emergency responders to arrive. The officer hastily removed the twine and placed it on the bathroom sink. Ambulance attendants soon arrived and rushed Barb to the St. Boniface Hospital. Her family kept a bedside vigil for the three days she spent on life support at hospital, while police desperately looked for the suspect.

Black and white police cars, their single red revolving roof lights turning the night sky red, descended on the parking lot of the Dominion Shopping Centre. In 1981, the police radio quality was far from today's standards and at times you could yell at a fellow officer across the street with better clarity than using the radio. There were no modern-day luxuries like police helicopters and Winnipeg's best K-9 service dog "Judge" was still years away from being born. And without the benefit of video cameras in the Ideal Donut shop, police would have to rely solely on eyewitnesses to help them in their search of Barb's attacker.

Under ideal circumstances even trained observers can have difficulties in accurately recollecting descriptions and events. Several years ago I shot a man in the chest with my Taser after he had car jacked several vehicles using a replica gun, and murdered another man days earlier. He was taken to hospital in shock believing that I had actually used my gun and thought he was dying. Hours later, when I was writing my notes, another officer who was present during the incident commented on the accused's repeated pleas for me to shoot him. I had totally forgotten due to the severity of the situation. He had charged towards me yelling: "Shoot me! shoot me!" I saw that he had no gun in his hands so I re-holstered my firearm and complied with his request using my Taser and lit him up.

The point is that under tense situations, people have difficulties accurately detailing times and events. Even with instant sports replays, there are debates whether a person is safe or out watching the same replay over and over. In fact today, directly involved members in a police shooting are not required to provide statements immediately after the incident. This is done to foster reliability in their recollection. Due to the dynamic necessity of apprehending the attacker police needed to have that information as soon as possible.

The night Barb was found, a man was seen leaving the Ideal Donut shop carrying a cardboard box and walking southeast behind the McDonald's restaurant. Police searched the area but could not find him and now focused on detailing the events of the evening with the witnesses available. They had to reconstruct what occurred moments

earlier. The donut shop interior was well lit and the outside darkness made visibility nothing short of excellent.



(Interior view facing parking lot)



(View from front door - women's washroom is through the doorway and to the left)

None of the witnesses had any idea when they started their day that they would inherit the burden of piecing this tragedy together.

Lorraine Janower was working at the “Boots” drug store at the Dominion Shopping Centre only seconds away. Just after 8 p.m. that night she walked to the Ideal Donut shop to buy a coffee to get her through the rest of her shift. As she crossed the parking lot she saw a man inside the shop locking the front door. She felt this was odd and walked closer to the building, which had large glass windows fully exposing the interior.

She recalled that the man was white, in his early 20s with a poor complexion and noticeable acne on his face. His hair was brown and unkempt and he had a long scraggly moustache and sideburns. He wore dark rimmed prescription glasses and a dark cowboy hat. That cowboy hat seemed to stick out much like the brown cowboy boots with well-worn soles. His jeans were tight fitting and faded. He seemed to have several layers of clothing on including a plaid shirt and hip length dark jacket with possibly yellow stripes on the left side.

The unknown man turned around and walked to the rear of the store and into the women's washroom. Upset that perhaps it was the waitress's friend closing early she returned to work and called the owner to complain but there was no answer. Still not satisfied she called the donut shop itself and even more alarming — there was no answer. She had just seen a man in the store and wondered, why wasn't anyone picking up the phone?

Several minutes later her husband Norman arrived to pick her up. She was still angry at what she had seen earlier and encouraged him to have a look for himself. He walked over to the front of the shop where he saw the same strange man with the cowboy hat walk to the front window and flip the sign to "closed". The man then exited the store, brushing past him while carrying a cardboard box approximately 12" X 12" in size.

"Don't bother, it's closed", the unknown man said and continued on his way past the McDonald's. He had a glib smile about him.

This was just too odd. Norman went inside the empty store and slowly walked towards the women's washroom. All the tables seemed to have been cleaned and appearances were that the store must have been closing early for the night — and why not, it was Christmas. But why was the front door left unlocked and who was the guy with the hat?

Norman reached the rear of the store and found that the door to the women's washroom was shut. He took a breath and opened it and gasped as he stared looking at a young girl unconscious on the floor.

Her head was slightly tilted and pushed up against the wall and her legs fully stretched towards the toilet. Her left arm was pinned under body and there was a purplish tinge to her face and hands. There were slight bloodstains on the south wall about four inches from the ground. There was also some slight appearance of blood about her mouth and teeth.

