

# A violent end for 'fun-loving' woman

## Tallmadge stabbing victim, 23, spent final hours in Akron bars

By Robert Heiles

Bacon Journal staff writer

Rachael M. Johnson liked to party.

She died after an evening of bar-hopping in what veteran police officers said was the most vicious murder they have ever seen.

Johnson was repeatedly raped, stabbed 10 times in the chest, beaten and slashed across the neck.

After she was dead, her body was dumped early Saturday on Weller Street in North Akron, doused with a flammable liquid, and set on fire.

That was ironic, detectives noted, because Johnson's immediate fear of fire placed her in the murderer's path.

Johnson's body was identified Monday from dental records, said an investigator at the Summit County coroner's office.

After spending Monday interviewing Johnson's friends and family and canvassing the neighborhood where she last was seen alive, Akron detectives said they had no suspects.

Johnson, 23, of Tallmadge spent her last night drinking in two Akron bars, El Old, on East Brooklands Cale, on The Brooklands, detectives said.

After leaving The Brooklands, Johnson and her girlfriend, whose identity was not released, got into the girlfriend's car and began driving home, but the car got a flat tire, detectives said.

“This is the most vicious thing I’ve ever seen.”

- Sgt. William J. Wright

The woman continued driving on the flat tire, which became hot, filling the car with the smell of burning rubber, police said.

Police said Johnson parked and tried to jump out of the car, but was stopped by the driver. The two women argued, with Johnson yelling, “Let me out of

this car. I’m not burning up in any car,” police said the driver told them.

Johnson got out of the car about 2:30 a.m. Saturday at Dan and Fouse streets and said she would find a way home.

Johnson's girlfriend drove home on the flat tire. That was the last time Johnson was seen alive, detectives said.

Friends and relatives described Johnson as a fun-loving woman who liked to party.

Johnson, like all seniors who graduated in 1985 from East

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Murder victim Rachael Johnson holds daughter Kaseelin, now 3, when she was a baby.

# Few clues in vicious death

## Detectives search area for witnesses

By Robert Holles

Beacon Staff Writer

Akron police detectives were out about 2 a.m. Wednesday stopping motorists on Brittain Road near Wellet Avenue — the street where Rachael Johnson's burning body was found early Saturday morning — hoping to find a witness.

They had no luck.

"We don't have the foggiest idea who killed her," Akron's chief of detectives, Maj. Leonard Strawderman said Wednesday.

Strawderman asked that anyone who was out early Saturday in the area of Brittain Road call detectives if they saw anything that might have been remotely connected with her killing.

Anyone with information about the killing can call detectives at 375-2486.

**“We don't have the foggiest idea who killed her.”**

**Maj. Leonard Strawderman**

If a motorist saw a woman standing on the sidewalk or by a car or getting into a car please call us. Strawderman said. "We are hopeful that someone saw

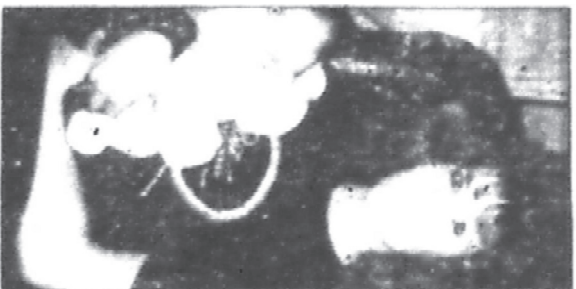
something.

Investigators say that Johnson, 23, of Southeast Avenue in Tallmadge was killed somewhere other than where her body was found.

She could have been killed in a hotel or in a car or even in a vacant house, Strawderman said. "However, it is there will be a lot of blood."

She was stabbed 10 times in the chest, beaten and raped before her killer dumped her body on Wellet. The killer then tossed the body with a flammable liquid and set it on fire.

Johnson's purse and some of her clothing — a black skirt, black pantyhose and black shoes — are missing.



Maying victim Rachael Johnson is shown holding a friend's baby. The baby was earlier identified as Johnson's daughter, Kaseela.

# Friend says victim — plans for the future

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woman said. Though Johnson had not yet been identified by authorities, the woman said she recognized Johnson by a description of her tattoos.

The woman went to Akron police and gave them Johnson's name.

Johnson's friend said Johnson was unfairly portrayed in news accounts as a woman who liked to party.

"Rachael wasn't like that. Kaseela, her daughter, came first," the woman said.

The 24-year-old Akron woman said she met Johnson between 11 p.m. and midnight Friday at The Brooklands Cafe on The Brooklands before they drove to El Cid on East Tallmadge Avenue.

A baby-sitter was taking care of Johnson's daughter while she was out, police said.

Akron police said Johnson and the woman left El Cid about 2:30 a.m. Saturday and began to drive in the woman's car when a tire went flat.

Johnson got out of the car at Fouse Street and Glenwood Avenue and said she would rather find her own way home.

# WHEN MURDER FITS A PATTERN



Rachael Johnson, of Tallmadge,  
died March 30, 1991

By  
Carol  
Christians  
And  
Natalie  
Collins

**R**ACHAEL JOHNSON  
was set afire in a place where no one should  
have to finally rest.

She was found on a bleak, uninhabited section  
of Weller Avenue in North Akron. It's not  
known exactly how long she lay there before  
her still-burning body was discovered on the day  
before last Easter.

She had been raped, savagely  
kicked in the liver and kidneys,  
stabbed 10 times in the chest and  
slashed across the throat. Her killer  
doused her with a flammable liquid  
and set the upper portion of her  
body ablaze.

She was a 23-year-old woman,  
the struggling mother of a young  
daughter. The ground where she  
was dumped was a landscape of  
battered, rusted guardrails, a huge  
mound of gravel and a few barren,  
lifeless trees.

It was a hideous murder. And  
behind that crime lies an even uglier  
possibility: Sometime between  
2:30 and 7:52 a.m. on March 30,  
1991, Rachael Johnson may have  
become a victim of one of two seri-  
al killers now preying on women in  
Northeast Ohio.

Today, the asphalt on which  
Johnson's body was dumped — po-  
lice believe the murder took place  
elsewhere — has been repaired.

The dirt-brown building across the  
street still stands, its opaque win-  
dows incapable of even casting a  
reflection. Railroad tracks cut  
through the ravine below.

And then there is the irony: A  
lime-green street sign about 100  
feet from where the body was  
found. It reads, "No Dumping."

That is not the only irony con-  
nected with Johnson's death.

She would probably still be alive  
today had she not gotten out of a  
girlfriend's car to find another way  
back to her Tallmadge home. The  
car had a flat tire, and when the  
girlfriend continued to drive on it,  
the car filled with the smell of burn-  
ing rubber. Johnson refused to stay  
in the car, fearing that it would  
catch fire.

