

SLAIN WOMAN HAD BEEN MURDER TRIAL WITNESS

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A Detroit woman found Nov. 21 in Rouge Park, dead from a gunshot wound to the head, has been identified as a witness who refused to testify in a triple beheading trial in 1980, police said Monday.

Police refused to comment on any connection between the slaying of Denise McGilmer, 30, and her part as a witness in the July 18, 1979, beheading and mutilation of three people at the Michigan Federated Democratic Club on the city's near east side.

"We just have no comment at all at this time," said Lt. Gerald Stewart, head of the homicide section. He was in charge of the decapitation case, which police have said was drug related.

Before McGilmer's funeral and burial Monday, two of her sisters, Vanessa and Barbara Poe, said they didn't believe there was a link between her death and the 1979 slayings.

"The police haven't told us anything," said Vanessa Poe. "I really don't think there's a connection, though. My sister has been staying here ever since she went to jail during that trial."

Barbara Poe said her sister had "never left town nor been afraid to stay around."

MCGILMER'S ATTORNEY, Joel R. Isaacson, said that in April 1980, McGilmer refused to testify in the trial out of fear, even after granted immunity by then-Recorder's Court Judge Justin Ravitz.

"Notwithstanding the immunity, she refused to testify," said Isaacson, who has moved to Los Angeles. "She preferred to do the 30 days (in the Wayne County Jail for contempt of court) instead of having these guys mad at her."

Isaacson said she didn't mention any threats, but she told him she was "afraid for her life."

McGilmer turned 30 two days before her body was found by a mounted police officer in the Rouge Park woods, two hundred feet from Outer Drive south of Plymouth Road.

SHE WAS 23 when jailed during the trial of four of the five men accused in the decapitation slayings. The fifth defendant, reputed drug czar **Frank (Nitti) Usher**, was tried separately.

Testimony in the case placed a woman named Denise in a Detroit apartment on the day of the murders with James (Red) Freeman and Robert (Lefty) Partee, defendants in the case.

Denise McGilmer's driver's license was found in a van with the bodies of the three victims, William (Dirty Dirt) McJoy, Perry (Straw Hat) Jackson and Joanne Clark, relatives said Monday.

Usher and Partee were convicted of first-degree murder. Adolph (Doc Holliday) Powell and Freeman, then 37, were acquitted. Charges against Benjamin (Shorty) Fountain were dropped because of insufficient evidence.

Police said the murders took place at the Michigan Federated Democratic Club at 43 E. Garfield near Woodward, a social club with no links to the political party.

THE VICTIMS were forced to lie on the floor and were shot to death. The bodies, with the heads and hands chopped off, were found wrapped in rugs in the van, police said.

Powell, the alleged mastermind of the triple beheading, was killed Jan. 22, 1983. The slaying of Powell, 50, was said by police to be professional killings.

At the time of his slaying, police speculated that Powell, an alleged drug dealer and hit man, knew his killers and was buying drinks for them at the La Players Lounge on Joy Road. Powell was shot in the side of the head as he held a \$50 bill in his hand, while three glasses of cognac were lined up on the bar.

McGilmer is survived by her husband, Norman; a daughter, Sharetha; her mother, Arlinda Poe; four sisters and three brothers.

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