

Presented By:

Danielle Pritchett

Genealogy Librarian

# WHAT'S THE TEA IN YOUR FAMILY TREE? Vol. 1





# Finding the Juicy Gossip in Your Family Tree

## Family Stories

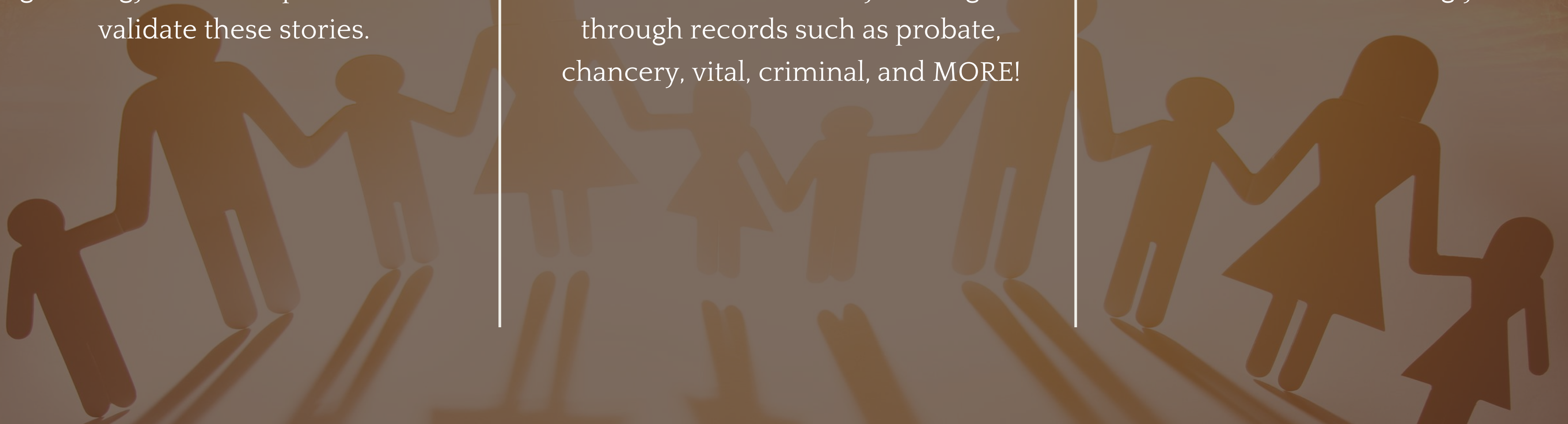
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by: Robinson Spangler Carolina Room

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## Woman, Brother Knifed

A 22-year-old Martinsville man was arrested early Saturday morning and charged with malicious wounding in connection with the cutting of a city woman and her little brother.

Police Sgt. H.P. Ward said Wesley Lorenzo Dickerson of Rt. 1, Martinsville, was arrested and charged one hour after the incident.

Ward said Pritchett, 19, of 408 Second St. received cuts to her back, stomach and both hands. Her brother, 7-year-old \_\_\_\_\_, received cuts to his left hand.

Both were admitted to Memorial Hospital of Martinsville and Henry County, where they underwent surgery to close the wounds, he said.

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### City deputy suspended while claim probed

By GLENN WOHLTMANN  
Bulletin Staff Writer

Martinsville Sheriff's Deputy C. Victor Flanagan has been suspended as a result of a woman's claim that she became pregnant after having sex with a male inmate who says he was allowed to spend the night in her cell at the city jail.

His suspension is temporary "until I can check into things a little more," Martinsville Sheriff Maynard Gilley said, adding that Flanagan will continue to draw pay while he is suspended.

"I don't know nothing about it all," Flanagan said Saturday. "I don't know how it happened on my shift."

Gilley said he learned of the woman's claim Feb. 12 when a local lawyer, whom he would not identify, told him a lawsuit might be filed as a result. Gilley said he suspended Flanagan Friday when

he was told reports of the suit were about to be made public.

In February 1991 Pritchett- was being held overnight in the city jail for a court appearance the next day, the sheriff said, adding that, at the time, Oliver Ricardo Wilson was a trustee at the jail.

Wilson alleges he and Pritchett- had sex in a holding room in the city jail Feb. 12-13.

Pritchett- who is an inmate in the women's prison in Goochland, gave birth to a son Nov. 21, 1991, Wilson said. Gilley said the baby is being cared for by relatives.

Wilson, who is an inmate at the Henry County Jail serving time on a drug conviction, said that he and Pritchett- had known each other before the night in question, but had never had sex before then.

Flanagan said that as a trustee, Wilson had access to a large area

of the jail and could have reached Pritchett- without deputies being aware of it.

According to Flanagan, the holding room where the woman was being held has a small door where meals can be delivered without opening the room's regular door. He described the small door as slightly larger than 16 inches wide, and said that in the past prisoners have managed to use the door to climb out of the room.

Flanagan said he learned of the suspension Saturday morning when he called Gilley after hearing in a broadcast Friday night that he had been suspended.

"I called this morning," Flanagan said Saturday. "He told me that it was done ... (but) I haven't seen no paperwork on it."

Gilley said Deputy Percy Young also was on duty that night, but he is not being investigated.

Although the jail is not certified

by the state to hold women, Flanagan said the practice is routine and that women had been kept in the holding room for as long as "15 to 20 days."

Gilley also said that women occasionally had been kept at the jail if no other housing was available, but said certain procedures were to be followed.

"I can hold them as long as I clean out a cell block or don't hold men close to them," Gilley said.

Pritchett- is serving a 27-year sentence at the Virginia Women's Correctional Center in Goochland. Wilson is in the Henry County Jail after being convicted of multiple drug charges in both the county and the city, according to Martinsville Commonwealth Attorney J. Randolph Smith, who could not immediately determine what charges Pritchett- had been sentenced on.



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Elizabeth City, North Carolina

Fri, Jun 27, 1902 · Page 2



Grits and Gravel Aug 23, 1938

Henderson Daily Dispatch

Henderson, North Carolina

Tue, Aug 23, 1938 · Page 3



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Charlotte Observer, The (NC)	2018 - Current	USA - NC - Charlotte	Newspaper	Image	English
Charlotte Observer, The: Blogs (NC)	2005 - Current	USA - NC - Charlotte	Blog	Text	English
Charlotte Observer, The: Video (NC)	2023 - Current	USA - NC - Charlotte	Video	Text	English
Charlotte Observer, The: Video Transcripts (NC)	2019 - 2023	USA - NC - Charlotte	Transcript	Text	English
Charlotte Observer, The: Web Edition Articles (NC)	2007 - Current	USA - NC - Charlotte	Web-Only Source	Text	English
Charlotte Semi-Weekly Observer	1892	USA - NC - Charlotte	Newspaper	Image	English
Daily Charlotte Observer	1883	USA - NC - Charlotte	Newspaper	Image	English
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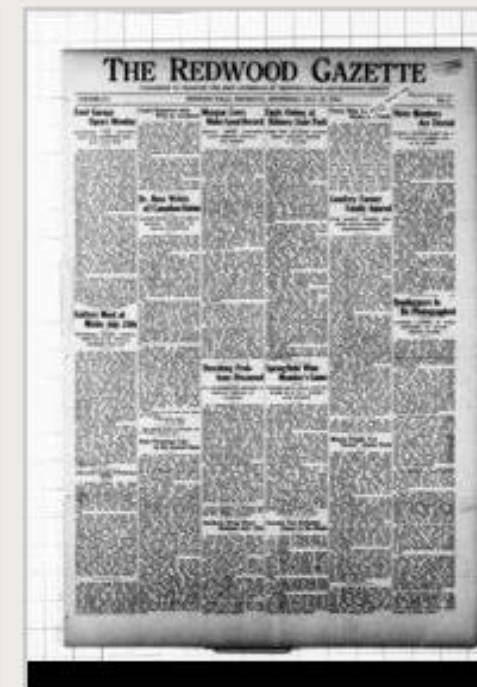
100 Years Ago Today: 7/23/1924 (37 issues)