•  
As a single incident, Rachael  
Johnson's murder is bad enough.  
As one of a string of heinous



Johnson's body was dumped and then set afire on this uninhabited stretch of Weller Avenue.

crimes, it becomes particularly frightening.

Now, nearly one year after the killing, Akron police have been unable to build a case against their only suspect, Daniel E. Wilson, 22, who has been charged with the May 4 murder of an Amherst woman.

That leaves another possible scenario: That Johnson was murdered by a serial killer who stabs and strangles young women and then sets them afire. His victims:

□ Katherine Corkery, 22, of Dormont, Pa., a suburb of Pittsburgh. On the morning of July 22, 1989, her burned body was found in a

backyard. The part-time student had been strangled and stabbed. She was probably sexually assaulted. Officer Gary Scheimer of the Dormont Police Department said Corkery was last seen at a party, though no one saw her leave sometime after 2 a.m.

□ Lynda Shaw, of Huttonville, Ontario. Shaw spent Easter morning — April 15, 1990 — with her parents in Huttonville and then headed back to the university in London, Ontario, where she was a student. When she hadn't arrived by the next morning, her roommate called the police and Shaw was declared missing. That Tuesday her

car was found just west of Woodstock, Ontario; on April 22, her burned body was found a few miles from the car. Inspector Ron Forsythe of the Ontario Provincial Police said because the body was so badly burned, it was impossible to determine an exact cause of death.

□ Elaine J. Graham, 33, of Chardon. Her body was found in her burning car on Nov. 14, 1990, in Geauga County. Both the body and car had been doused with a flammable liquid. County coroner's investigator Dan Shipek said because the fire was so intense, the

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## Murders

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cause of death couldn't be determined. Without that cause of death, the case cannot officially be ruled a homicide; it's listed as arson.

□ Rachael Johnson, killed on Easter weekend, 1991.

□ Glaciera Abram, 33, of Elyria. Abram disappeared about 10 p.m. on Oct. 25, 1991, when she left her home on foot to pick up a few groceries. Her partially burned body was found in a shallow creek beneath a bridge in Medina County on Nov. 29. The body was so badly decomposed that police were unable to determine how she died.

All these deaths and disappearances occurred on a Friday night, Saturday or Sunday.

Jack Levin of Northeastern University in Boston, a specialist in serial murder, said most serial killers kill on a part-time basis. "They may go out on a Saturday night the way other guys go out and drink beer with their buddies," he said. "These guys go out to kill."

Within days of Johnson's murder, Akron police began looking at similar cases around the country and in particular at the murders in Ontario and Dormont, Pa. Then, with the arrest of Wilson for the May 4 murder of the Amherst woman, 24-year-old Carol Lutz, their investigation focused on Wilson.

Wilson admitted locking Lutz in the trunk of her car and setting it on fire behind Northwood Junior High School in Elyria. But he denied involvement in any other killings.

In mid May, Akron police sent evidence taken from Johnson's body and DNA samples from Wilson to the FBI's Behavioral Science Unit in Quantico, Va., for comparison. When no report had come back by the end of the year, Maj. Leonard Strawderman said he did not expect the samples to match.

"I'm sure our suspect is going to fall through," Strawderman said. "That one's going to come back and tell us, 'Lot's of luck.'"

Akron police have no other suspects in Johnson's murder.

Few people want to admit that a serial killer might be at large in their town.

Inspector Forsythe, of the Ontario Provincial Police, for example, said he believed Shaw's murder was a one-time kill.

Elyria Detective Chuck Gallion, who is investigating Abram's death wouldn't say what he believes.

"The coroner hasn't even ruled on this one as a homicide yet," he said. "I've got ideas, but I'm not saying."

Not all similar crimes — crimes in which a killer sets his victim's body afire — can be linked.

Both the FBI and area law officers had checked out the possibility that the killer of Johnson also was responsible for similar murders in Virginia, Florida, California, Maryland and New Mexico. But after several weeks of investigation, none of those crimes appeared to match murders in this area.

And the Nov. 14, 1990, death of a Lakewood woman, found in her burning car in Huron County, has been ruled a suicide. Huron County Sheriff Dick Sutherland said it appeared that Jean Eddy doused herself and the interior of her car with gasoline. An empty container was found in the car, and a seven-page suicide note was found at her home.

Although recently more attention has been focused on the five burning deaths because of their brutality, for sheer numbers no other killer in the East can match the I-71 killer.

In fact, the killer has long strayed from Interstate 71, committing murders on or near interstate highways from Indiana to New York. Police believe he has killed at least 16 women, nearly all of them prostitutes, whom he picks up at truck stops.

Most of the I-71 killer's victims were strangled. Some were beaten or suffocated.

These murders began on June 12, 1985. That's when the body of Marcia Mathews, 25, of Akron, was found along I-71 in Richland County. Among the killer's other victims were two other Akron women: April Barnett, 18, who was found Dec. 4, 1986, along I-71 in Ashland County, and Lamonica Cole, 19, found Nov. 27, 1987, behind a truck stop in Breezeswood, Pa., along Interstate 70.

His latest victim apparently was 20-year-old Crystal Sedan. She had been strangled and her body was found on New Year's Day near an entrance ramp to Interstate 69 near Muncie, Ind. Sgt. John Kelly of the Indiana State Police said Sedan, who was 19 weeks pregnant, was a prostitute who worked out of Indianapolis.

Kelly said a tire print from a small-model car was found near the body, giv-

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Katherine Corkery,  
of Dormont, Pa.,  
killed July 22, 1989



Lynda Shaw,  
of Huttonville, Ont.,  
found dead  
April 22, 1990



Elaine Graham,  
of Chardon,  
found dead  
Nov. 14, 1990



Glaciera Abram,  
of Elyria,  
found dead  
Nov. 29, 1991





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ing support to the theory that though the I-71 killer frequents truck stops, he is not a truck driver.

A year ago, a 13-agency interstate homicide task force was formed to investigate the slayings. Licking County Sheriff Gerry Billy was chosen as the task force coordinator. But so far, the task force hasn't accomplished much.

"The task force isn't going anywhere at this point," said Medina County Sheriff L. John Ribar, who added that law enforcement agencies aren't sharing information with each other.

That unwillingness or inability to share information in serial killings isn't uncommon. It's probably helped the Green River Killer, perhaps the nation's most notorious at-large serial killer. He's believed to have murdered at least 49 women in Washington state and 17 in northern Oregon.

One unusual aspect to the I-71 killings is the fact that there were no similar murders reported to the task force between November 1987 and November 1990. No explanation has been found for that gap, though it's possible that the killer was in prison during that time.

It's also possible that there have been other victims of the I-71 killer.

