

ACCESSIBILITY MAKES PROSTITUTES FREQUENT TARGETS OF MURDERERS

Detroit Free Press (MI) - Tuesday, September 3, 1985

Author: JOE SWICKARD Free Press Staff Writer

"Working girls" have always been at risk on the streets, whether they were the murky lanes of Victorian London's White Chapel or Detroit's busy Woodward, Eight Mile and Cass avenues.

By their obvious availability and other complex factors, **prostitutes** have been victims of serial slayers from Jack the Ripper of Victorian London to the Green River Killer now stalking Seattle.

They also are at peril from random homicidal outbursts.

Two suburban teenagers were convicted last Wednesday in Recorder's Court of murdering one **prostitute**, stabbing another and slashing a man -- after demanding "Are you a boy or a girl?" -- in three separate attacks during a pre-dawn rampage along Woodward Avenue in March.

On Tuesday, Victor Malone, 38, faces the first of two first-degree murder trials in Recorder's Court in the killings of two **prostitutes**. Malone, a suspect in at least 10 similar killings in the Detroit area over the last dozen years, also faces a murder charge in Oakland County for the January slaying of another **prostitute**.

Richard Hopko, a 38-year-old Detroit steelworker with no prior criminal history, is awaiting trial in Recorder's Court for allegedly murdering a **prostitute** three weeks ago.

"THE FREQUENT victimization of **prostitutes** by serial killers . . . derives in part from their **accessibility** on the streets and their willingness to enter an apartment or automobile, domains controlled by their customers," according to the book "Mass Murder" by professors James Alan Fox and Alan Levin.

"Furthermore, their recurrent victimization stems from the fact that, for a price, they will assume a submissive role in sex, even with pain, which may further stimulate a volatile person to exercise the ultimate act of control and domination -- murder," Fox and Levin wrote.

A veteran Detroit police homicide investigator put it more bluntly: "They're out there alone at night and go off with strangers."

IN THE LAST 10 years, Detroit **prostitutes** have been victims in several series of killings.

"Bigfoot" was the name given to man who raped, beat and murdered **prostitutes** and other women in the Cass Corridor in 1975. Survivors of the attacks said their assailant had enormous feet. Seven women died in the series of killings, which remain unsolved.

In 1980, 11 **prostitutes** were among 18 young women killed in similar circumstances, a series of slayings that still provokes controversy because of overlapping confessions from two suspects.

Ex-convict Donald Murphy was convicted **of two of** the murders and confessed to four others. However, Murphy's confessions came only after David Payton, the former girls' basketball coach at Highland Park High School, had told police he committed some **of** the same killings.

Payton quickly recanted his confessions, claiming coercion by police. The murder charges against Payton were dismissed when Recorder's Court Judge Warfield Moore Jr. ruled police had delayed too long in taking Payton before a magistrate. He also was acquitted **of** robbing and raping two other **prostitutes** .

IN THE LAST 18 months or so, several **prostitutes** were killed on Detroit's far west and southwest sides after being seen in a dark van. Bodies **of** other **prostitutes** from the Cass Corridor were found in or near trash bins. Police will not discuss the cases, saying the investigations are continuing.

Prostitutes , the homicide investigator said, are easy **targets** because they are on the fringes **of** society, engaged in illegal activities and unlikely to be missed immediately if they drop from sight. Their killers, he said, are driven by overwhelming urges.

Assistant Wayne County Prosecutor Joseph Koch, who secured the convictions last week **of** Robert Anderson and John Stinson for murdering a **prostitute** during the March 11 knifing spree on Woodward, said the suburban teenagers saw their victims as objects **of** gratification or revenge.

"WHEN ANDERSON couldn't get lucky with his go-go dancer girlfriend, he took it out on those people," Koch said. "He viewed them as things -- objects, just purely objects. They were things to have sex with or to hurt."

University **of** Washington anthropologist Debra Boyer, who has studied the Green River Killer and Seattle's prostitution subculture, said hookers "are a very powerful symbol differentiating good women from bad women."

Prostitutes have been "stigmatized both morally and legally," Boyer said. "Society has objectified them -- they have been objects rather than people. It's as if you want to hurt someone, you can hurt a **prostitute** ."

Koch, in his argument to jurors in Anderson-Stinson case, touched upon this cultural bias, reminding jurors the victims were more than street characters.

"These are all human beings with rights in this country . . . not to be abused by men like these," Koch told the jurors.

THAT IMAGE as social outcasts allowed the Green River killings to continue for two years before police recognized the pattern, Boyer said. As outsiders, the **prostitute** victims were not immediately recognized as they would have been in the case **of** a killer stalking schoolteachers, Boyer said.

Western culture, she said, denies and stigmatizes sexual urges, especially for women.

"There is a hatred that goes along with sex in our culture," Boyer said. "Sex and violence can get all mixed up together. With prostitution, you have set up a caste **of** people to whom you can do what you want. . . . They're available and they are women who represent evil."

Society's attitude is typified, she said, by the Washington Legislature's consideration last year **of** a law that would have offered a \$100 reward for information leading to the identification and conviction **of a prostitute** .

"PUTTING A \$100 bounty on the women was supposed to get at the Green River Killer," Boyer said. "It's like putting a bounty on rape victims to catch rapists."

Boyer said many **prostitutes** rely upon a sixth sense to alert them to the customer who may be more than they can handle.

Edition: METRO FINAL

Section: NWS

Page: 3A

Index Terms: PROSTITUTION ; MURDER

Record Number: 8502050101

Copyright (c) 1985 Detroit Free Press