



HONEYMOON MURDER OF THE TRANSSEXUAL BRIDE

by EDDIE KRELL

Before they could catch a killer,
police had to uncover the history of
a victim who was both man and woman



On first view, roadside corpse, guarded by frightened pet, gave no indication of the complications about to ensue.

NEWTON, IOWA, JUNE 1, 1976

■ It was just after daybreak and the car traveling along Interstate 80 picked up speed. The morning light seemed to open the broad highway as it unwound through the flat cornfields of central Iowa. Only a few miles of daylight driving had been accomplished when the motorist spotted something that made him shift from the gas pedal to the brake.

At first glance, it appeared to be a hitchhiker sleeping and not in any particular trouble. Still, it was dangerous lying there off the highway, only a few feet from the pavement and the concerned driver pulled over and walked back to wake up the sleeper.

A blue blanket and a blue pillow lay on top of the still form. A small black shaggy dog stood by. As the man neared the object he saw spots of red on the blue blanket and pillow. When

he lifted the cover, he knew he had come upon a matter for the police.

A nearby turn off the highway took him to Grinnell, two miles away. At the police station he told an officer about what he had seen lying off the interstate, at the Lynnvile interchange. The patrolman dispatched to investigate, reported on his radio a few minutes later that a woman was lying off the highway and she appeared to be dead. He also reported that circumstances indicated the woman was not an auto accident victim or even an accident victim at all.

From the dispatcher in Grinnell the information was relayed to the Jasper County sheriff's office in Newton, 15 miles west of the scene and Deputy Sheriff Dunsbergen, finishing up night patrol, was sent east on the interstate.

Dunsbergen's report, in turn, got the

dispatcher in the sheriff's office busy on the telephone. Deputy Sheriff James Verwers was called about an hour before his alarm was set to go off. He contacted the Iowa Bureau of Criminal Investigation in Des Moines and a team of state investigators and a mobile crime crew was assembled for the 45-mile trip to Jasper County.

Warren Stump, assistant director of the Iowa BCI, was in charge of the state contingent that included Special Agents L. Hoffman and John Tinker. Dr. Fred E. Carpenter, Jr., Jasper County medical examiner, followed Deputy Verwers to the scene.

When the blue pillow and blanket were removed, the investigators looked down at the form of a young woman. There was blood on her long blonde hair and her flowered blouse. She was wearing a pair of dark slacks.

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Among officials at highway death scene were Coroner Lynne (L) and Deputy Sheriff Dunsbergen (third from left).

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continued

The small shaggy dog that had been guarding the body at first moved off with the arrival of so many people, but returned when officers convinced it they were friendly. A tag on the collar was a rabies inoculation tag from Denver.

A smoked cigaret stub was noted on the ground near the body as well as cigaret ashes on the victim's lap. A purse and a small overnight bag lay nearby.

"She hasn't been dead long," the medical examiner said. "Not much more than an hour."

The woman lay on her left side and the officers could see what appeared to be bullet wounds in the head and back. Investigator Stump noted something else.

"She's got unusually large feet for a woman," he commented.

About 5 feet, 7 inches tall and slender, the victim looked to be in her 30s. She was heavily made-up, also, and when Stump and Dr. Carpenter knelt down for a close look at her face, they found themselves doing sudden double-takes. The semblance of a black beard was coming through the make up.

Other officers took a close look at the face of the victim, and confirmed the impression.

"Maybe it's a female impersonator," one puzzled officer commented.

Plans were discussed to have the body taken to Des Moines for examination. Investigators wanted to know more than the cause of death, they also were interested in the question of sex.

A search of the purse turned up a wallet with \$20 in traveler's checks and about \$20 in cash. There were identification cards issued to Terri A. Williams, age 34, with an address in Denver, Colo.

Investigators were particularly interested in a marriage license taken from the purse. It showed that Terri A. Williams was married in Denver to Richard Moore on May 14, 1976.

"Married six days ago in Denver," an investigator said. "That dog must belong to the victim."

Another dig into the purse brought out a small address book. A state agent thumbing through it noted a number of names, address and phone number listings for Denver and several cities in Michigan.

Officers moved up and down the highway and a nearby ramp looking for other clues. "Maybe the guy on the marriage license is around here somewhere," a state trooper suggested.