The body of Martha Bannafield, 35, a Canton prostitute, was found on Oct. 23, 1991, in a cement quarry about 10 miles east of Interstate 77. She had been strangled. Capt. James Shannon of the Stark County Sheriff's Department said his department has not investigated a possible link with the I-71 murders because Bannafield worked in Canton's inner-city.

"There's no indication that this was linked (to I-71), but there's no indication it wasn't," Shannon said. "We had some people that put her alive on Oct. 21 . . . but there was no one who could actually tell us that she got into a gray car or a black car or anything else."

Shannon said interstate travelers are common in Canton, and it's relatively easy to determine where to find a prostitute.

Although the quarry would not be found easily by someone unfamiliar with the area,

Shannon said, "Blind chance is always there. You can go down any road and eventually run into the woods."

On Sept. 30, 1991, the decomposed body of an Akron drug user was found in a wooded area in Firestone Metro Park. She was identified as 34-year-old Roberta Tandarich. No cause of death could be determined.

Strawderman of the Akron Police Department said Tandarich's death cannot be classified as a murder because the body was so badly decomposed. He said she could have died from an overdose.

Then there's the disturbing case of Kathryn Fetzner, a 26-year-old Medina housewife who disappeared on Nov. 19 after leaving home to go to a shopping mall. Her abandoned car was found the next day in a gravel truck turnaround less than a mile from Interstate 71.

The fact that the bodies of Bannafield and Tandarich were found in remote areas, and that Fetzner has not been found (she is still considered a missing person), may indicate that these were isolated killings. But it's also possible that they were victims of the I-71 killer and that he has now become familiar

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## Protecting Yourself

**H**ow do you keep from becoming the victim of a serial killer?

In some cases you can't, but you can cut your odds of victimization by using caution and common sense.

These suggestions come from the Akron Police Department and the FBI:

□ Be alert and aware at all times. Avoid walking alone. At night, walk on well-lighted and well-traveled streets. An attacker is more readily attracted to someone who is alone, is unaware, and appears to be unaggressive.

□ Don't walk past bushes and shrubbery near the sidewalk. Avoid dark passageways and spaces between parked cars. Don't take shortcuts.

□ Ignore anyone who bothers you. Use a loud, angry

voice to discourage him.

□ If you are walking and are followed by someone in a car, turn around and walk in the opposite direction. If the car turns to pursue you, go to the nearest house or business. The same advice applies if you are followed by someone on foot.

□ Don't hitchhike or accept a ride from someone you don't know. This includes someone you've met at a bar for the first time, even if he seems charming and safe.

□ Have your key ready so you can open your car or house door immediately.

□ Drive on well-lighted, busy streets at night if at all possible. Keep your car windows rolled up and the doors locked day or night.

□ Keep your car in gear at traffic lights and stop signs. If your safety is threatened, drive

away immediately, pressing the horn.

□ If you think you're being followed by another car, don't pull into your driveway. Drive to the nearest police station.

□ If your car breaks down, pull off to the side of the road, turn on your flashers and hang a white cloth in your window. Stay in the car with the doors locked. If a stranger stops, ask him to summon the police. Don't accept a ride or start walking.

□ Don't stop to help disabled motorists if you're traveling alone.

□ Park in well-lighted spots as close to your destination as possible. Look for loiterers before getting out of the car.

□ Always lock your car. Even when your car is locked, look behind the front seat before you get in.

□ Keep the area around your garage and front door well-lighted.

□ If you are pursued by an unmarked car with a flasher and siren, pull over but don't turn off the ignition, unlock the car, or roll the window down more than a half inch. "You can slide your license out that way," explains Robert Hawk, a special agent with the Cleveland FBI office. "A real police officer shouldn't mind that, and a real policeman isn't going to mind if you ask to follow him to the nearest police station or call for a uniform officer."

□ Never approach a man you don't know well, even if his arm is in a sling or cast and he apparently has just dropped something. That was the successful technique used by the notorious serial killer, Ted Bundy. □

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enough with the area to find remote dump sites.

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Could the I-71 killer also be the Green River Killer?

The Green River Killer dropped out of sight in 1984. The I-71 murders began in 1985.

At one time, many police officials believed that the Green River Killer moved on to California after murdering the women in Washington and Oregon. But today police in both Washington and California, say the Green River Killer was not responsible for any murders in California.

The only significant variance between the I-71 killings and those of the Green River Killer is in the disposal and concealment of some of the bodies. The Green River Killer was able to hide bodies where they would not be found for several months. However, if the killer moved to Northeast Ohio, it might take him a while to become familiar enough with the area to find remote locations for dumping his victims.

Detective Jim Doyon of the King County Sheriff's Department was one of the two detectives first assigned to the Green River case. He thinks the killer is probably dead, institutionalized or imprisoned.

Doyon said he bases this opinion on his belief that no man could continue to kill for 11 years without breaking down. He also hopes for poetic justice, speculating that because the Green River Killer attacked so many prostitutes, he may have been a victim of AIDS.

That's a comfortable thought, but it's not shared by all experts.

Dr. James Orlando, an Akron psychologist, doesn't think serial killers necessarily break down after a long period of time. For instance, he doesn't think Ted Bundy, who killed at least 30 women before his capture and eventual execution in Florida, would ever have been caught if he had not had an alcohol problem. If the Green River Killer does not have a substance abuse problem, Orlando believes he could keep killing indefinitely.

"I think he's even more intact and in control than Bundy was," Orlando said. "If you really stop and think about it, this guy is incredibly good at what he does if he has been doing this for 11

years. Just the odds alone mean there are going to be times when you either get caught or get very close to getting caught.

"If he's still out there doing it, he has a really high IQ. I think he approaches this a lot like a business in a sense that he is very good at what he does. I think Bundy did some things on impulse. I really think that there have to be far fewer things that the Green River Killer does on impulse."

Levin, the serial-murder specialist from Northeastern University, leans more toward Doyon's opinion that the Green River Killer probably is dead or imprisoned.

"You would have to conjecture that the Green River Killer either stopped killing entirely, which is unlikely; that he died, which is a good possibility; that he's in prison or that he's moved on and is killing in another state," Levin said. "I hope some day we find out which is true, but I'm not very optimistic."

Levin says that many people involved in the study and pursuit of serial killers become victims of a "linkage blindness," an unwillingness to believe in a successful transient serial killer.

"The nomadic serial killer is relatively rare, but you can never rule that possibility out — especially because they may be the brightest and the most difficult to apprehend," Levin said. "With the most effective serial killer, the cream of the crop, there's no crime-scene evidence. Only dump sites. No semen. No blood. No physical evidence of any kind and that's typical of the best of them."

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A serial killer is a particular kind of sociopath, a person incapable of feeling emotion for anyone but himself. Most of the time these killers are male.