[Seward daily gateway. \[volume\] \(4pp.\)](#)  
Seward, Alaska



[Grant County herald. \[volume\] \(8pp.\)](#)  
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<b>The Advance (Elizabeth City, N.C.)</b> ... — 728 issues online; 1901-1916	Pasquotank	Community		
<b>The Advertiser (Raleigh, N.C.)</b> — 1 issue online; 1893	Wake	Community		
<b>The Advertiser (Wilson, N.C.)</b> — 2 issues online; 1888	Wilson	Community		
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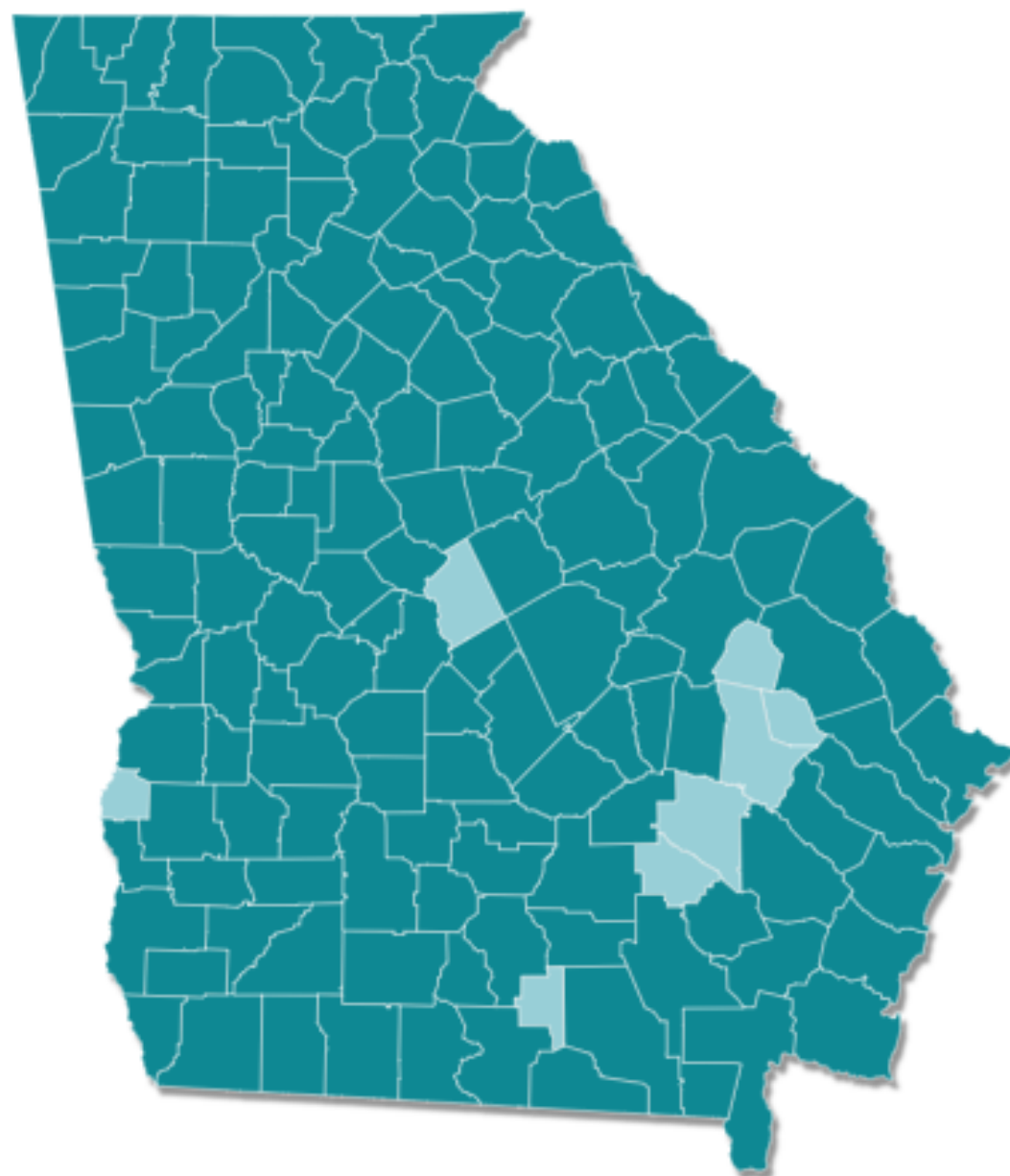


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Mar 31, 1955 - Apr 21, 1955

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#### [Alvord Sunset Gazette](#)

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#### [A'tome](#)

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Feb 14, 1974 - Dec 19, 1974

#### [L'abeille de la Nouvelle-Orleans](#)

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70 issues

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1,333 issues

May 1, 1903 - Dec 30, 1915

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110 issues

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#### [The Advocate](#)

48 issues

Jan 14, 1886 - Jan 6, 1887

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680 issues

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732 issues

Oct 2, 1988 - Jan 31, 2008

#### [The Altar and The Throne](#)

1 issues

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113 issues

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752 issues

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363 issues

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Sep 6, 1894 - Dec 25, 1895

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#### [The Afro American](#)

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Jun 7, 1918 - Jun 8, 1918

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#### [L'Alliance](#)

6 issues

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6,622 issues

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#### [American & Commercial Daily Advertiser](#)

