



Christine Rothschild



Eugene Newbury



Sheila Jean Collins

The Killer Left His Trademark

By William T. Brannon

There was a festive air among the third grade children at the Lakeview School in Zion, Illinois, on the last day of school before the Christmas vacation, Friday, December 20, 1968. They were especially convivial because of the party scheduled that afternoon in the room of one of their teachers, Miss Anna Mondragon, 22.

Miss Mondragon was to become the bride of a teacher in another Zion school on December 28th. Fellow teachers at the Lakeview School were having a bridal shower for her on Friday afternoon.

The kids had heard about it and had asked to be included. Friday morning, when the children came to school, they brought along their presents in gaily wrapped packages.

But Miss Mondragon had not come to school that morning and a substitute had to be found to take her classes. This was very unlike the conscientious young teacher. Always before, if illness had prevented her coming to work, she had notified the principal in ample time.

But with a bridal shower scheduled for later in the day and her wedding only a week away, there was some excuse for this one default. It was fully expected that Miss Mondragon would show up for the party. When she didn't, fellow teachers and school officials became alarmed. Repeated efforts to reach her by telephone had failed. Finally, the party was called

off and the disappointed teachers and youngsters went home.

Later that afternoon two boys went for some place where the ice was solid enough for skating. Both had been warned by their parents not to try to skate on any deep ponds where there was danger of drowning if the ice broke.

But there were shallow ponds in the Illinois Beach State Park near Lake Michigan and South of Zion. The boys began exploring the park, searching for a skating pond. Suddenly one of them stopped, uttered a startled cry and pointed.

Lying in the ditch was the almost nude body of a young woman. Dried blood covered her face, which was badly battered. There was no

doubt that she was dead.

The boys ran to the nearest building, the beach lodge, where they told the switchboard operator what they had discovered. She contacted Park Ranger Robert Needham, who notified Lake County Sheriff Harold Scheskie at his office in Waukegan. Sheriff Scheskie, Detective Maurice Butler and other detectives hurried to the scene. Lake County Coroner Orville Clavey was close behind.

The sheriff and his men stared down for a few moments at the battered body. There was blood on the face and the hair was matted with blood. A pencil had been jabbed into one eye.

Most of the girl's clothing had been pulled down around her ankles and some of it had been ripped off and tossed into nearby weeds. The officers guessed that she was in her early twenties.

As Coroner Clavey knelt beside the body for a preliminary examination, he noted that a large quantity of grass had been stuffed into her mouth.

Coroner Clavey said it appeared that the killer had held her throat in both hands and battered her head against a rock.

He pointed to angry red marks, apparently made by fingernails, on the girl's neck and throat. He said she apparently had been strangled but that he was unable to determine whether she had been raped.

even though it had all the appearances of a wanton, sadistic sex crime.

"Do you have any idea how long she's been dead?" asked Sheriff Scheskie.

"Several hours," the coroner replied. "She might have been killed last night."

A search of the weed-filled ditch and a wide area around it failed to turn up a purse or anything else that might contain identification.

Meanwhile, friends of Anna Mondragon had continued to try to contact her and their alarm had grown when she couldn't be found. Then they heard of the finding of the body in the park and contacted Sheriff Scheskie.

When they had identified the body as that of the missing school teacher, Sheriff Scheskie and his men began tracing Miss Mondragon's last movements. Friends told officers that Anna grew up in Santa Fe, New Mexico, and that her relatives still lived there.

About two years before, when she had been attending Highland University in Las Vegas, New Mexico, she had met Eugene Newbury, now 23, who also was a student there. His romance with Anna Mondragon had blossomed and he had brought her to visit Zion, where he was born and where he had spent most of his life. She had decided to take a teaching job at the Lakeview School.

One teacher who had been close to Anna said the girl had expressed the hope that someday she could teach deaf children. The teacher said Miss Mondragon's mother was deaf.

She said that Anna and Gene Newbury — who by that time would have been married — had made plans for a graduate study at a New Mexico university in the summer of 1969.

From the slain girl's friends, Sheriff Scheskie learned that Gene Newbury lived with his parents in a mobile home. But he was not there when the sheriff and his men called.

The father said that he last saw Gene and Anna about 6:45 Thursday evening when they left the mobile home. He said Gene was taking Anna to keep an appointment with an eye doctor. Afterward, they planned to do some Christmas shopping.

When they left, the couple told him they would be back by 11 o'clock that night, but they didn't show up.