He needed to take control — that stranger with the cowboy hat must have attacked her. He shouted for his wife to call police and saw the cowboy running across the parking lot towards the McDonald's. He noticed a young man standing by the doorway wearing a snowmobile suit and quickly told him to go after the man.

The Janowers weren't the only people in the area at this crucial time. Paul McDougald had been sitting in his truck in front of G&T Television Store waiting for his wife to finish shopping. The Television store faced the Donut shop and he had arrived just after 8. p.m. He had an excellent view.

Between 8:15 – 8:20 p.m. he saw the strange man in the donut shop talking with a waitress who was alone. He walked behind the counter by the cash register with her and then went to the back of the store and enter the kitchen area out of sight. He then saw the two both walk to the serving area by the round table and they appeared to be talking. The man then stopped at the cash register and appeared to do something — but he couldn't make out what. He then went to the front door and locked it and walked to the women's washroom.

About 10 minutes went by and then he saw the same man leave the washroom, crouching down and crawling behind the round counter. His eyes were glued to what he was watching and he couldn't blink if he tried. The guy then stood up and casually walked to the front door. He slowly turned the sign to "closed" with his left hand and unlocked it with his right calmly walking out towards the McDonald's carrying a cardboard box.

Perhaps the most important key witness was located an hour after police initially arrived. Twenty-three-year-old old John Doerksen was selling Christmas trees in the parking lot of the shopping centre. He went to the Ideal Donut shop for a coffee at 8:35 p.m. and found the door locked. There was no one visible inside. He waited outside for several minutes and then saw a man with a cowboy hat exit the women's washroom shut the door and then crouch down behind the counter. He then went towards the cash register stood up and took a cardboard box from a shelf and walked around the counter towards the front door. Like the other witnesses, Doerksen also observed the man to flip the sign to "closed," unlock the front door and leave.

John heard Norman Janower's shouts to go after the man with the cowboy hat and followed him running behind the McDonald's restaurant along the lane behind the shopping centre. He had no idea what the man had done but was determined to catch him. As he passed the Domo gas bar he armed himself with a baseball bat but later discarded it at the foot of the Norwood Bridge.

He caught up with the man on the bridge and tackled him. They both fell to the ground. As they struggled on the snow laden walkway Deorksen bellowed:.

"What the hell happened back there," he demanded of the man, earring his grip on him.

"There's nothing going on. I was just locking," the man replied.

Confused as to why he was chasing the man in the first place, Deorksen let him go and quickly stood up.

The man got off the ground and pulled a knife with a 6-7-inch blade gesturing at him.

“Stay away or I’ll throw it at you!” the man shouted.

Deorksen slowly backed up in fear — moments ago he was selling Christmas trees — this was out of his league. He walked back to the Domo gas bar and kept looking back as the man with the cowboy hat continued to run north over the bridge stopping only once to throw something over the side.

Marcel Gloux was driving over the Norwood Bridge at the same time the two were struggling. He had no idea what the fight was about and decided to keep driving by — a decision that would haunt him for years.

Doerksen walked back to the mall parking lot and saw police interviewing people outside the donut shop. Instead of telling them where the man was heading he decided to track him down himself. He hailed a taxi and tried to find the man he wrestled with earlier. He instructed the driver to take him over the bridge in what would prove to be a futile search for the cowboy.

This night was too much for him. He was not thinking clearly — perhaps this was the most dramatic event of his life and it seemed to end in failure. The taxi dropped him off at home where he dwelled on the encounter and consumed five cold beers.

About an hour later he called the St. Boniface Hospital to check on Barb’s condition. He knew her only briefly through the shop. Finally, he relayed what had occurred earlier and police investigators were immediately summoned. When they heard Doerksen’s story they rushed to the area of the riverbank and began searching for whatever may have been discarded.

About two-thirds of the way down the riverbank Police found the following:

-Two black/white coloured gloves laying on the snow covered ice approximately 10 feet apart.

No snow was covering them.

-Left glove was found with green twine 172” in length.

-Left glove also found with white facial tissue.

-5 pieces of Green/Yellow braided nylon rope approx. 1/8 “in diameter

-Size of the pieces were 20, 43, 14, 10 1/2, and 89 inches.

-The pieces were noted to have been balled up as if removed from a pocket.