"I doubt it," a BCI agent said. "If he was killed around here, he would be right with the other body. He might have been killed miles from here."

One trooper went to the rest area

near the exit ramp. Another trooper recalled seeing the flattened body of a small animal at the far end of the ramp. He had thought it was a skunk that was run over. But when he went for another look, he saw it was a dead dog. There was a chain collar around the neck and a Denver tag on the chain.

"No doubt they belong to the same person," he said. "Couldn't be two dogs from Denver around here... and this tag number is one more than the other."

While the body was taken to Des Moines, the detectives went to the sheriff's office in Newton and filled in Sheriff Darrell Hurley on the probe.

"The victim was shot a couple of times," a state agent said. "The main thing we're waiting for regarding the examination is the sex."

State agents called police in Denver and Michigan seeking information on Terri A. Williams and Richard Moore, giving them the names, addresses and phone numbers from the address book.

In Lansing, Mich., Detective Lieutenant Joe Hibbard and several other detectives remembered the victim, Iowa probers soon learned. Terri Williams had come to their city about four years before from Detroit. When they first knew him, he had been a man of about 30 who dressed and acted as a woman.

Terri first came to police attention during the investigation of a murder. A man who police had been told was a homosexual was murdered and thrown



Sheriff Darrell Hurley provided escort for man who was charged in shooting death. Unclaimed by any relative or friend, a victim who had hoped for a new life was buried by county.

into a river. The probe led police back to a bar frequented by transvestites and Terri Williams had been an important witness in the case.

The connection Lansing police made with Terri Williams then was to prove valuable later in 1974. Lansing police reported that Terri Williams gave them a tip that led to the arrest of a man who had escaped from a Michigan institution. The man reportedly had been sharing an apartment with Williams and police were told the man had said something incriminating about a triple murder in Florida in which jewelry was stolen.

Terri Williams had been flown to Florida to testify at the man's trial. Conviction and the death penalty had followed.

Police indicated they knew little about the background of the Iowa victim before he came to Lansing. His name evidently had been Frank before he assumed a feminine identity.

Further information indicated that the victim's name was more well known in medical files than crime records. In October of 1974, Terri Williams had entered a county hospital in Lansing where a doctor who was a professor on the faculty of Michigan State University had operated.

That was the first operation in a series of three and early in 1975, news of them leaked out of the hospital and reached the ear of a reporter for a television station. (Continued on page 64)



He didn't remember, Townsend said. "Are you wearing a belt?" Detective Shepard asked.

Townsend said he was. "May I see it?" she asked.

Townsend took off his belt and handed it over. It had a distinctive pattern—an open rectangle with two slanting ovals inside it—that seemed to correspond exactly with the impression left on the dead girl's upper inner thigh.

At that point, Townsend was placed under arrest on a charge of first degree murder. There was no more questioning.

The Miami officers next asked Broward County authorities to pick up the suspect's car for them and to preserve it carefully for clue processing. It was found still parked at the Miramar address.

The investigators found in the LTD, among other things, a spare tire in excellent condition in the trunk. The officers wondered why Townsend had not put on the spare instead of buying an extra tire at the filling station, but found no ready answer.

In the glove compartment of Townsend's car, police found his wallet. They looked through his credit cards and were shaken to discover the gasolin card through which they had traced the murder suspect was not there. Hurriedly, they began a minute search of the car. Behind and partly under the driver's seat, they found the card. It proved a perfect match for the imprint of the slip for the retreat tire.

"Looks like he just didn't take time to put it back in his wallet at the station," Detective Shepard remarked to her colleague. "He reached behind the seat with one hand as he drove off and dropped it on the floor."

At a preliminary hearing for Townsend, with evidence presented by Assistant Dade County State Attorney Carol Guralnick, a vivid picture of Emily Slatinsky's last moments of life was presented.

James Williams, who was registered in Room 10 of the Paradise, the murder

room, testified that Emily, known on the streets as Brenda, came to him and asked to use his room for an hour.

"She said she wanted to use it to talk to a friend," Williams testified. He described the "friend" who had accompanied Emily to the motel as a man in a yellow shirt and brown pants.

After Emily had been with the "friend" for more than an hour, Williams said, he grew impatient and told the motel manager he thought it was time to "get her out." He had said:

"I'm going to knock on the door and tell her she has to leave."

