

## VICTIMS WERE BLACK , PETITE AND EASILY OVERPOWERED

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Benjamin Atkins' alleged **victims were petite** women, **easily overpowered** by the wiry confessed serial killer.

All **were black** women and several **were** drug users or prostitutes who traded sex for drugs.

At least 10 **were** strangled; many **were** bound and gagged; all **were** found in abandoned buildings.

All met their deaths in the 1.4-mile stretch of Woodward Avenue in Highland Park and Detroit, the turf of a serial killer that had been the focus of intense police investigation for the past few months.

Atkins was charged Saturday with the murder of Debbie Friday, 31; Patricia George, 36, and Vickie Truelove, 39. Police say he has confessed to eight other slayings and is expected to be charged in those deaths today. The first **victim** , Debbie Friday, was found Dec. 14 in the basement of an apartment building on Elmhurst near Woodward. Last seen six days before, she was found strangled and bound in the basement of an abandoned apartment building.

The characteristics of Debbie Friday's murder **were** seen 10 more times in just over nine months.

Bertha Mason was found in an abandoned, crumbling townhouse complex on Alger off the Detroit side of Woodward.

Mason, 26, discovered Dec. 30, was last seen Dec. 11, when she told her boyfriend she was going to the store. She was 5 1/2 months pregnant when she died.

The next body was discovered Jan. 3, when a bulldozer hit the body of a woman while demolishing a house on 74 Kenilworth. Like the others, the body was nude from the waist down. It took four months before police **were** able to identify her in early April as George.

On Jan. 25, Truelove was found in an abandoned nursing home on Woodward. Her clothes **were** used to tie her hands behind her back. On Feb. 17, three nude bodies **were** found in shower stalls at the abandoned Monterey Motel on Woodward. Juanita Hardy, 23, was in Room 18. Valerie Chalk, 34, was in Room 35. The third woman at the Monterey has not been identified. Her nude, frozen body was found in the shower stall in Room 68.

Vicki Beasley-Brown, 43, was found April 15 in a closet on the first floor of a vacant apartment house on Highland at Second, four blocks from where the first **victim** was found.

The next **victim** was JoAnn O'Rourke, 40, found June 15 in an abandoned building at 12223 Woodward.

The last two **victims** attributed to Atkins **were** found in buildings next door to one another. After Atkins was arrested, he confessed to killing Brenda Mitchell, 38, who had been found dead April 9 in an abandoned two-story clapboard house, investigators said. Investigators had first thought Mitchell died of a drug overdose, as indicated by toxicology tests. Mitchell's body showed no signs of strangulation.

On Friday, the badly decomposed body of a woman was found in the basement of the garage between West Grand and Pasadena near Woodward. The woman is believed to have been dead since about January. She was found with a cord around her neck. Investigators have yet to identify her.

Residents in the area near the garage said the brick structure was used daily by prostitutes and drug addicts.

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