He is different from a mass murderer. The anger in mass murderers erupts suddenly. Their victims usually are killed within 24 hours at one or two locations.

"The typical sociopath is usually very angry, and they usually come from a background where they have reason to be angry," said Dr. Steven Haml, an Akron psychologist. "I don't think it's any accident that these people turn out like they do. Basically, it's a real deficit, even at a young age. Their lack of empathy enables them to commit these acts of

violence. That's one of the major reasons they're able to do it."

Spotting a serial killer can be virtually impossible. Ted Bundy was a respected friend and confidante of Washington politicians and reporters. John Gacy of Chicago murdered more than 30 young men, most of whom he buried beneath his house; he was a Democratic ward committeeman who once was photographed with First Lady Rosalynn Carter.

Hampel said the most successful serial killers have an unusual amount of charm and ability to manipulate others. In some ways, they are very much like everyone else, except that their public facade is more extreme.

"Look at the side of yourself that you present to the public," Hampel said. "Is that who you really are? We're pretty multi-dimensional and it really doesn't surprise me that much (that serial killers often come across as charming acquaintances), given their capacity to read people and their capacity to manipulate people."

Police and forensic specialists say that prostitutes are the most frequent victims of serial killers, not because they represent an evil in the mind of the killer, but

because they are most accessible.

Young, naive women are also frequent targets. Bundy, for instance, often approached college coeds.

"There are lots of people who would help a complete stranger, and even if a straggly-looking stranger comes up to them and needs help, they'll say, 'Sure, I'll go,'" Orlando said. "What you have to realize is that these guys are extremely skilled at manipulating people into situations where they can harm them. Bundy could have sold you the Brooklyn Bridge. He really could have."

Orlando said he worries particularly about coeds on local college campuses.

"College campuses are ripe," he said. "If you look at a bunch of 19-year-olds on a college campus, they will let anyone come into their room. They'll go with them anywhere. They'll meet somebody in a bar and go anywhere. It's part of being 19 and thinking nothing bad will ever happen to you." □

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*Carol Christians and Natalie Collins are free-lance writers from Akron. Cathy Tierney, the Beacon Journal's chief librarian, provided research assistance for this story.*

# Cracking homicide cases often trickier in suburbs

- Most unsolved killings occur outside city limits

**BY WILLIAM OUTLAW**

*Beacon Journal staff writer*

It has been 11 months since Rachael Johnson's body was found burning in an Akron street.

Detectives say they plan to re-interview suspects in the case, but so far her killer has not been found.

Johnson's case is not alone in the region's files of unsolved homicides from 1991.

A quarter of the homicides recorded in the five-county region in 1991 remain unsolved, with a dis-

proportionate number of unsolved cases in suburbs and rural areas.

More than half of the unsolved homicides are outside of the Akron and Canton city borders, although only one in four homicides occurred in those outlying areas.

Fewer witnesses and, in some cases, more time between a killing and the discovery of the body often make rural homicides tough to solve, area police said.

And as each day passes, the chances of solving the cases diminish, police say.

"The first 72 hours are crucial and the guys usually work around

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# KILL

• Fewer witnesses, longer time discovering body make rural homicides tougher to solve, police say

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the clock in different teams," said Summit County Sheriff's Capt. William Lewis.

After that, it often comes down to a matter of luck to break a case, he said.

Indeed, of the approximately 40 homicides in the region last year that resulted in an arrest, nearly 83 percent were solved within three days.

Only seven people were arrested after three days, while 18 people, or 45 percent, were arrested the day of the killing.

"You can see then where timeliness is critical when it comes to arrest," Stark County Sheriff's Capt. James Shannon said of those numbers. "The longer the delay, the more cold, obviously, the trail is. There's more time for it to be tampered with; there's more time for suspects to plan alibis."

The 19 cases that remain unsolved have been open an average of 31 weeks.

But although one out of four homicides in the region is unsolved, that figure is better than the national average.

In 1990, the most recent year for which figures are available, 67 percent of the nation's 23,438 homicides were solved, according to figures provided by the Cleveland office of the FBI.

And the number of homicides solved — or "cleared" in the parlance of law enforcement officials — is steadily dropping.

In the early 1970s, 90 percent or more of all homicide cases were cleared, said Bob Hawk, media coordinator with the FBI in Cleveland. By 1986 that rate had dropped to 70 percent.

"With street shootings you're

going to have people who saw something but they won't say anything," said Lt. Joseph Bosko with the Akron Police Department. "If there's drugs involved, you've got a fear factor involved."

Akron's detectives review the files of unsolved homicides like Johnson's every six to eight weeks to keep the cases fresh in their minds, Bosko said. And, he said, "as a new guy comes in we give them the files. Sometimes you can't see the forest from the trees."

Akron has six unsolved killings. In four of those, Bosko said, the police have a pretty good idea who did the killing.

But cities like Akron are by no means the only places with unsolved homicides.

It has been four months since Manber and Joiti Patel and their 6-year-old daughter, Alka, were found shot to death in their home adjacent to the motel they operated in the Village of Green.

The killer or killers have never been found.

"We still feel in the back of our minds someone unintentionally saw something that they haven't thought about yet," Lewis said. "Right now it's just one of those things, trying to put the whole thing together. When you talk to the family they had no enemies. We just haven't had that piece of luck yet to break it."

It is the homicides in rural areas that area police say are often the toughest to solve, although nationwide figures show that 76 percent of rural killings wind up in an arrest.

The case of Harold Hines, whose body was found in a dried lake bed in Stark County's Nimishillen Township, is an example of what



File photo

Twenty-three-year-old Rachael Johnson was brutally killed in March. Her case is among the unsolved homicides in the region.

area police are talking about.

"He was killed and the body dumped in probably the most desolate portion of Stark County," Shannon said. "Oak and maple trees aren't very good witnesses. The crime scene did not reveal any, what we would call, substantial clues. We don't expect to find a witness in the middle of a dry lake bed at 2 in the morning. It's probably the killer and the victim," he said.

Still, Shannon said, police have two suspects in that case, although no arrests have been made.

But there are some long-term successes, too.

Perhaps the most notorious case involves convicted killer Jeffrey Dahmer. Dahmer has admitted killing Stephen Hicks in 1978 in Bath Township. Hicks' body was found last summer and Dahmer, already convicted of 15 other murders in Milwaukee, is expected to plead guilty to Hicks' killing.

Then there is Edward D. "Tappy" Boykin, whose body was found in a field in Nimishillen Township in December 1982. Nearly a year later, James Darnell Coleman and Donald Joseph Hess were arrested in Boykin's killing.

## QUOTES

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L.T. JOSEPH BOSKO  
Akron Police Department



② ELYRIA

## Taped statement allowed as evidence

A Lorain County judge has ruled that a tape-recorded statement given to police by a man charged in a series of slayings may be used as evidence.