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Mar 9, 1800 - Jun 1, 1880

#### [L'Abeille Canadienne](#)

10 issues

Dec 7, 1833 - Feb 8, 1884

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Jan 22, 1920 - Feb 24, 1925

#### [L'Action Catholique](#)

7,461 issues

Dec 31, 1915 - Dec 11, 1962

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2,273 issues

Mar 6, 1913 - Jun 17, 1970

#### [The Adams Centinel](#)

2,142 issues

Nov 19, 1800 - Mar 19, 1883

#### [The Advertiser and Eastern Townships Sentinel](#)

561 issues

Jan 11, 1856 - Nov 7, 1887

#### [The Afro American Ledger](#)

286 issues

Jan 5, 1906 - Jun 30, 1917

#### [L' Aiglon](#)

198 issues

Sep 25, 1886 - Jan 24, 1963

#### [The Alamance Gleaner](#)

1,482 issues

Jan 3, 1881 - Dec 29, 1910

#### [Album Universel](#)

7 issues

Feb 25, 1905 - Dec 30, 1905

#### [Allo Police!](#)

101 issues

Feb 28, 1953 - Jun 24, 1956

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9,477 issues

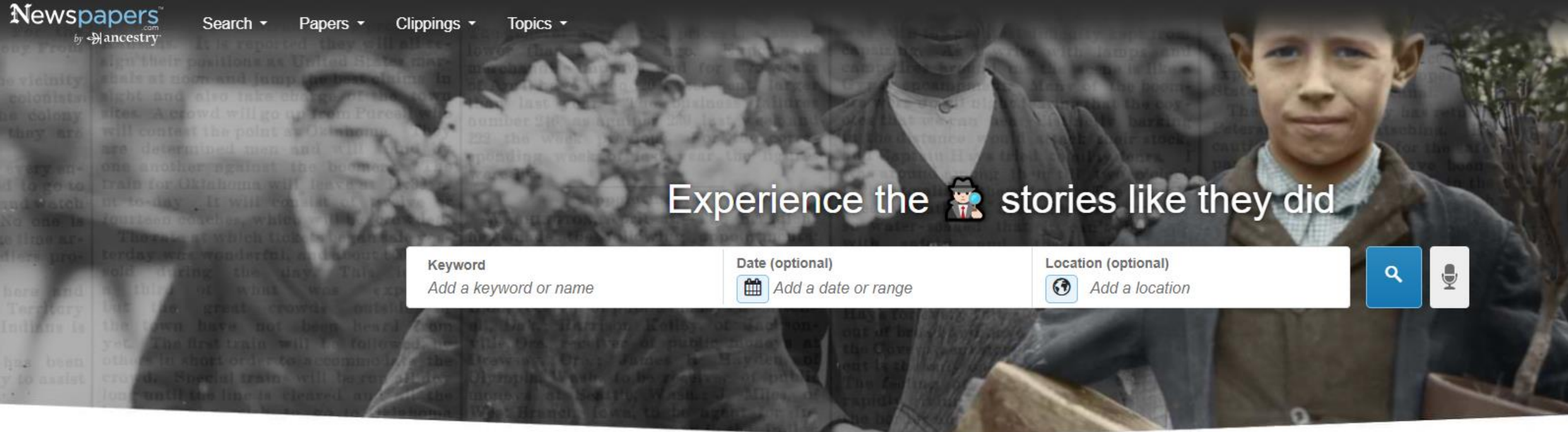
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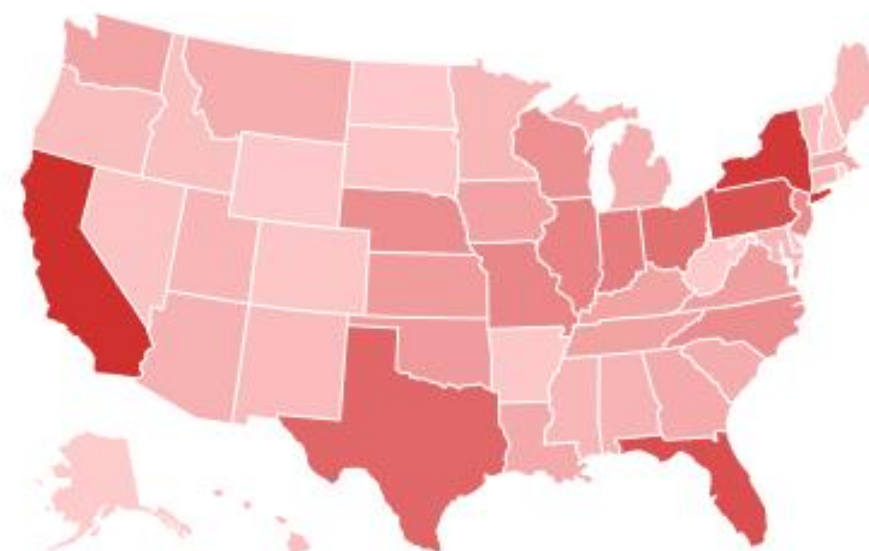
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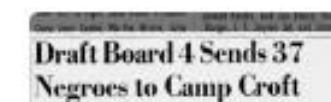
Winston-Salem Journal

Winston-Salem, North Carolina

Tue, Jun 06, 1944 - Page 4

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Winston-Salem Journal

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# WHAT'S THE TEA WITH...

## MONA LISA ABNEY



- Mona Lisa McDaniel, born October 1, 1952 in Martinsville, VA
- Married Wilbert Abney Jr on August 17, 1974
- Second Cousin 1x Removed



# Strangled to Death in Motel

## Woman Is Slain In Fairfax Motel

Fairfax County police are investigating the slaying of a Richmond area woman, who was found strangled Saturday morning in a room at the Holiday Inn at Tyson's Corner.

The woman, identified as Mrs. Mona Abney, 25, was found by a maid, police said. Police would only say that she had been strangled, and declined to release information on what means had been used.

Police said that the door to Mrs. Abney's room had not been forceably opened, but said there were signs of a struggle within the room.

Police were unable to furnish an address for the woman.

## Ex-Resident Strangled

She rarely, if ever, drove to Washington, D.C., from her Richmond home to go shopping.

But last Friday Mona Abney, formerly of Martinsville, checked into the Holiday Inn opposite Tysons Corner Shopping Center in Fairfax — alone — on what her husband has told police was an overnight shopping trip.

A hotel maid discovered her "partially clothed" body about 9 a.m. Saturday, according to Fairfax County police. Mrs. Abney's room and belongings were "in disarray," and marks on her neck suggested what an autopsy at Fairfax Hospital confirmed later on Saturday — she had been strangled to death.

Police have several suspects in the apparent murder, but have not made any arrests yet, according to Marge Besant, spokesman for Fairfax police.

A 1970 graduate of Martins-

ville High School, Mrs. Abney had relatives in Washington, "but she didn't ever go up to visit them," said her father, Horace E. McDaniel Sr., of 704 Ailcie St. "I'd never known her to go on a shopping trip up there," he added.

Mrs. Abney's husband, Wilbert, told McDaniel that Mrs. Abney, 25, telephoned her husband in Richmond about 6 p.m. Friday after checking into the Holiday Inn to say that she was "okay," McDaniel said. Later, Abney also said that a maid at the hotel had given a key for Mrs. Abney's room to an unidentified man, McDaniel said.

In addition, the dead woman's husband also told her father that Mrs. Abney had "about \$300 on her" on the trip, McDaniel said. "She don't usually carry much money on her, usually she just

carries a lot of credit cards," her father said.

Fairfax police could give no information this morning about any possible theft of anything from Mrs. Abney's hotel room, nor could the police spokesman, Mrs. Besant, specify what clothing Mrs. Abney was wearing when she was found Saturday morning.

Mrs. Abney intended to return home on Saturday, according to McDaniel. The Abneys lived at 944 Lisson Crescent in Richmond, said Mrs. Besant.

After graduating from Martinsville High School Mrs. Abney attended Virginia Union College in Richmond, McDaniel said. She and her husband, who attended Virginia State University in Petersburg, met in Richmond. They were married in 1974, the same year Mrs. Abney graduated from Virginia Union, her father said.