"I just can't see how this could have happened," the father said. "I have a feeling my son was murdered. It's a mystery."

In response to the detectives' questions, he said his son and Anna had left in a red Volkswagen with 1968 Illinois license plates bearing the number, 743-881. An immediate search was launched for Eugene Newbury and the red Volkswagen.

"Gene and Anna were very happy as far as my wife and I know," the father said. "She always called him to wake him up in the morning. She ate with us twice a week. She and Gene skied together."

At the scene of the crime, meanwhile, crime lab technicians made a thorough search between the nearest road and the weedy ditch, they found what appeared to be fresh tire tracks made by small tires — the kind that would be on a compact car such as a Volkswagen.

Had Gene Newbury been out here with his bride-to-be? Had they been assaulted? If so, what had happened to Newbury and the red Volkswagen?

A radio alert went out to cruising squads of the numerous law enforcement agencies in Lake, Cook, DuPage and Will Counties to watch for the car.

At the building where Anna Mondragon had lived alone in an apartment, neighbors said they did not recall having seen her since Thursday morning. They were positive they had not seen her at all on Friday.

Throughout the night, the search for Gene Newbury and the red Volkswagen went on. Early Saturday police helicopters joined the search for the red Volkswagen and the body of Gene Newbury.

On Saturday morning, Coroner Clavey had a report on the post mortem. It indicated that Anna Mondragon had signs of strangulation by one of two means — by manual strangulation or by suffocation from the grass which had been stuffed down her throat.

The coroner said there were indications that the girl had been tortured before she finally had been slain. Her face was badly battered and bruises on her head indicated that it had been beaten against a rock.

Although most of Anna's clothes had been ripped off and some had been pulled down around her ankles, the autopsy disclosed that she had not been raped or sexually molested.

However, the removal of the clothing suggested a sex motive, Coroner Clavey was well aware that this could be some form of deviation where sexual gratification was realized in other than the conventional manner.

He was reminded of two other recent cases involving girls from the Chicago area.

About two o'clock Sunday afternoon, January 28, 1968, a doctor from Ames, Iowa and his eight-year-old daughter, while driving along a gravel road, found the most nude body of a very attractive girl who appeared to be about 18 to 20 years old. Her only garment was a sweat shirt.

The girl's body was lying face down in the ditch and it was almost obscured by weeds. Her knees were bent in a kneeling position. A coat that officers said "looked like it had been thrown there" was over the girl's head in the manner of a shroud.

A nylon cord was knotted around the victim's neck. It's knotted just once, but it's tied tighter than hell," said a deputy called to the scene.

The officers found the girls panties, jeans, purse and suitcase in a field just to the west of the ditch where the body rested.

Papers in the girl's purse identified her as Sheila Jean Collins, 19, a student at Iowa State and a resident of Evanston, Illinois. When Sheriff Shalley investigated at the university, he learned part of what had happened.

Sheila had hoped to go home for the weekend. Her steady boy friend, a student at Northern Illinois University in DeKalb, Illinois, had planned to pick her up in Ames and drive her to Evanston for the weekend.

But her boy friend had been unable to make the trip and Sheila had gone to the "Going My Way" board in Memorial Hall.

Under the Going My Way sign there is a map of the United States divided into zones, each with a number. There is a corresponding box for each number and anyone who wants to offer a lift or get a ride fills out the card and puts it in the proper zone box.

Sheila had filled out a card. When the deputies looked, the card was still in the box.

Her roommate told the sheriff that sometime before eight o'clock, Sheila had received a call from someone who said he had seen her car. He offered her a ride to Chicago.

Numerous students were questioned, but Sheriff Shalley couldn't find anyone who had seen her get in a car. When he tried to find out the name of the person who had called her, her roommate said Sheila had told her the man had given his name but she had forgotten it.

After Dr. William R. Bliss, Story County medical examiner, had examined the body and ordered it removed to a mortuary for an autopsy, one of the deputies who had had no doubt that it was a sex crime and that the girl had been sexually abused or molested.

"I can't say that officially until the medical tests are completed," he added, "but why else would someone take off most of her clothes and then strangle her?"

After the autopsy, however, Dr. Bliss didn't see her. He said the girl had been strangled and that it probably was a sex crime. But he also reported that the victim had no evidence of sexual molestation.



Anna Mondragon

"The fact that her body was almost totally unclothed leads one to surmise we are dealing with someone who had a sex deviation," said Dr. Bliss.