The ruling by Common Pleas Judge Lynette McGough also granted a defense request that the tape be



Wilson

sealed until the trial. On the tape, Daniel Wilson allegedly said he locked Carol Lutz, 24, in a her car trunk and set the car afire.

Wilson, 21, is suspected in several similar slayings, including the death of Rachael Johnson, 23, of Akron, who was stabbed and then set afire.

Defense attorneys had tried to prevent the tape's being used as evidence. They said that although their client had asked for an attorney none was present during the questioning.



# Fire victim was Canton prostitute

• Police seek clues in strangulation, burning of woman found in road

BY GEORGE W. DAVIS  
Spectrum Journal staff writer

CANTON: A Canton prostitute who was to have been arraigned Thursday on a disorderly conduct charge has been identified as the woman found brutally slain and burned on a Pike Township gravel road early Wednesday.

Christina Lynae Warnes, 34, of Prospect Avenue Southwest was positively identified Thursday morning through comparison of photos taken Wednesday at the county morgue with those on file at the sheriff's office, said Stark County Sheriff W. Bruce Umpleby.



Warnes

The body of Warnes, who is believed to be the mother of a child being raised by her mother in the Dundee area, was found about 7 a.m. by a motorist who told deputies the remains, which he first thought to be a mannequin, were in the west-bound lane of Brinker Street, about a mile south of Fohl Road Southwest and just east of Interstate 77.

Umpleby said Warnes' body was nude and had been burned severely on the head and lower legs by someone who apparently strangled then set her afire, possibly while she was still alive.

"Whoever did this doesn't want the victim's identity easily discovered," said Umpleby, who said Warnes was believed to be working on her own as a prostitute.

County Coroner Dr. James R. Pritchard said after an autopsy

Wednesday that Warnes apparently died of a combination of strangulation and burning. He thinks she was alive at the time of the fire and that microscopic tests will show fumes in her lung.

Canton police vice agents had charged Warnes with disorderly conduct about 7:30 p.m. Saturday for stopping traffic in the 400 block of Rex Avenue Northeast.

Unaware that she was dead, Municipal Judge Loren E. Souers Jr. issued a bench warrant for Warnes when she failed to appear for arraignment Thursday.

Court records indicated Warnes had been arrested 10 times for soliciting for prostitution since 1991. Umpleby said she was arrested and charged with passing bad checks in 1989.

He said deputies from Holmes and Tuscarawas counties had tried numerous times Thursday to reach Warnes' mother, who finally got word independently that Stark deputies wanted to talk with her. Detective Rick Perez was to meet with her Thursday night.

Umpleby said Akron police detectives and Stark detectives compared the case with a March 30, 1991, bludgeoning and burning of Rachael Johnson, 23, of Tallmadge, whose slaying has not been solved.

Johnson had gone to seek another ride after a friend's car got a flat tire. Her body was found on Weller Street in Akron.

"There are definitely some similarities, but not much else to go on at this point," Umpleby said.

He urged anyone who knows of Warnes' whereabouts Tuesday or with whom she may have been to contact sheriff's detectives at 430-3800.

"We need the public's help in this, and so far no one has come forward with a drop of information. Maybe now that she has been identified we will get some help," the sheriff said.

# Jury recommends death for convicted killer, 22

• Attorney says man who burned woman alive in car trunk was abused; prosecution says punishment fits

Associated Press

ELYRIA: A Lorain County Common Pleas Court jury on Wednesday recommended that a man convicted of locking a woman in the trunk of a car and setting the vehicle afire should be given the death sentence.

The jury, which last month had convicted 22-year-old Daniel Wilson of killing 24-year-old Carol Lutz of Amherst, returned its recommendation about 10 a.m. Wednesday after deliberating Tuesday afternoon.

Wilson, formerly of Portage County, stood with his head bowed as he heard the jurors' recommendation. His brother David covered his face with his hands, and three cousins wept.

Wilson's attorney, Kenneth Lieux, said the case will be appealed.

But Prosecutor Gregory White said he was satisfied.

"The jury worked hard and came to the right decision," White said. "The punishment has to fit the crime. I'm happy for the victim's family that it's over."

During arguments Tuesday, Lieux had asked jurors to spare Wilson's life because of his troubled childhood with an alcoholic father.

"Dan knows abuse," Lieux said. "He knows how it was being beaten with a belt across a bare rear end . . . being humiliated, being neglected emotionally, physically. Dan told you he makes mistakes."

But White told the jury, "This man is a walking time bomb. He was a walking time bomb when he killed Carol Lutz to avoid appre-



A jury has recommended death for killer Daniel Wilson.

hension. He's a walking time bomb in an institution. He's a walking time bomb, period."

Wilson had met Lutz at a bar and accepted her offer to give him a ride home. He was convicted of forcing her into the trunk, then setting the car on fire while she was still alive.

Common Pleas Judge Lynette McGough, who is not bound by the jury's recommendation, is to pass sentence on May 8.

Wilson once was a prime suspect in a brutal murder in Akron last year.

In February, Akron detectives said Wilson was no longer an active suspect in the March 30, 1991, death of Rachael M. Johnson, 23, of Tallmadge, who was raped, beaten, stabbed 10 times in the chest and slashed across the neck. Her body was dumped on Weller Street in North Akron and set on fire.

Detectives said a DNA test conducted by the FBI failed to link Wilson with Johnson's death.

## BEFORE DAWN BREAKS . . .

news breaks in the pages of  
The Beacon Journal

# DNA test fails to link suspect to slaying

• Match of Wilson's blood sample to semen found in rape and stabbing death would have meant charges

BY ROBERT HOLES  
Beacon Journal staff writer

Akron detectives have learned that genetic tests conducted by the FBI have failed to link the prime suspect with the March 30 slaying of a woman in North Akron.

"I'm sure that our suspect is going to fall through," said Maj. Leonard Strawderman. "The FBI has unofficially told us that the test is inconclusive."

The test compared the DNA — the genetic material unique to each individual — in semen taken

from the body of Rachael M. Johnson, 23, of Tallmadge with the DNA in a blood sample taken from accused killer Daniel Wilson.

Strawderman said Detective Charles Snyder flew to Washington, D.C., in May and hand-delivered the samples to the FBI's scientific analysis section.

Strawderman said the case against Wilson "will rise or fall with the DNA test. If it is not him,

we are back to square one."