- 10" X 12" X 6" cardboard box
- 1 salmon coloured coffee stick inside the box

There was also possible suspect footprints in the snow which were noted and photographed by Bob Parker. He was an identification officer who had been summoned while he was shopping at Unicity in the West end of Winnipeg. It was the holiday season and the police department was once again running with bare minimum complement.

News of the attack spread quickly as Barb's family and friends hastily attended to the St. Boniface Hospital to be with her. Their place was by her side as they prayed for her to recover.

For the police the race was now on to find who attacked her but the suspect had well over an hour head start. Soon detectives and uniform officers would gather what they could from witnesses, the crime scene and the discarded items on the riverbank.

And what about the motive? It was later determined that \$33 was stolen from the cash register while her purse still contained \$24.75. Was this a robbery gone horribly wrong?

The method I employ in reviewing/investigating criminal cases is by separating the "Abstract" from "Concrete" evidence.

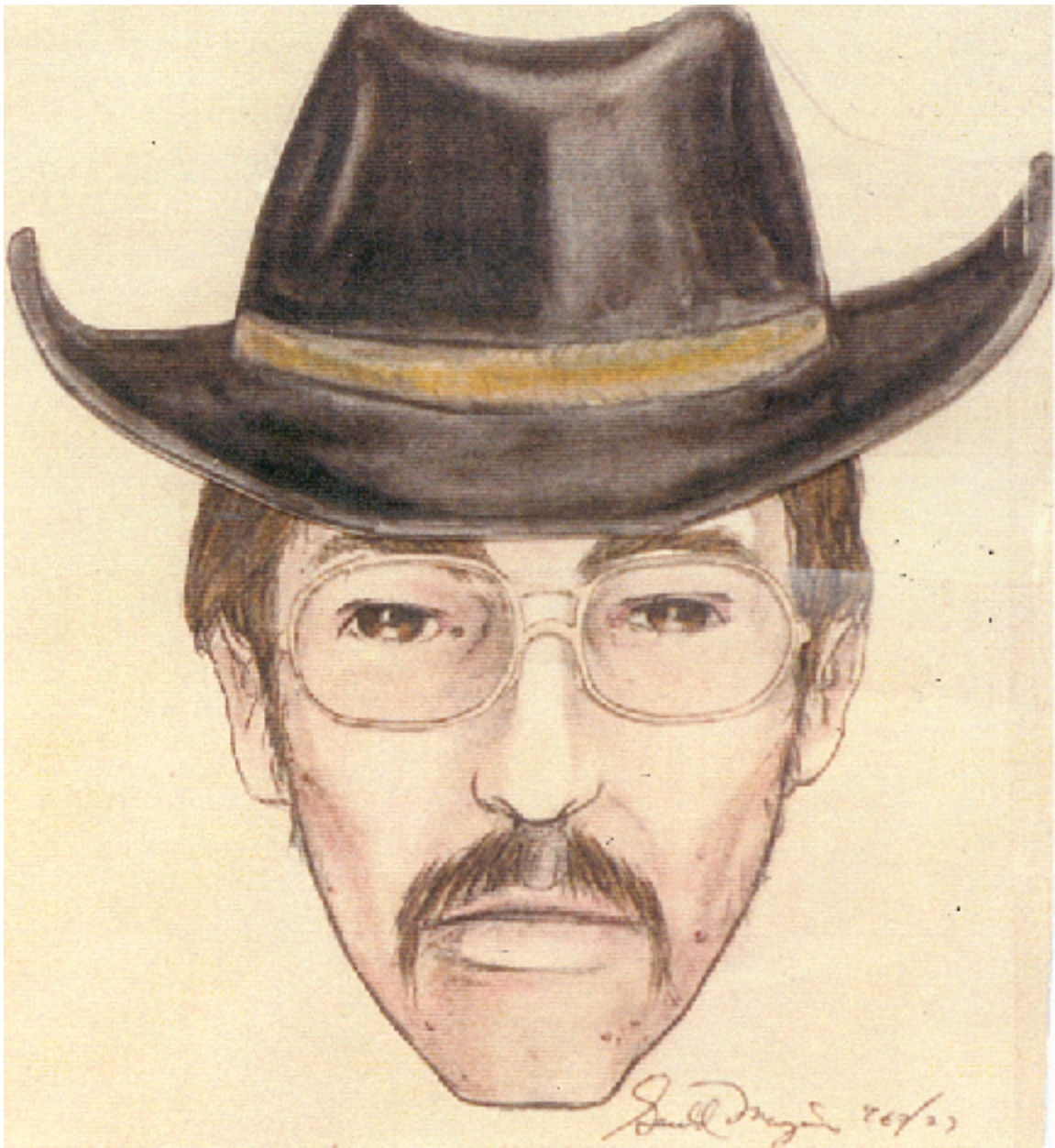
Abstract – Existing in thought or as an idea but not having a physical or concrete existence. (Examples include eyewitness statements, inferring motives, profiling, and assessing levels of plausibility , etc.)