Martinsville Bulletin Wed, Feb 01, 1978

## Murder Remains Unsolved

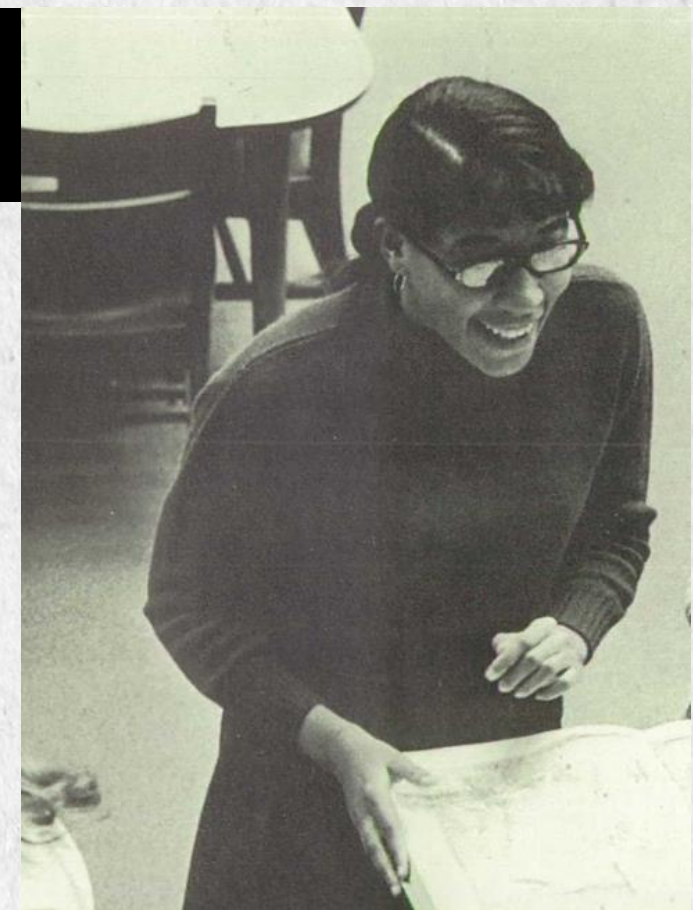
No progress has been made in solving the Jan. 26 murder of a former Martinsville resident in Fairfax County, according to police.

Mona Abney, 25, a 1970 graduate of Martinsville High School, was strangled to death in January in her hotel room in Tysons Corner while on an overnight shopping trip to Washington, D.C., from her Richmond home.

The daughter of Horace E. McDaniel Sr. of 704 Ailcie St., Mrs. Abney's "partially clothed" body was found in the Holiday Inn on Jan. 27 by a maid, according to Marge Besant, spokesman for Fairfax police.

The murder is the only unsolved case among eight murders this year in Fairfax County, Mrs. Besant said.

Martinsville Bulletin Thu, Jul 06, 1978



Richmond Times-Dispatch Wed, Feb 01, 1978



# Wife's Murder Sparks Insurance Claim Disputes

## Man Sues To Collect Disputed Insurance

RICHMOND (AP) — A trial date of Nov. 29 has been set for a federal court suit centering on the validity of an insurance policy that names as beneficiary the husband of a 25-year-old Richmond woman who was strangled in a Northern Virginia motel.

Fairfax County police are continuing an investigation into the death of Mona Lisa Abney, whose body was found by a maid last Jan. 29 at the Holiday Inn at Tyson's Corner. The woman apparently was alone when she checked in the night before, police said.

Wilbert Abney Jr. has filed the suit in U.S. District Court seeking the payment of \$200,000 by New York Life Insurance Co. Court records show the disputed life insurance policy was dated about two weeks before Mrs. Abney's death.

Challenging the validity of the policy, New York Life said — among other things — that Abney "may have committed or caused to be committed the murder of his wife."

Police said no one has been charged in the death.

The case is still open, said Capt. James Joseph, head of the criminal investigation division of the Fairfax police, but he declined to discuss details of the investigation.

A lawyer for the company said only that the "pleadings (in the civil suit) have not been withdrawn."

The Roanoke Times Mon, Nov 06, 1978

## Man Admits Taking Company's Lie Test In Wife's Death

RICHMOND (AP) — Wilbert Abney Jr., in documents filed in U.S. District Court here, has disclosed that he was given a lie detector test in connection with his wife's death.

"The examiner told me he didn't think I was lying," Abney said.

However, he said he had never been formally given the results of the test.

Abney has filed a suit against New York Life Insurance Co. in an effort to collect on a \$200,000 life insurance policy dated two weeks before the January death of his 25-year-old wife, Mona Lisa Abney.

New York Life, in responding to the suit, said Abney "may have committed or caused to be committed the murder of his wife."

The trial on the lawsuit is scheduled in U.S. District Court here Nov. 29.

Mrs. Abney's slaying has never been solved. Her body was found in a motel room at Tyson's Corner Jan. 28. An autopsy showed she had been strangled.

The Roanoke Times Wed, Nov 08, 1978

## Perjury Charge Likely in Insurance Suit

RICHMOND (AP) — Either Wilbert Abney Jr. or the parents and sister of his slain wife today face the possibility of a perjury charge in connection with their testimony in a \$200,000 civil suit here.

U.S. District Judge Robert R. Merhige Jr. raised the question of perjury after he questioned Abney about the whereabouts of his wife in the latter part of December 1977.

Merhige said "somebody told a lie" and he turned the matter over to the FBI for investigation.

Merhige's action came Thursday at the conclusion of the two-day trial in which Abney is seeking \$200,000 from New York Life Insurance Co.

Abney, a former New York Life agent, says the company wrongfully refused to pay the proceeds of a policy on his wife's life.

New York Life has challenged the validity of the policy, which Abney obtained five days before Mona Lisa Abney, 25, was robbed, raped and strangled in a Northern Virginia motel room in January.

Abney won a partial victory when Mer-

hige dismissed contentions by New York Life that Abney had participated in a pre-arranged murder.

He has admitted he was having an affair with another woman and the woman has testified she spent the night with Abney the night his wife was killed. Abney said his wife had gone to Northern Virginia on a shopping trip.

He already has collected \$80,000 from other policies on his wife.

New York Life has filed a \$260,000 countersuit against Abney that will be tried later.

The Roanoke Times Fri, Dec 01, 1978

## Judge Rejects Claim

RICHMOND (AP) — A federal judge here has rejected a Richmond man's claim for \$200,000 from a life insurance policy that was issued on his wife shortly before she was murdered last January.

U.S. District Court Judge Robert R. Merhige ruled Friday that the disputed policy was invalid because of material misrepresentations about the medical history of the insured, Mona Lisa Abney.

The Roanoke Times Sun, Dec 17, 1978



# Mona Lisa Abney's Murder Still Unsolved

## Still No Solution To Year-Old Murder

RICHMOND (AP) — A year has passed since Mona Lisa Abney was murdered in a northern Virginia motel room, but the case remains unsolved and legal battles in connection with it will continue for months.

The 25-year-old Richmond woman was raped, robbed and strangled Jan. 27, 1978, Fairfax County police said.

An appeal of a suit by her husband, Wilbert Abney Jr., to collect \$200,000 from an insurance policy on his wife's life probably will not be heard for several months.

Abney is appealing to the 4th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals the decision of U.S. District Court Judge Robert R. Merhige Jr. last month.

Merhige said the disputed New York Life Insurance Co. policy, issued to the 29-year-old Abney about a week before his wife was murdered, contained misrepresentations about Mrs. Abney's medical history.

Abney was working for New York Life at the time the policy was delivered.

Also rejected by Merhige were attempts by the insurance firm to link Abney to his wife's slaying.

New York Life has filed a \$260,000 counterclaim against Abney but action probably will not be taken on that case until the appeal of Merhige's ruling is resolved.

Meanwhile, Mrs. Abney's mother has filed a \$3 million wrongful death suit in U.S. District Court in Alexandria against Holiday Inns Inc. and the operator of the Holiday Inn motel at which Mrs. Abney was slain.

The suit contends that a maid at the motel at Tysons Corner gave an unidentified person access to Mrs. Abney's room on the night of the murder.

Fairfax County police say their investigation into the murder is continuing, but no arrests have been made.

The only evidence at the murder scene indicated that Mrs. Abney's assailant was a white man, police said. Abney is black, as was his wife.

## Reward for information

FAIRFAX, Va. (UPI) — Fairfax County police are offering a \$1,000 reward for information leading to the arrest and indictment of the killer of a Richmond woman.