Detectives have gathered circumstantial evidence pointing to Wilson as Johnson's killer, but they acknowledge the evidence by itself is not enough to file charges. Strawderman said that had the DNA samples matched, an aggravated murder charge would have been filed against Wilson, who re-

See DNA, Page A18

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## DIPLOMAS

### Four-tier diplomas

The four-tier diploma system requires two proficiency tests. Depending on how well they did, students could receive one of four diplomas:

- Diploma of Commendation — to students who pass the ninth- and 12th-grade tests and meet other standards set by the state.
- Diploma of Distinction — to students who pass the tests and meet other standards set by each school district.
- Diploma of Basic Competency — to students who pass the ninth-grade test and also the state minimum requirements for graduation.
- Certificate of Attend-

## DNA

• Akron detectives may lose prime slaying suspect

Continued from Page A1

mains a suspect in the killing.

DNA, or deoxyribonucleic acid, is the basic building material for chromosomes and is the same in all of a person's cells. The characteristics of certain segments of DNA, though, vary from person to person and form a detectable "genetic fingerprint."

Advocates of DNA testing say it matches molecular material found on a crime victim or at the crime scene with that of a suspect. Prosecutors and some scientists say it is nearly foolproof, while defense lawyers and other scientists say it



Daniel Wilson faces trial in the death of Carol Lutz of Amherst.

may be flawed, at least in the way some laboratories conduct the test.

Johnson was raped, stabbed 10 times in the chest, beaten and slashed across the neck; her body was dumped on Weller Street in North Akron and set on fire.

Detectives said Johnson was last seen alive about 2 a.m. March 30 at Fouse and Dan streets in North Akron after she got out of a girlfriend's car. She got out of the car seeking another ride because the girlfriend's car had a flat tire, detectives said.

The crime is similar to one that Wilson, 21, formerly of Portage County, is accused of committing in Elyria in May.

Wilson is being held in the Lorain County Jail until his trial on a charge of aggravated murder in the killing of Carol Lutz, 24, of Amherst, whose body was found inside of her burning car. The trial could be held next month.

Wilson has admitted killing Lutz, but denied involvement in other killings, according to Elyria Capt. William Cameron.

Staff writer Jim Dettling contributed to this article.

# Atwater slayings suspect is indicted

• Prosecutor aide delves into 2-year-old case, charges Alliance man serving time in prison

BY DENNIS McEANEENEY  
Ravena Journal Staff Writer

RAVENA: An Alliance man serving five to 25 years in prison for robbing an elderly couple two years ago has been charged with the April 1990 slayings of Bernhard and Cora Hartig of Atwater Township.

Gary Eugene St. Clair, 23, could face the death penalty if he is convicted of killing the Hartigs, whose bodies were found April 7, 1990, in their home. The Hartigs, both 81, had been shot.

Coroner Robert Sybert said at the time that from the condition of the bodies, it appeared the couple had been dead for some time before they were discovered. A neighbor called police after seeing the Hartigs' garage door open and their riding lawn mower outside for two days.

Prosecutor David Norris credited investigator Ron Craig with gathering the evidence that led to the charges filed against St. Clair.

St. Clair appeared Wednesday before Portage County Common Pleas Judge Joseph Kainrad, but an arraignment was postponed until Monday so St. Clair can have attorneys present when he enters a plea.

St. Clair was brought to Ravena by sheriff's detectives from the Orient Correctional Institution near Columbus to face two counts of aggravated murder, two of aggravated robbery and one of aggravated burglary.

A secret indictment handed down by the county grand jury on Friday says St. Clair broke into the Hartigs' home and shot them while robbing the house.

St. Clair was not alone in the break-in. "but that's as far as I'll elaborate," prosecutor Norris said

on Wednesday.

Court records, however, say another Alliance man — Joseph Dalesandro, 21 — has pleaded guilty to conspiracy to aggravated robbery and has agreed to testify against St. Clair in connection with the Hartig robbery and killings.

Dalesandro's sentencing has been delayed until after St. Clair's trial.

Norris said he assigned Craig to the Hartig investigation in May when his office had a lull in criminal cases needing supplemental investigations.

After police detectives complete their reports, prosecutor's investigators usually perform supplemental investigations "geared toward what the prosecutor needs in the courtroom," Norris said.

A 26-year veteran and detective with the Keok police department before joining the prosecutor's staff about three years ago, Craig "is a fine detective," Norris said.

Craig's detective work led in 1990 to the convictions of three men for the murder of Connie Nardi, 31, of Randolph Township. Nardi was strangled in 1988 after she refused to have sex with the three men, who dumped her body into a pond in Geauga County.

In May, while Craig had time on his hands, Norris said, he assigned Craig to go through several detective files to see whether new leads could be developed.

Investigation of the Hartig murders was suspended in 1991 while authorities in Elyria prosecuted Daniel E. Wilson, 23, for the May 1991 slaying there of Carol Lutz of Amherst, who was found dead in the trunk of burning car.

Wilson also was a suspect in the March 1991 slaying of Rachael M. Johnson, who was found burning on Wever Street in Akron.

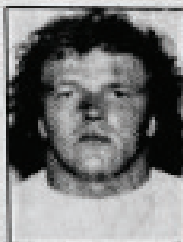
Wilson had been convicted in 1984 at age 14 of delinquency by reason of involuntary manslaughter and aggravated burglary in the death of an Elyria man, 81.

In 1987, Wilson had lived with his foster mother on a farm in Portage County about a mile from the Hartigs' home.

Norris said questions from reporters about Wilson's possible involvement in the Hartig homicides was a major reason he asked Craig to go through the files.

"We never thought Wilson was a serious suspect (in the Hartig homicides) but you never know until you do all the background work," Norris said. "At any rate, we thought it was time to put the question to rest.

"When I assigned this case to Ron, it was for the purpose of eliminating Wilson as a suspect. In the course of doing that, we were led to St. Clair," Norris said.



Wilson



# Victim possibly burned alive

• Fire-disfigured body of unidentified woman found on Stark County road

BY GEORGE W. DAVIS  
*Beacon Journal staff writer*

CANTON: A woman whose nude, partially burned body was found on a Pike Township road Wednesday morning may have been alive when she was set afire.

Stark County Coroner Dr. James R. Pritchard said an autopsy revealed that the woman apparently died of a combination of strangulation and burning.

"She may have been alive when set afire," Pritchard said. "We'll be able to tell more when toxicology and microscopic tests involving her lung and neck muscles are completed in about a week."

The body was discovered about 7 a.m. on Brinker Street, a sparsely populated gravel road in southeastern Stark County.

The street is east of Interstate-77, but there is no I-77 interchange at Brinker Street.

The woman had not been identified Wednesday evening.

"At this point we have very little to go on and we realize the victim could be from anywhere, including outside the county and even the state," Sheriff W. Bruce Umpleby said.

The woman was white, about 20 years old and had a 12-inch

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Beacon Journal

# BODY

## •Slayer tried to hide clues to woman's identity

Continued from Page D1

surgical scar on her upper left leg. She stood between 5 feet 2 inches and 5 feet 4 inches, weighed between 140 and 160 pounds and is believed to have borne children.