He had noticed a flat on the car that had rolled up with Emily and the man, Williams said, and he remembered it as he knocked on the door of Room 10.

"I called to the man inside that he had a flat and he said 'thank you,'" Williams testified.

Williams said he had turned and walked back toward the motel office, then heard the door of Room 10 shut. He looked back and saw the man who had occupied it with Emily running toward his car.

"I thought something was funny," Williams testified. "I went back to tell her he was leaving. I went and saw her on the bed and she looked funny. I shook her and she didn't answer. I ran to the manager."

As he did so, he recalled, he had noticed the man who had been in the room get into his car and drive off with the flat tire.

"His wheels were spinning as he took off," the witness said.

Gene Lamar, an employee of the motel, testified he was working on a lawnmower outside before the girl and her male "friend" arrived. However, he was inside, at the desk, when Emily came up and asked him to change a \$20 bill, he went on. He said that after a conference with the manager and his wife, the change was provided.

Lamar also described the Ford LTD parked outside, visible through the door and windows, and said he also had noted it had a flat. He also saw

the man drive off hurriedly, he said.

Under Assistant State Attorney Guralnick's questioning, Lamar pointed out Townsend in the courtroom and said, "That's him."

"He took off like he was mad," Lamar testified. "A hubcap came off the car and I saw a man on the sidewalk go pick it up."

At that moment, Lamar said, James Williams came running to the desk exclaiming, "Man, that girl is dead!"

Detective Ina Shepard, who noted she had been a Miami police officer for ten years, testified as to how she had obtained the name of Townsend's optometrist. An affidavit from the optometrist was introduced. It read: "This is to verify that these glasses belong to Roger Townsend; Bausch and Lomb, yellow gold-filled frame."

The optometrist also gave the prescription used to make the lenses to confirm the identification of the glasses.

The woman detective testified that, when she first saw Townsend, he had a mustache and a very short beard running from sideburn to sideburn. He had shaved off his beard and mustache when he appeared for the hearing. Witness Lamar also had recalled the whiskers, but apparently had no difficulty in identifying Townsend.

County Judge Arthur Winton ordered Townsend held without bond for the strangulation murder of the pretty young girl who became a prostitute to try to get home. At this writing Townsend is awaiting trial for that murder.

Mrs. Guralnick, the assistant state attorney, called Miami police work on the case outstanding. "When they started, the police had nothing," she said. "In a matter of hours, they had the whole case wrapped up. I call that outstanding."

EDITOR'S NOTE: The names James Williams and Gene Lamar are not the actual names of the persons who were in fact participants in the incidents described in this article.

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Terri Williams, the reporter learned, had gone through a series of operations designed to change his sex. Though not exactly commonplace, sex change operations had been performed before, but not of the type that Terri Williams had undergone.

Instead of removing the male sex organs, Terri Williams' operations involved inverting these organs into the pelvis and then constructing a female sex organ. If successful, this would have allowed Terri Williams to have

complete sexual relations as a woman.

The reporter interviewed Terri Williams as she was recovering from the third operation. He found her a slender woman with sandy hair rolled back in a bun. He also found her somewhat hostile when he identified himself and started asking questions.

The newsman reported that Terri Williams made threats to be carried out if any news stories identified her. The reporter wasn't interested in causing Terri Williams embarrassment, but

there was a story and he was determined to get it. Besides the interview with Terri Williams, he talked to people who were connected with the hospital and to government officials.

A Michigan state legislator was also interested in the operations. He wanted to know why government funds could be used for a sex change and brought the issue up on the floor of the state capital in Lansing.

The reporter's story had mentioned that a man had undergone a series of operations to have a sex change in a county hospital and part of the ex-

penses had been paid by government programs.

When Terri Williams had gotten out of the hospital, she had gone to her home in a duplex in the center of Lansing, about half a mile from the state capital and a short walk from a section known as the "Sin Block" consisting of X-rated movie houses, X-rated book stores, drinking places described as gay bars, and other establishments reportedly inhabited by homosexuals and female impersonators.

The reporter who had interviewed Terri Williams in the hospital went by her home to follow up on his story and found Terri sitting in front of her home with several people who appeared to be women.

His subject appeared every bit a complete woman. She had a developed bust, reportedly helped along by hormones, various exercises and silicone shots. She wore her blonde hair pulled back in a bun.