The "Crime Solver" program offers rewards of \$100 to \$1,000 for tips that lead to the arrest and indictment of alleged criminals, the department said.

The department selects a "Crime of the Week" from its file of unsolved cases.

The department chose the murder Jan. 27 or 28, 1978, of Mona Lisa Abney as its first "Crime of the Week." Mrs. Abney was found raped, robbed and murdered in a county motel, police said.

Police still have no leads in the case. Persons with information about the slaying or possible suspects are asked to call (703) 691-8888.

Officials said callers will be assigned numbers and will not have to divulge their names. Tipsters can call the department collect under "Crime Solvers," which is fashioned after programs in Montgomery County, Md., and several cities.

Last week, a federal judge in Richmond ruled that Mrs. Abney's husband could not collect \$200,000 for her murder under a life insurance policy because he failed to report her health problems to the New York firm that wrote the policy.

Potomac News Mon, Jan 14, 1980

## CRIME STOPPERS

METRO RICHMOND



Crime Stoppers is seeking information about the January 1978 slaying of Mona Lisa Abney of Richmond in the Tysons Corner Holiday Inn in Fairfax County.

Ms. Abney, 28, checked into the motel at 5 p.m. Friday, Jan. 27, and was found about 10 a.m. the next day. She had been robbed, raped and strangled.

Fairfax Crime Solvers caller No. 3523 is urged to call back, as some new information has been recently obtained.

If you have information about this or any crime in the Richmond area, call Crime Stoppers at 780-1000. The information could lead to a reward of up to \$1,000. Callers are given identification numbers and do not have to give their names or testify.

Caller No. 11943 is asked to call 780-1000.

**Crime Stoppers — Call 780-1000**  
**Richmond — Henrico — Hanover**  
**New Kent**



# Anonymous Tip Received Concerning Mrs. Abney

## Tip opens new lead on 1978 homicide

Associated Press

FAIRFAX — Fourteen years after a hotel maid found the body of Mona Lisa Abney of Richmond, county police said one person has come forward with new information about the January 1978 death.

An unknown person who called the county's CrimeStoppers number in early August may have information about the killing, said Officer Cindy Carroll.

The caller "named a person they said killed a black female in a motel six-and-a-half years ago in Tysons Corner." The caller thought the victim was from the Hampton Roads area, Carroll said.

A check of the records showed the only case matching the caller's information — except for the date of the crime and the residence of the victim — was Mrs. Abney's.

The victim was raped, robbed and strangled in her room at the Tysons Corner Holiday Inn. No one was ever charged with the

crime.

The death of the 25-year-old woman triggered a two-year court battle between the victim's husband and an insurance company. The husband, an insurance salesman, had taken out \$200,000 in insurance on his wife a week before her death.

Wilbert Abney Jr.'s claim to insurance money finally was rejected by a federal court. The court ruled the insurance application contained inaccurate information about Mrs. Abney's medical history, including a recent abortion. Testimony also showed that Abney had forged his wife's signature to the application.

Carroll said police were interested in talking with the caller again.

The caller said he thought the person involved in the killing was a drug-user and lived with his mother in Richmond, the officer said.

Carroll said she is in contact with Richmond police, who also are working on the case.

Kingsport Times-News  
Tue, Nov 12, 1991



# 27 Year Old Cold Case Finally Solved

## Husband surrenders in killing of wife 27 years ago

By **MICHAEL W. KAHN**  
Associated Press Writer

FAIRFAX, Va. — Twenty-seven years after his wife was found strangled in a Tysons Corner hotel, a husband surrendered to police Tuesday and was charged with her murder.

Mona Lisa Abney, 25, was visiting from Richmond when her body was discovered on Jan. 28, 1978, in her room at a Holiday Inn. The case went unsolved until detectives from the Homicide Cold Case Unit took a renewed interest.

"They reopened the case. They re-interviewed everyone, went over all the past reports," said Mary Mulrenan, a spokeswoman for the Fairfax County Police Department. They also recently sent DNA from the crime scene to a lab for new analysis, and a match came up.

Police said all of this led them to Abney's husband, Wilbert Abney Jr., 55, who turned himself in at police headquarters and was ordered held without bond.

Mulrenan declined to discuss a motive.



**WILBERT ABNEY JR.**  
... Turned himself in ...

Another police spokesman said the couple lived together at the time of the killing. Abney most recently was living in Plymouth Meeting, Pa., a Philadelphia suburb.

"He was fairly cooperative with our investigation, although he was somewhat surprised that the police are reinvestigating a case from 1978," Fairfax Police Detective Steve Milefsky

**"HE WAS** fairly cooperative with our investigation, although he was somewhat surprised that the police are reinvestigating a case from 1978."

**Steve Milefsky,**  
Fairfax police detective

told WRC-TV in Washington, D.C., which ran a story about the case earlier this month.

During the initial investigation, a hotel maid told police she let a man into Mona Lisa Abney's room about an hour after she checked in. The maid described the man as looking like the late actor Brian Keith, best known for the TV series "Family Affair."

Wilbert Abney looks nothing like Brian Keith.

"I don't know what the story is there, whether she was mistaken, got the room wrong or what have you. But that turned out to not be the murderer in this case," Mulrenan said.

## Jury convicts Abney in '78 death of wife

A Fairfax County jury has found a man guilty of first-degree murder in the 1978 death of Mona Lisa Abney, a former Martinsville resident, and he will be formally sentenced May 5, officials say.

According to a Washington Post article, the jury was not swayed by Wilbert Abney Jr., 55, and his explanation that his wife died accidentally during rough sex. He was convicted after two days of jury deliberations last week.

Mona Lisa Abney was 25 when she was found strangled in a room at the Holiday Inn in Tysons Corner on Jan. 27, 1978.

Last year, the Fairfax County Police Department was led to her husband by DNA evidence in the case, which was reopened by a cold case unit. Police said Abney turned himself in last May.

The Washington Post reported Abney faces a sentence between 20 years to life in prison.

Martinsville Bulletin  
Fri, Mar 10, 2006



# 27 Year Cold Case Finally Solved

Newsstand - 50¢

## Abney murder case becomes subject of crime show

BY F.M. WIGGINS  
STAFF WRITER

PETERSBURG — More than 28 years after the death of former Petersburg resident Mona Lisa Abney, her husband has been brought to justice, arrested and earlier this year was found guilty of her murder. But just how did that happen?

On Jan. 27, 1978, Wilbert Abney Jr., a former Petersburg Police officer, had traveled from Richmond to Tysons Corner in Fairfax County where his wife had gone to do some shopping. It was at a Holiday Inn there that he killed his wife.

For 28 years the case had remained unsolved.

Then in 2005 Wilbert Abney was arrested after testing confirmed that semen found at the scene matched his DNA.

And on Nov. 18 the case will be featured on the A&E television program, "Cold Case Files."

The program, which examines cold cases from across the country, recently talked to those who were involved in the case and who knew the Abneys.

One of those who was interviewed for the program was Patricia Parker, a Prince George resident.

"We were all friends and lived in the same apartment complex," Parker said. "We had fun together and went out places together. Mona [Abney] was just a very sweet girl."

Parker said that while Mona Lisa Abney was sweet and somewhat quiet, her husband was anything but that.

"He was kind of a show-off,"

Please see **ABNEY**, page A7

## Abney: DNA evidence linked husband to the murder

Continued from page A1

Parker said. "He was funny and was sort of like a Burt Reynolds type."

Parker said that she could remember in January 1978 receiving a call from Wilbert Abney saying that Mona Lisa had died.