Anyone with information is asked to call the sheriff's office at 430-3800.

"In my 12 years in office, we've never had a body we couldn't identify," Pritchard said. "This one is going to be a toughie, because the face is burned beyond recognition as a result of the fire."

Umpleby said it was the worst murder he had seen in more than 30 years of law enforcement. "It is a very brutal homicide," he said.

Umpleby said it appeared the woman was set afire where her body was found. A motorist who regularly travels Brinker Street told police there was not a body on the roadway when he drove by the scene at 10:30 p.m. Tuesday.

Pritchard said he would not know how long the woman had been dead until he received the results of forensic tests.

He said tests should determine if the victim was inhaling fumes

from the fire when she died, which would mean she was alive when a flammable liquid was poured on her head and face and lower legs and then ignited.

All of the woman's hair was burned off except for a few strands at the back of the neck. Deputies said her hair appeared to be reddish-brown.

Fingerprints taken by the Canton-Stark County Crime Lab were sent to Washington, D.C., for comparison. Attempts to match the body to a missing Canton woman proved unsuccessful, Umpleby said.

Wilma Franks, who lives near where the body was found, said she called 911 when a man who identified himself only as Paul Smith came to her house and told her there was a body on the road.

"He said, 'It looked like a mannequin, but I touched it and it didn't feel like a mannequin,'" Franks said.

The circumstances surrounding the death, especially the burning of the body, bear some similarity to the March 30, 1991, slaying of Rachael M. Johnson, 23, of Tallmadge.

Johnson's body was found in North Akron. Akron police said she had been raped, stabbed 10 times in the chest, beaten and slashed across the neck before being dumped on Weller Street and set on fire.

An Akron detective said the Johnson case remains open and that no charges have been filed.

# A long string of murders in '91 remains unsolved

• Area police keep more than a dozen cases open, including Franklin Twp., Steve's Motel family killings

BY PAULA SCHLEIS,  
KIM HONE-MCMAHAN  
AND CHERYL CURRY  
 *Akron Journal staff writers*

In this area, at least, the year 1991 seems to have challenged the conventional wisdom that you can't get away with murder.

While the 1987 slayings of four Akron area women shocked the community in a way no series of homicides has before or since, perhaps the worst year in terms of unsolved killings was six years ago.

More than a dozen homicides from 1991 are still open cases for law enforcement agencies in Summit, Stark, Medina, Portage and Wayne counties.

Two of the most brutal murders in recent area history were that year: the June 1 slayings of Howard and Margaret Hood in Franklin Township, and the Oct. 20 execution of three members of the Patel family in Green Township.

The Hoods were attacked by a knife-wielding assailant when they returned to their home from a card party at a daughter's house. Margaret Hood, 66, managed to drag herself to a neighbor's house to seek help. She died in the ambulance en route to the hospital. Her husband's body was found in a pool

of blood on the kitchen floor.

Police questioned Dennis T. Huffman, who had done some house painting for the Hoods and was living in the home of their daughter, Sandy Pamer. Police also had questioned Huffman in the 1987 slaying of Ted Haudenschild, and the 1988 stabbing death of Bryan McDonald, both of which also remain unsolved. Huffman is currently behind bars, serving time for an unrelated crime.

A little more than four months later, Manher and Jyoti Patel, the owners of Steve's Motel, and their daughter, Alka Patel, were killed execution-style in their brick, cape-style home.

Manher, 35, and Jyoti, 32, were found shot in the head on the first floor; Alka, 6, was shot as she lay sleeping in her bed.

While money was missing from a cash box and some jewelry had been taken, detectives speculate the killers may have only been trying to make it look like a robbery. Burglars don't generally shoot children in their sleep and then leave behind a briefcase containing \$2,000 cash, police said.

Also, the fact that no one has tried to provide information to claim a \$12,000 reward leads investigators



Howard Hood



Margaret Hood

to believe the slayings were a professional hit.

Two other killings that year may have been the work of a serial killer who travels the Midwest slaying young women and setting their bodies on fire.

On March 30, the body of Rachel Johnson, 23, of Tallmadge, was found on a North Akron street. She had been raped, savagely kicked in the liver and kidneys, stabbed 10 times in the chest and slashed across the throat. Her killer dumped her body, doused it with a flammable liquid, then set it ablaze.

On Nov. 29, the body of Glaciera Abram, 33, was found partially burned in a shallow creek beneath a bridge in Medina County. She had disappeared a month earlier when she left her Elyria home on foot to pick up a few groceries. The body was so badly decomposed that po-

lice were unable to determine the cause of death.

Several other notable cases from 1991, including the following, remain unsolved:

- Jan. 13, 1991: Roderick Clemons, 26, assistant manager at Church's Fried Chicken on Copley Road in Akron, was shot in the back of the head during a robbery.

- Feb. 6, 1991: Jill A. Holzbach, 29, of Massillon, bled to death after being shot in the head and neck through the closed window of her mother's car in the parking lot of the Jackson Township Police Department.

- July 6, 1991: Alma Smith, 84, was stabbed to death in her Granger Township home. Her body was found on the first floor of the house, which was burned in a fire that was deliberately set.

- Sept. 17, 1991: The charred body of Charles Miller, 26, was found in a burning car in Valley City. The Kentucky man, a prison escapee, was shot in the head.

- Nov. 26, 1991: Kathy Fetzer, 26, of Medina, left a note for her husband, saying she had gone to the mall. She never came back. Her abandoned car was found 20 miles from home. Officially considered a missing person, Medina police are confident that Fetzer was murdered somewhere in Lodi. Her body has not been found.

## UNSOLVED MURDERS

Here are some of the homicides in Summit, Stark, Medina, Portage and Wayne counties that have remained unsolved over the past 20 years:

- Aug. 6, 1977: William Lavaco, 21, of Doylestown and Judith Straub, 18, of Sterling were each shot in the neck at point-blank range in Norton's Silver Spring Metropolitan Park. Their bodies were discovered two days later. A Doylestown man was charged with the slayings in 1979, but a grand jury did not indict him.



**Barker**

- April 8, 1978: Leslie A. Barker, a 23-year-old special education teacher at Akron's Hotchkiss School, was found in the back seat of her burning car along Mentor Road.
- Aug. 19, 1978: David Sherman, 18, was abducted in the early morning from the Lawsons store on Lafayette Road in Medina, where he worked as a part-time clerk. A few hours later, a motorist discovered his body in a ditch in Montville Township. He had been beaten; his pockets were empty.