Concrete – Existing in a material or physical form: real or solid: not abstract. (Examples include fingerprints, DNA, video recordings, murder weapon , etc.)

In essence the more concrete evidence you have the more certain you can build your case. Suspects can easily be eliminated or convicted on the level of concrete evidence presented. During the initial days of this investigation the following evidence was gathered by police.

Abstract Evidence

1. Several witnesses assisted in creating a composite drawing of the suspect. The composite itself is a tool for Police in obtaining leads from the public which in this case numbered in the hundreds. It also served to narrow the search for the suspect obviously excluding many races, body types and ages.





2. The previously described chain of events provided a glimpse of the suspect's actions prior to the attack and his last direction of travel.

3. Police established a timeline on the events leading up to the assault and during. To accomplish this endeavour, investigators interviewed Barb's family, friends and numerous other potential witnesses. The results yielded not only a flurry of time shots around the time of the attack but also many sightings of the possibly suspect during the day at the mall itself. More information continued to come in.

The time frame of the suspects possible activities may read dry but they are essential in understanding the sequence around her attack.

Myron Zuk – Employee of G. T. TV observed the killer in the donut shop between 8:30 – 8:45 p.m. and watched him leave with a box.

Andy Dufault – He was the last known customer at the Donut shop. When he left at 8:15 p.m. and recalled that the waitress was alone and talking on the phone.

Barb's friend Darlene Church later reported that she was on the phone with her at 8 p.m. The conversation lasted 10 minutes and there was no indication that anything was wrong.

Several other witnesses claimed to have seen a male matching the description of the composite and wearing a cowboy hat. They were as follows:

Allan Shapiro — Manager of the MacDonald's saw the man in his store at approx. 4 p.m. He described the male as white, 6-feet tall, 170 lbs, 25 years old with a dark moustache, round thin glasses, cowboy boots, dark brown cowboy hat, jeans and a short jacket.

Bernard Rioux — was an employee at the Dominion Store and saw the "Cowboy" enter his store at 6:00 p.m. The man was white, tall approx. 35 years old, with baby blue eyes, dirty blond moustache and hair, wearing black cowboy hat, jeans, checkered shirt, and tan leather jacket.

Kathleen Rowan — was an employee at the Norwood Hotel Coffee shop and saw the male in her shop at 3 p.m. He was wearing a black cowboy hat and work clothes.

Gerry Henault – Also an employee at the Norwood Hotel Coffee shop. He saw the male twice on this date at noon and at 5 p.m. He was drinking coffee and reading a paperback book. He was described as white, 25 years of age, 6' – 6'1", 150 pounds, slim and muscular, brown hair, wearing a brown cowboy hat, faint

moustache, brown parka with zipper front, fur trim, jean jacket underneath and cowboy boots.

Marina Labossiere — employee at Shoe Save observed a male in her store at approx. 4 p.m. She described him as white, at least 6-feet tall, 170 pounds, and 25 years old with a dark moustache, round dark glasses, cowboy boots, dark brown cowboy hat, jeans and a short jacket. He was in the store asking about cowboy boots and presented himself in a friendly manner.

Lynn Leroy — The manager of Shoe Save who also saw the “cowboy” in her store at approx. 3 p.m. She last saw him walking in the direction of the MacDonald’s. She described him as being six-foot-two-inches, with dark brown hair, moustache down to the lower lip, wearing a brown cowboy hat. She noted that the top of the hat bumped the top of the door when he left. He was also carrying a navy blue tote bag with beige trim.

Esther Plett — employed at R. B. Ormiston Florists in the mall. She saw the male in her store between 7:00 - 8:00 p.m. and asked her what time the store was open. She described him as being 6-foot-two-inches, slim, wearing a dark cowboy hat, moustache, jeans, and a short black jacket.