Although 15 detectives were assigned to the case, they found no solid suspect. A great deal of attention was given to the Going My Way board and numerous male students were questioned. But the detectives soon learned that Memorial Hall was open to anyone, not necessarily students. The killer probably was acquainted with the Ames area and knew of the system for providing rides; otherwise, he could have been any passing devotee with a car.

The murder of Sheila Collins was still unsolved when the body of Anna Mondragon was found.

So was another, more recent murder in Madison, Wisconsin. About 7:30 p.m., Sunday, May 26, 1968, a laboratory employe at the University of Wisconsin went to Sterling Hall, a physics building, to look for a friend.

He didn't find his friend but in a clump of bushes near the building he found the body of a beautiful blonde girl who was covered with blood from obvious stab wounds in the chest and neck. Her clothing had not been removed, but it had been disarranged in the manner it might have been if this were a sex crime.

The victim was identified as Christine Rothschild, 18, of Chicago, who lived in an off-campus dormitory about a mile away. A search of the scene turned up three articles that might be connected with the crime.

One was a blood-stained handkerchief under the girl's head. Another was a stained pair of denim trousers and the third was a stained, rusted laboratory knife. Each of these items were found in a closeby clump of bushes.

Tracing the young victim's background and her last known movements, Chief Ralph Hanson's detectives soon learned that Christine was that rarity among women — a real beauty with brains.

In Madison, the last time Christine had been seen alive was about 4:30 a.m., when she left her room to go to the bathroom. A night housekeeper had seen her. However, the police could find nobody who had seen Christine leave the dormitory, whose doors were locked until 5:30 a.m.

It was known that Christine liked to go for morning walks every Sunday and it seemed certain she had done so this day. The building in front of which she was found was normally deserted on Sunday. There was road traffic, but it

usually was not very heavy until after eight o'clock.

From this it was believed that Christine had died sometime between 5:30 and 8 a.m. The autopsy tended to confirm this. The pathologist reported also that Christine had suffered 14 stab wounds made by a knife with a sharp double edge. They had been inflicted on her breasts, chest and neck.

Since the beginning of the college year there had been some 40 assaults on college students and it seemed almost certain that the slaying of Christine, which Coroner Chamberlain called the work of a psychopathic maniac, was a sequel.

But when the autopsy had been completed, the psychologist reported there was no evidence of rape or sexual molestation.

Despite an intensive investigation the killer still has not been identified when Anna Mondragon was murdered near Zion.

All three cases had the earmarks of sex crimes, yet none of the girl victims had any certain identity. Could it be that the same devotee was responsible for all three deaths?

The search for Eugene Newbury and his red Volkswagen continued throughout Saturday, but he was not found. Then about two o'clock Sunday morning, December 22nd, the Dane County police dispatcher in Madison, Wisconsin, answered the phone.

"I'd like to talk about a murder," said the male voice at the other end.

"Is the murder in Dane County?" the dispatcher asked.

"No, it's out of state."

"Where out of state?"

"In Waukegan."

The man said he was in a motel in Waukegan, Ill., and he wanted to report for officers. Deputies were dispatched to the motel, where they found a red Volkswagen with Illinois plates and a young man who identified himself as Eugene Newbury.

Dane County sheriff's deputies notified Eugene Newbury's father, Eugene Scheskie, who drove to Madison with Starr's Attorney Jack Hoogstraen. They arrived about seven o'clock with a warrant, but Newbury had not yet talked to his lawyer and refused to waive extradition. He was charged with the murder of Anna Mondragon.

Meanwhile, Madison police questioned Newbury about the slayings of Sheila Collins and Christine Rothschild. They said he told them he was in Arizona in January at the time Miss Collins was killed, although he had been a graduate student at Iowa State University.

According to the Madison police, he admitted that he was at Iowa State in Ames at the time Miss Rothschild was slain. Madison, Story County Attorney Vanderbut thought there were too many coincidences and said he would investigate further. As this was written, Vanderbut had not been able to prove any connection between Newbury and Miss Collins.

Newbury was tried before a Circuit Court jury in Waukegan and on Friday, August 1, 1968, he was found guilty of murder. Following the jury's recommendation, Judge Lloyd A. Van Deusen had no choice but to impose the death penalty.

However, as there have been no executions in Illinois, as in the balance of the United States, recently, pending challenges of the law, Newbury is still in prison and found the Lake County jail, awaiting the court's decision.