**Leonard**

- Aug. 24, 1979: Mary Leonard, 17, and Ricky Beard, 18, left their Akron homes on a date and never returned. An extensive search proved fruitless after Beard's car was found on a farm lane in Northampton Township. Six years later, their skeletal remains were found in a wooded area off Riverview Road. Beard had been shot and Leonard stabbed.

- Feb. 1, 1980: Charles Witenhafer, 34, a bookie from Liverpool Township, was found shot and stabbed in the basement of his home.

- 1983: John Szilagyi, 74, was beaten at his Bronson Street home in Medina after a group of men broke in and robbed him. The victim was able to make it to the police department, but died of head wounds before he could provide information about his attackers.
- Feb. 28, 1985: William Morris, a

40-year-old cook, was found dead in the back seat of his car on Akron's near north side. He was beaten and dragged before being put in the car. Robbery is a suspected motive.

- Feb. 23, 1985: The body of Margaret Patton, 28, was found in an Akron garage. She had been beaten and strangled and had been hidden in the garage for some time, partially concealed by boards.

- April 23, 1985: Harold Mundy, a 69-year-old Michigan man who was visiting the area to sell sporting equipment to schools, was found shot to death at the Tallyho-Tel motel in Cuyahoga Falls.

- July 20, 1985: The body of Shirley Taylor, 24, of Virginia, was found in a closed rest area off Interstate 76 in Medina County. She had been strangled. The woman may have been the victim of a serial killer that has claimed the lives of several prostitutes.

- July 23, 1986: Charles R. Reece, 25, and Arnold V. Argenio, 34, were found wrapped in blankets in a car in Akron's Ellet area. The two had multiple gunshot wounds to the head and body. Robbery was the suspected motive.

- Jan. 9, 1987: Ted Haudenschild, 27, was found on the floor of the Weender Bar in Barberton. The bar manager had been stabbed to death.

- March 2, 1987: Karim Omar, 38, was shot four times in a parking lot near his store in Akron.

- July 15, 1987: The body of Carolyn J. Mills, 33, was found in a vacant building on Kenmore Boulevard in Akron. She had been stabbed.

- Sept. 6, 1987: Mary Robinson, 41, of Akron was found shot dead in her second-floor apartment at Valley and West Market streets.

- Aug. 17, 1988: The handcuffed body of Leonard Fields, 48, was found in the bedroom of his Everton Drive apartment in Akron. He was shot in the head.

- July 26, 1988: Jerome L. McDade, 36, was found lying in a bed at his Carnegie Avenue apartment in the Kenmore area of Akron. He had stab wounds to his face, neck and chest.

- Oct. 5, 1988: Dillard Bryan McDonald, 29, was found stabbed to death by a utility worker in a wooded area in Norton. The Barberton man had been reported missing by his parents two weeks earlier.

- June 16, 1989: An arsonist is responsible for the deaths of Carrie Hartney, 25, and her two children, Pamela, 2, and Benjamin, 8 months. The fire was set in the dining room and stairwell of their South Akron home.
- April 1992: Two fishermen



**McDonald**

found a skeleton wrapped in a carpet along a creek in Chippewa Township. Two years later, the remains were identified as Diamond Jones, 16, from Detroit. He had died from severe blows to the head.

- May 9, 1992: Elizabeth Anderson, 82, is found on the dining room floor of her South Akron home. She had been struck in the head several times.

- Aug. 14, 1992: Wooster tavern owner Glenn "Chip" Eyster, 42, was killed with a shotgun blast to his head on an oil-well access road near his James Road home.



**Olases**

- Sept. 14, 1992: Dr. Carmelito Olases, a 48-year-old obstetrician, was found shot to death in the front yard of his Brunswick Hills home.



**Menendez**

- Aug. 25, 1993: The body of Kathryn Menendez, 17, of Alliance, is found by an oil and gas company worker. Menendez was likely killed elsewhere, and her body dumped in the woods off Fewtown Road in Portage County's Deerfield Township. She had been strangled, beaten, stabbed with a screwdriver and cut with a knife.

- Nov. 6, 1993: The bodies of Lisa Watters, 32, of Kent, and Andy Hussey, 31, of Akron, were found by hunters at the edge of Berlin Reservoir. Watters and Hussey had been shot once each with a deer rifle. Cartridge cases were found on a bluff above the spot where Watters and Hussey fell.



**Foguth**

- Nov. 28, 1994: Brian Foguth was killed during a robbery at the Duke & Duchess gas station on State Route 43 in Brimfield Township. The night clerk was found dead of a gunshot wound to the head.

- Jan. 26, 1995: Malissa Nichole Thomas' frozen body was found in a second-floor bedroom of a vacant house on East Avenue in Akron. The 13-year-old girl's feet and hands were tied with shoelaces and she had been strangled.

- May 11, 1995: Anthony Hughes, 39, was shot to death in his Akron home. Neighbors said Hughes had been arguing with two men in his driveway, and the men pursued him into his home and shot him.

- June 16, 1995: Theodore Eckles, 77, was beaten to death with a baseball bat in his Canton home. The lone robber also struck the victim's wife in the chest as she came to his rescue, but she survived.

- Aug. 4-5, 1995: Renorra Robinson was found dead in her west Akron apartment. The 34-year-old woman had been stabbed numerous times.

- Sept. 29, 1995: Michael Rodgers was found by firefighters, dead from smoke inhalation in the basement of his Durbin Avenue home in the Portage Lakes area of Franklin Township. He had been tied up and his home set on fire.

- Dec. 2, 1995: John Thompson, 38, is shot on his Medina Township property while hunting with other family members. A man wearing the blaze orange clothing of a hunter was seen fleeing the scene. The shooting may have been an accident, but no one has come forward.

- March 5, 1996: Roseanna Davenport was beaten, slapped, repeatedly raped and finally suffocated. Her body was found two days before her 13th birthday, stuffed under a stairwell in the basement of a vacant house in the 100 block of South Maple Street on Akron's near west side.

- June 18, 1996: Opal Hensley, 40, was stabbed 12 times in her Sylvester Street apartment in Barberton. The scene indicated a violent struggle, yet tenants said they heard nothing. Police arrested a 21-year-old laborer, but charges were dropped for lack of evidence.

- Oct. 23, 1996: Jason Marti, 21, was shot to death in a Wooster grocery store parking lot.



**Wise**

- Jan. 16, 1997: Renee Wise, 30, may have surprised a burglar when she arrived at her Suffield Township apartment in Portage County. She died of cuts to the face and neck, blunt impact to the head and strangulation. She had earlier called police to report items missing from her apartment.

- May 22, 1997: Emmanuel "Mike" Stamatakis, 70, was shot once and beaten with a blunt object in his furniture store on Cherry Avenue Northeast in downtown Canton.

- June 11, 1997: Theodore M. Pavlick, 81, was found dead in his Canton home. He had been stabbed some 28 times.