"I remember that he didn't seem to be sad, and that there was just something weird and strange about the call," Parker said.

Then she started to remember some other strange statements that he had said to her:

"I remembered that he had always said that if Mona died he would use the insurance money to buy a Rolls-Royce," Parker said.

Parker wasn't the only one who heard Wilbert Abney make such statements before or after his wife's death. Michael Clark drove Abney to Fairfax from Richmond the morning after Mona's murder. During a trial in Fairfax on March 15, Clark testified that Wilbert Abney had said he was going to use the insurance money to buy 12 custom-tailored suits, a Rolls-Royce and a big house.

Fairfax Detective Steve Melifsky said that despite Wilbert Abney's suspicious behavior 28 years ago, it wasn't until DNA testing could confirm he had been at the crime scene that he was arrested.

"One of the biggest problems was the red herring of a maid's statement from the hotel that she had seen a white man leaving the hotel room," Melifsky said. "[Wilbert] also claimed that he hadn't been to Fairfax on the night that Mona was killed."

Melifsky said that in 1996 the case had been reviewed but that detectives in the Fairfax cold cases unit had worked on several other cases.

"In 2000 I was assigned to the

cold cases unit and we went through all the cases here and found all the ones with DNA and we started sending evidence off to the lab," Melifsky said. "In 2004 we tested the DNA from the Abney case against two suspects who were already listed in the case and it came back negative. So we decided to go back to the husband."

Since the crime, Wilbert Abney had moved to Pennsylvania. Melifsky contacted him there and asked if he'd be willing to submit a DNA sample.

"I remember that he was a little shocked that we had come to him and (he) asked us why we were reviewing the case," Melifsky said. "I was a little shocked by his reaction because usually families are pretty happy to see we're reviewing cases again."

Melifsky said that Wilbert Abney eventually agreed to the test and that in early 2005 it came back as a match.

"When we went back to arrest him he had changed his story from what he had said in 1978, which was that he hadn't been to the hotel," Melifsky said. "When we went to arrest him he admitted that he had killed Mona [Abney] but that it was by accident as part of some erotic asphyxiation."

In March a jury didn't buy his story and he was sentenced to 27 years in jail. Melifsky said that Abney was sentenced under the 1978 guidelines as that's when the crime was committed.

"I have mixed emotions about the case," Melifsky said. "It's one case closed, but there isn't really any closure, her family is still missing her, and there are 75 other cases that need to be closed and each case represents a family which is still missing a loved one."

• F.M. Wiggins may be reached at 732-3456, ext. 254.

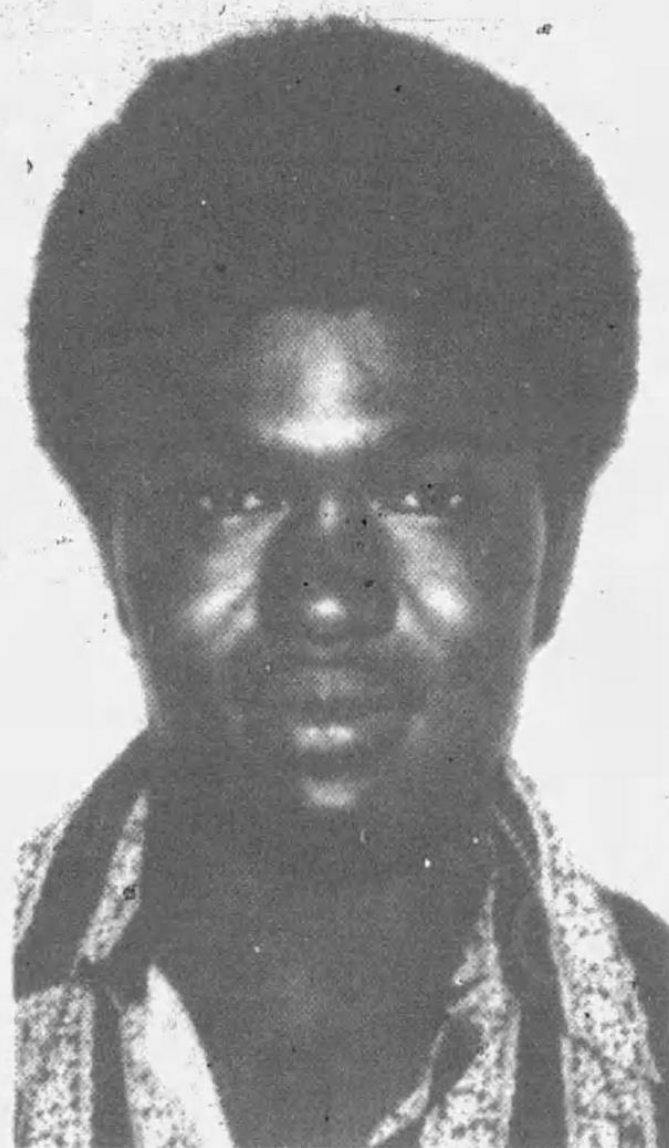


Wilbert Abney Jr Died October 25, 2013



# WHAT'S THE TEA WITH...

## JAMES DONALD PRITCHETT



- James Donald Pritchett, born April 30, 1954 in Henry County, VA
- First Cousin



# Mother in Trouble Leads to Murder

## Quarrel Leaves Farmer Dead

By JAY BARKER  
Bulletin Staff Writer

Elsie Martin sat on her porch on the hill above the road as chickens strutted beneath her Axton house.

Then shots broke the hot day's silence and "when I heard the shots, I went inside," said the white-haired old woman. "I don't know nothing."

On the road below a 68-year-old Axton farmer, Roy G. Robertson, had died in what police said was a shootout prompted by an argument over eligibility for a federally funded food program, in view of more than 50 young children and teenagers early Wednesday afternoon.

Charged with murder in Robertson's death is James Donald Pritchett, 24, Rt. 2, Axton, who lives in a house on the hill above the spot along Virginia 615 where Robertson died in his pickup truck shortly after being shot at least twice, authorities said.

Pritchett, who is being held without bond, also is charged with use of a firearm in commission of a felony.

A tobacco farmer, Robertson had loaded more than 10 of his young farmhands into the truck for a trip to the roadside site where an old milk truck daily dispenses food for about 60



JAMES D. PRITCHETT

children on Virginia 615, according to Lt. J. H. Kendrick of the Henry County Sheriff's Department.

Robertson was challenged by Annie Pritchett, supervisor of the food program at the site, who said the youths the farmer had brought to be fed did not live in the Axton area and were not eligible for the free food, Kendrick said.

An argument resulted and Mrs. Pritchett's son James "took a position in the argument," Kendrick said, but he did not elaborate.

But, witnesses told Dan Robertson, brother of the dead man, that Pritchett arrived in a pickup during the argument and took a rifle from it. Robertson said witnesses told him Pritchett stood at the passenger's side of his brother's green truck and held him at gunpoint for more than 30 minutes.

The 68-year-old farmer finally started his truck and began to drive away, but was shot as he did so, Dan Robertson said witnesses told him.

His brother fell on top of his rifle on the seat of the vehicle when he was shot, possibly indicating that he had not fired the weapon, Robertson said.

Kendrick declined comment on who fired the first shot, nor would he comment on what appeared to be bullet holes on the interior of the truck. Neither appeared to have exited. One was located under the glove compartment, the other above and to the right of the window on the passenger side.

Spent cartridges from a rifle were found on the ground next to the passenger side of the truck, Kendrick said.