THE conversation was cordial and open when Terri talked about fulfillment of her life's ambition. In her frankness, she appeared to seek some understanding. But when the reporter got around to questions on payment for the operations, Terri Williams' attitude reportedly became hostile.

A young man arrived and joined the conversation and Terri introduced him as her fiancé. The couple said they had been shopping for an engagement ring that day.

The operations performed on Terri Williams had caused a furor in the state legislature when an appropriations bill for a state medical school came up. Some of the more conservative members questioned the use of state funds and the employment of university faculty members for such operations.

As for Terri Williams, she appeared to have what she wanted and did not show up at the gay bars, or other places frequented by homosexuals.

"Terri isn't gay any more," word circulated in such haunts. "Terri is not a homosexual. Terri is a real woman."

A detective who had considered Terri Williams a good informant kept in touch with her after the operation. He related she had expressed great satisfaction at the results of the operations, telling him she was a complete woman, experiencing all the relations of a woman.

The reporter, visiting Terri again at a later date, was told her engagement had been broken.

It was in the winter of 1975 when Terri Williams packed up and left Lansing. She next was traced to Denver where she settled in an apartment and got a job as a topless dancer.



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One of the men who saw her dancing took a very special interest in her and Terri's new found friends in Denver got the word that she was going with him alone.

Months later, over in Newton, Iowa, on the warm Thursday morning of May 20, 1976, detectives were collecting all this background information in an effort to get a lead on their murder case.

Some of the addresses listed in the little book were in East Lansing and Detective James Kelley of the East Lansing police department was put in charge of the investigation there.

He reported back to Iowa that Terri Williams had been visiting friends in East Lansing on her honeymoon, with her husband, Richard Moore. They had stayed at a friend's house there for several days. The friends had presumed the honeymooners were going back to Denver when they left.

The couple had been traveling in a red Mercury with two small dogs according to the information to reach Newton from Michigan. And, in going through the address book, BCI agents noted the description of a red Mercury, along with a license number.

"She put a lot of things down in this book," an agent said. "It's a big help

to us. Let's get an all-points bulletin out for the Mercury."

The agent called Denver police and was connected with Detective Chris Erickson. He requested they be on a special alert for the red Mercury ... and for Richard Moore.

"We're not sure about the bridegroom," the state agent said. "All we know for sure is that the woman was shot and left off the interstate with the two dogs. But, if Moore is involved, he could have headed in any direction. If he planned to return to Denver, I don't think he'll be there for a while. It looks like that woman was killed sometime this morning. He's got a ways to go ... if he's on his way back to Denver."

The information from the address book given to Detective Erickson included a home address for Terri Williams, names and addresses of several people in Denver, and the name of a nightclub where she had worked.

The Denver detective recognized the name of the club as one specializing in topless dancers; some reportedly performed bottomless too.

Detective Erickson found the home address was a basement apartment in an old two-story building in an old part of north Denver. The name "Terri Williams" was on the mail box.

Receiving no response to his knock, the detective went to the home of a neighbor and asked questions.

"Terri got married last week," a woman said. "She's on her honeymoon."

The woman was told Terri would not be returning to the apartment, but police were interested if her husband came back. "He's got a red Mercury," Erickson said.

"I've seen him and the car," the woman said.

Erickson gave her a card. "If you see him or the car, please call this number right away."

Erickson went to another address from Terri's book and talked to a woman who had been a friend of Terri's since she arrived in Denver. She said she didn't know much about Richard Moore except that Terri had met him at the club where she worked and that Moore might have been living in the basement apartment with Terri before the marriage.

Further information from Michigan indicated the honeymooners had some difficulty during their recent visit. There was a report of trouble between them.

"Maybe the bridegroom found out in Michigan that his bride was a sex change," a detective suggested. "Maybe that's the motive in this case."

There were no reports to reach authorities that day on the whereabouts, or condition, of Richard Moore. The alarm for the man and his red Mercury automobile was now nationwide.

The next day, Friday, a report from Des Moines contained no surprises for the murder investigators. The report stated the victim had been shot in the head and back with a .22-caliber gun. It also gave confirmation that male sex

organs had been found inside the victim.

Over in Denver, Detective Chris Erickson was staking out the apartment on Clay Street. If Richard Moore was still driving his red Mercury, he would have had time to make it back there by now.