Marion Mclean — employed at the Ideal Donut shop and had the shift prior to Barb’s on the date of the attack. Prior to 3:30 p.m., she saw a male dressed like a cowboy sitting in her store. He was eating pistachios and commenting on country music. She described him as being a white male, tall and thin, wearing a brown cowboy hat, jeans and a short jacket.

Paul Collette — employed in the MacDonald’s restaurant and saw the “Cowboy” twice inside. Once at 7:30 p.m. where he was drinking a coffee by himself and reading a paperback book. He was also seen again at approx. 8:15 – 8:30. He described the male as being white, 25 years, 6’ – 6’1” tall, 150 pounds with a slim yet muscular build, brown hair, slight moustache, wearing a brown cowboy hat, brown parka with zipper front, fur trim, jean jacket underneath and cowboy boots.

The initial belief by police was that the Cowboy who was seen inside the donut shop was in fact the same that was seen several times at the mall. In fact Marina Labossiere who saw the man at 4:00 p.m. was used in creating the composite drawing.

The work done by the initial investigators was labour intensive but produced excellent abstract evidence.

Concrete Evidence

1. Hair samples were located on the top of the toilet tank in the women's washroom. These were found to be consistent with Barb's hair, suggesting that she struck her head on the toilet and may have been knocked out immediately. Apart from slight bruising to the inner portions of both arms and a bruise behind her right ear there were no signs of a struggle.
2. The twine found around her neck was the same as the five pieces located under the Norwood Bridge. In fact, the six pieces were originally likely part of the same single piece of twine.
3. The gloves Located under the Norwood Bridge were a matching pair. The left glove had 172-inches of twine consistent with the twine around her neck. Crime lab results also found an acrylic textile on the glove consistent with Barb's sweater thereby connecting the gloves to the attacker — he wore those gloves.
4. The right glove was found to contain small wood fragments and paint chips. The colours included light green, silver/grey, medium green/wood, dark yellow, dark brown, blue, red and white. The left glove also had paint chips including dark blue, red/wood, brown, grey, tan and green.
5. A soiled facial tissue found with the gloves had a dark coloured synthetic fibre not consistent with any of Barb's clothing. This suggests it was likely from the suspect.
6. Numerous animal hairs were found on her clothing likely from her cat and dog.
7. A saliva stain was located on the rear of her pants. This was found to be the same as the DNA in a piece of gum located on the bathroom floor and both belonged to Barb. However, mixed in with the saliva was a small quantity of male DNA. The sample was so minute that it could not be used to confirm the donor's identity. While this sample may have belonged to the attacker it may have also belonged to medical staff, police, etc. There were no other evidence of male DNA on any other exhibits.
8. A 40 ¼ -inch piece of twine was found wrapped twice around her neck and tied in two common knots. Although the twine was not tested it was believed to have been manufactured by Powers Twine in Washington who sold it to B.C. Hydro. Representatives from the company stated that the twine was similar in configuration.

9. Three unidentified palm prints were lifted from the middle of the door near the crash bar. These prints may have been made by emergency personal or customers during the day or may have been the suspects (although he was seen wearing gloves).
10. Another right index finger print was lifted on the donut shops door near the locking mechanism. Once again it may have been made by the suspect, a customer or emergency personal.

Police worked diligently looking for leads as Barb lay unconscious in the hospital. Her mother held vigil by her side day and night until December 29 at 9:30 am.. That's when Barb was pronounced dead. The cause of death? Strangulation. This was just the beginning of years of grief for such a good family.

Armed with limited evidence, police were under intense pressure to apprehend the killer, both from from the media and the public who demanded: "Make sure you get him". Mayor Bill Norrie went as far as to write a letter to the Stoppel family assuring them that they would do everything they could. The police department soon authorized a reward for any information leading to the arrest and conviction of the person responsible.

There is no doubt that there was a genuine interest to catch her killer. And what they had to this point was all they had to go on.



\$8,500 REWARD

I am authorized to offer the above reward for information leading to the arrest and conviction of the person or persons responsible for the death of BARBARA GAYLE STOPPEL, 16 years, who was found strangled in her place of employment, Ideal Donuts, 49 Goulet Street, Winnipeg, on December 23rd, 1981.

This reward expires at midnight July 1st, 1982.

The Chief of Police of the Winnipeg Police Department shall be the sole arbiter as to whom this reward shall be paid and in what proportion if there is more than one claimant.

*KEN JOHNSTON,
Chief of Police,
Winnipeg, Manitoba*