The detective refused to comment when asked who fired the first shot.

Kendrick also declined to say how Pritchett obtained a rifle.



(Photo by Mike Wray)

A bullet pierced the windshield of Roy Robertson's truck.

Like many farmers, Robertson carried a rifle in his truck, his brother said. Both guns have been confiscated, and are .22 caliber.

Robertson was shot with hollow-point bullets, probably causing rapid death, according to Inv. J. L. Hairston. Robertson was wounded in the stomach and face, said Kendrick and Beverly Deen, spokesman for

Memorial Hospital of Martinsville and Henry County.

An autopsy was to be performed today in Roanoke by Dr. David Oxley, deputy state medical examiner for western Virginia.

One resident at the small settlement on Virginia 615 by the creek called "The Gulf" said Robertson had not previously brought any children to the area

to be fed from the food truck. But his brother, Dan, said Robertson had done so several times before.

In Martinsville, a spokesman at the office of the food program said children must be under 18 years old to be fed, but that no rigid residency requirements exist. The spokesman added, however, that "this is not a first-come, first-serve

program," and said the site supervisors such as Mrs. Pritchett are required to count children who eat each day. With that daily count, site supervisors order the number of meals needed for the next day, the spokesman said.

"If anybody else comes in, how could they be served?" the

(Continued On Page 7-A, Col. 3)

## Shooting

(Continued from Page 1-A)

spokesman said.

According to Dan Robertson, many of his brother's farmhands reside in the southern part of Henry County in the "Bend of the River" section and were not acquainted with Mrs. Pritchett and residents of "The

Gulf" area. All of the youths Robertson brought to the food site were black, said Kendrick and Dan Robertson.

Deputies were alerted to the shooting at 12:37 p.m. Wednesday, when an unnamed woman phoned to say that Robertson was holding a rifle on Annie Pritchett, according to records. Kendrick declined to comment.

Dan Robertson charged that

Pritchett and others at the scene prevented anyone from contacting authorities about the shooting for up to 45 minutes. The shooting occurred at noon, and "they let my brother bleed to death for 30-45 minutes," he said.

Kendrick also said he could not comment.

After the shooting Wednesday, 15-20 children huddled in a group around a tree

beneath which Robertson's truck had been parked. Silent when a reporter arrived, one youth pointed to a pool of blood in the dirt when asked if the shooting had happened there.

At a nearby grocery, an Axton man said, "If it weren't for that food program, Roy Robertson would be alive right now" and vowed to vote to defeat any candidate who supported it. Others at another store said the shooting seemed "unnecessary," and noted that Roy Robertson "worked hard every day of his life."

At the shooting scene Wednesday, 18 Henry County deputies, State Police and a Pittsylvania County deputy responded after the first officers there radioed for assistance, Kendrick said. The 75 persons at the scene included relatives and friends of both Pritchett and Robertson, both white and

black, and everyone was "excited" and "tense," the detective said.

Had the first deputies there — Sgt. Lloyd Hairston, Dep. Tim Mills, and Sgt. Paul Gilley — not requested help, Kendrick said violence probably would have followed the shooting.

All officers on the scene "did an outstanding job" of keeping order, he noted.

Pritchett was among eight persons police took into custody at the scene of the shooting for questioning, but was the only one charged. Authorities took custody of the eight to obtain information and reduce possible violence, Kendrick said, adding that police feared problems would erupt among approximately 75 persons who milled around the site for more than an hour after the shooting.

Wednesday's shooting took place across the road from a

Sept. 1974 fire and snooking at a trailer in which someone set fire to the mobile home and shot residents as they emerged, Kendrick said.

Mrs. Pritchett and four of her children, all of whom lived in the trailer, suffered shotgun and burn wounds.

Thomas Robertson, a 23-year-old visitor from Pamplico, S.C., was killed in that attack. No arrests have been made. He was no relation to Roy Robertson.

Kendrick said Wednesday that no connection is believed to exist between that attack and the Robertson shooting.

Pritchett was convicted in Pittsylvania County Circuit Court in 1976 on three counts of grand larceny, and received suspended sentences on condition of 20 year's good behavior, according to a court clerk.

## GSA

## Martinsville Bulletin Thu, Jul 27, 1978



# Murder Trial Ordered For Man Defending Mother

## Murder Trial Ordered

By JAY BARKER  
Bulletin Staff Writer

Murder charges against James D. Pritchett, 24, were advanced to Henry County Circuit Court this morning after two witnesses to the July 26 shooting of Roy Robertson testified that Pritchett shot Robertson without apparent provocation.

James W. Moyer, 16, and Anthony Weaver Hairston, 17, who were with Robertson on Virginia 615 when the farmer brought them and other workers to the site of a federally funded food program, told Judge Kenneth Covington at a hearing in Henry County General District Court that Pritchett fired three times into Robertson's truck.

The shooting followed an argument between Robertson and Pritchett's mother, Annie, about 30 minutes earlier that Pritchett had not heard, according to the two witnesses.

Moyer testified that Mrs. Pritchett told Robertson "she didn't have enough food to go around," noting that other children were regularly fed there. An official of the program has said that "this is not a first-come, first-served program," adding that meals are ordered on the basis of a count of children who ate the previous day.

Robertson, 68, was found dead by Henry County deputies who arrived at "The Gulf" area on Virginia 615 after the shooting, which apparently occurred between noon and 12:45 p.m.

Mrs. Pritchett and another woman present at the scene, Brenda Martin, have said that Pritchett accidentally shot Robertson after Robertson fired a rifle wildly into a crowd of children that afternoon.

But Hairston and Moyer said today that Pritchett arrived after the argument between his mother and Robertson, stopped for a minute or less, left and returned again. When he came back he brought a rifle from his truck, walked to the passenger's

(Continued On Page 8-A, Col. 4)

## Trial

(Continued from Page 1-A)

side of Robertson's vehicle and spoke to Robertson, Moyer and

## Be Studied

primarily interested in small group counseling sessions for students, a program in which counselors visit students' homes and discuss the child's education with parents, and another program in which Home-School Counselor John Tinsley schedules meetings at churches to talk with parents who are reluctant to come to school or to schedule a home visit, according to Martinsville School Director of Federal Programs William F. Murphy.

The information collected

Hairston said.

The witnesses said Robertson had restarted his truck and was backing up when Pritchett said, "That's all right, you don't have to leave."

Immediately after saying that, Pritchett fired three times, according to Hairston.

Moyer said Robertson grabbed his gun but could not say whether Robertson fired. Moyer and Hairston both said they heard only three shots and that all three came from Pritchett's direction.

Police have found at least two bullet holes inside the truck in addition to several spent shell casings, but Moyer testified he did not know whether that evidence resulted from Robertson's firing a gun.

Police previously had termed the incident a "shoot-out."

Robertson, a tobacco and fruit farmer, had taken Moyer, Hairston and five other young field workers in his truck to get lunch from a food truck that came daily to the site in front of Mrs. Pritchett's house on Virginia 615. Moyer and Hairston testified.

Both witnesses said Robertson always provided their lunch but had never taken the two of them to the food truck before.

Robertson and the boys waited for several minutes at the Gulf until the food truck arrived, and then Robertson got out unarmed and spoke with Mrs. Pritchett, the site supervisor for the program, the two boys testified today.

Mrs. Pritchett and Robertson began "fussing about who gets the food, who don't get the food," and Roy told her anybody who

lives in Henry County is supposed to get the food free," recalled Moyer.