Detective Erickson was back at police headquarters during a shift change to put patrolmen who worked north Denver on a special alert, giving them a description of the car and Richard Moore.

There was speculation in Denver and Iowa on many aspects of the murder case, but early Saturday morning some of the speculation was over. It was 12:30 A.M. when a man called Denver police.

"That red Mercury is out there... in front of the apartment," he said. "He must have just come back."

Patrolmen A. J. Lombard and S. Collins, cruising north Denver, got the assignment from the dispatcher and sped to the address on Clay Street. They found a man standing by the parked red Mercury and carrying a suitcase. He could have been unloading his car... or loading it for a trip. Whatever plans he had were changed, as he was taken to police headquarters.

Later that morning, a Denver detective called the Jasper County sheriff's office in Newton, Iowa, with details of the arrest of Richard A. Moore. Moore was listed as 26 years old, with no place of employment. The Denver detective also reported that Moore was carrying a .22-caliber magnum six-shot revolver when arrested. He said Moore told him he had left his bride in Chicago and hadn't seen her since Wednesday.

A murder charge was filed against

Richard Moore in Jasper County and he was ordered held in jail in Denver without bond pending extradition.

News of the murder came as a shock to many people. A Denver newspaper carried the story under the heading: "Sex-Change Denverite, 34, Slain."

At the topless bar on Colfax, where some of the dancers also performed bottomless, employees and customers were trying to figure it all out.

"You mean... that slender blonde... Terri... was a man?" a regular customer asked, finding it difficult to believe. "With that body!"

"The way we got it, she used to be a man," a waitress said. "She had one of them sex change operations."

Over in Michigan, where Terri Williams had lived for years before and after the series of operations, many friends were talking about the long struggle Terri had experienced in fulfilling her desire.

"Irony, isn't it," a man commented. "All her life, just about, she wanted to be a woman. She went through all that and became a woman, legally and medically."

"And she became a bride and was killed on her honeymoon and they're holding her husband for it."

Richard A. Moore waived extradition and Sheriff Darrell Hurley went to Denver and brought the suspect to Newton by plane.

Authorities said no one from Denver, Michigan or anywhere else had claimed the body. County Attorney Ken Whitehead applied for a court order to bury the murder victim. She was buried as Mrs. Terri Williams Moore, at the expense of Jasper County. No one from Denver or Michigan attended the funeral for the unwanted bride. ■

IT'S LIKE GOING TO HEAVEN TO BE SLAUGHTERED continued from page 22

As relatives and friends of the two agents made calls to Acapulco seeking information, there appeared to be some confusion over what police were doing in the search for the missing woman and in the investigation of the murder.

News reports quoted Guerrero State authorities as theorizing the pair might have been waylaid by robbers on their return to Acapulco from Taxco. There appeared little police could do in the area of the Condesa Del Mar Hotel though there were other plush hotels and large apartment buildings nearby.

It was early Tuesday morning, when police picked up their first lead. The jeep rented to Semmelroth was found abandoned in the Las Brisas residential area, a suburb of Acapulco inhabited by wealthy Mexicans. Houses there were usually large, with high walls.

It seemed obvious to police that whoever shot Gary Semmelroth did not reside in this neighborhood.

In St. Louis that day, Theodore Fronczak boarded a plane for Acapulco, anxious to assist in the search for his wife. He was met on his arrival by Allan Wilson, the airline tour leader.

When St. Louis newsmen contacted Fronczak on Wednesday, he said he was having difficulty because of the language barrier. He also was getting the feeling police had nothing to report in any language.

Fronczak said he had requested assistance from U.S. Representative James W. Symington, "to get our government involved... to put pressure on the authorities here."

"She's been missing since Saturday and I haven't heard a thing except they

found the car and his body. I'm so frustrated. I want to offer a reward for information. I'll be married five years Saturday and I'd like to find her before then."

The next day, a report from Acapulco stated that police believed the two travel agents were accosted after leaving an Acapulco discotheque in the early-morning hours, with the motive being robbery or an attempt to attack the woman.

While police gave no details to back up this theory, it was believed authorities had found no information to place Semmelroth or Mrs. Fronczak in Taxco. In fact, the mileage listed in the odometer of the vehicle Semmelroth rented indicated he did not make the trip.

A newsman who spoke to the missing woman's husband that day quoted him as saying he was having a problem getting people to move.