Mrs. Pritchett next told Robertson that "she had not forgotten about the time he (Robertson) had hit her son or brother in the head with a hammer," Moyer testified.

They continued to argue, Hairston added, saying that both were "cussing" and raising their voices.

Robertson then walked back to his pickup truck and took out his 22 caliber rifle, pointing the muzzle at the ground, Hairston and Moyer said. Moyer said Robertson returned to the truck with the rifle but Hairston said Robertson only removed it for a moment and then climbed back inside the truck.

Robertson and his workers remained in the truck while

Mrs. Pritchett told an unidentified woman to call the police, saying Robertson was holding a gun on her, Moyer testified.

About that time Pritchett drove up for the first time and Hairston testified that Mrs. Pritchett yelled at her son, telling him to "go on."

Pritchett left but returned five to 10 minutes later and disembarked with his rifle, according to Hairston and Moyer.

The shooting occurred shortly afterward and again only one person spoke to Pritchett, according to Hairston. Mrs. Pritchett yelled, "Don't shoot him," the youth testified.

Pritchett then spoke to Robertson, "then he started shooting," said Hairston.

Martinsville Bulletin Fri, Sep 22, 1978



# Martinsville Man Sentenced For Murder

## Two Indicted for Slayings

Murder indictments against two Henry County men were among indictments against 29 persons, returned Monday by the county's grand jury, records show.

James D. Pritchett, 24, Rt. 2, Axton, was indicted on charges of murder and use of a firearm in commission of a felony in the July 26 shooting death of 68-year-old Roy G. Robertson of Axton.

Pritchett allegedly shot Robertson after he arrived at

the site of a federally funded food program on Virginia 615 in Axton and argument over eligibility ensued between the elderly farmer and Pritchett's mother, the program's site supervisor.

Judge John D. Hooker Friday declined to rule on a motion by Pritchett's attorney, Harvey S. Lutins of Roanoke, to move the trial to another part of the state.

Hooker said he will first try to impanel an impartial jury of

Henry County citizens in the trial, scheduled for Feb. 21-23.

General Jackson Barnes Jr., 42, Rt. 4, Martinsville, also was indicted on charges of murder and use of a firearm in commission of a felony. Barnes' charges stem from the June 26 slaying of Morgan Delano Spencer, 38 of Rt. 6, Bassett, at Bowens Creek camping area at Philpott Lake.

The two apparently had

been drinking together before an argument, possibly stemming from discussion of a family feud between their clans at the turn of the century, prompted the shooting, police have said.

A third indictment named Rickey E. Brogan, 18, Rt. 1, Henry, who has been charged with his brother James Terry Brogan in the Oct. 19 triple murder of three Franklin County loggers. The younger Brogan was charged with

shooting into an occupied dwelling Oct. 10. Details were not available.

And a fourth indictment charged 16-year-old Tony A. Hairston of Rt. 2, Martinsville with involuntary manslaughter in a Sept. 8 accident on U.S. 58 east of Martinsville. Terri Denise Martin, 19, Rt. 8, Martinsville, died as a result of head injuries suffered in the wreck.

Miss Martin's father, O.J. Martin, has sued both Hairston and Thomas Eugene Stone, 19, Rt. 1, Martinsville, in connection with the fatal accident, court records show.

Stone drove the car in which Miss Martin rode when they crossed U.S. 58 about 10 p.m. near the intersection with Mt. Olivet Road and collided with Hairston's westbound vehicle, Trooper O.G. Reid Jr. has said.

Martin has sued Hairston and Stone for a total of \$500,000 in one suit that names them as codefendants, records show.

Stone also has filed a suit in the accident, asking \$300,000 in damages from Hairston. Stone suffered a cervical fracture in the accident. Hairston was not hurt.

In other indictments, 16-year-old Timothy L. Beamer of Rt. 5, Bassett was charged with statutory rape of a 12-year-old girl on July 8.

## Pritchett Gets 16 Years For Murder of Farmer

By JAY BARKER  
Bulletin Staff Writer

A 24-year-old Axton man pleaded guilty today to second-degree murder in the July 26 shooting death of Roy G. Robertson and was sentenced to a total of 16 years in prison.

By pleading guilty, James D. Pritchett admitted killing Robertson, a 68-year-old Axton farmer, as Robertson sat in his pickup truck at the site of a federally funded food program on Virginia 615 in Axton in front of the home of

Pritchett's mother, Annie.

Judge John D. Hooker of Henry County Circuit Court approved a plea agreement between Pritchett's attorney, Harvey S. Lutins of Roanoke, and Roscoe Reynolds, Henry County commonwealth's attorney.

Pritchett received a 15-year sentence for second-degree murder, and the mandatory one-year term for use of a firearm in commission of a felony.

Before sentencing Pritchett, Hooker said

Robertson had "behaved very badly" in arguing with Mrs. Pritchett before he was shot. Robertson's "abrasive" and "abusive" and "bullying" behavior "caused this tragedy," the judge said.

Pritchett's "anger and indignation are understandable," Hooker said. But "just because Mr. Robertson behaved badly doesn't... mean he forfeited his life," he added.

Hooker called the killing, "any killing," a "tremendously

tremendously serious" act.

He noted that evidence showed Robertson was preparing to leave when he was shot.

Evidence summarized in court by Reynolds showed Robertson brought seven young workers from his strawberry fields to the food site shortly before noon July 26, and argued with Mrs. Pritchett, the site supervisor, about their eligibility for food served there.

During the argument Robertson cursed Mrs.

Pritchett and brought a loaded rifle from his truck, saying, "If you want to start something, I've got my stuff with me."

But Robertson did not point the weapon at Mrs. Pritchett and returned to his truck, which he started and had put into gear when he was shot, Reynolds said.

James Pritchett arrived after the argument and spoke with his mother and a neighbor, Brenda Martin,

(Cont. On Page 8-A, Col. 3)

Martinsville Bulletin Tue, Jan 16, 1979

Martinsville Bulletin Thu, Feb 22, 1979



# Mullins-Pritchett Wedding



**MULLINS-PRITCHETT**  
Mr. and Mrs. John B Mullins of Martinsville announce the engagement of their daughter, Germaine A. Mullins, to James D. Pritchett, also of Martinsville, son of Mrs. Annie P. Pritchett of Axton.

A June wedding is planned.

The bride-elect is a 1980 graduate of Martinsville High School and is employed by Pannill Knitting Co.

The bridegroom-to-be attended Carver High School and is also employed by Pannill Knitting Co.

**Germaine A. Mullins**

Martinsville Bulletin Sun, Feb 16, 1986



**Mullins-Pritchett**  
Germaine Anette Mullins and James Donald Pritchett, both of Martinsville, were married Saturday at Pilgrim Baptist Church, Martinsville. The Rev. T.B. Marsh performed the ceremony.

The bride is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. John B. Mullins of Martinsville.

The bridegroom is the son of Mrs. Annie P. Pritchett of Axton.

A program of wedding music was performed by Kenneth Thornton of Cascade, organist, and Miss Cheryl Walton of Martinsville, vocalist.

Escorted by her father, the bride wore white chiffon and lace gown featuring a V-shaped neckline, floral appliques in back, bodice trimmed in pearls, bow at the waistline, and skirt with cathedral-length train of ruffles and lace. She wore a three-tiered veil trimmed in pearls attached to a hat with pearls and carried a bouquet of pink carnations and baby's breath.

Mrs. Gloria W. Watkins of Martinsville was matron of honor. She wore a pink lace tea-length dress with spaghetti straps. She wore baby's breath in her hair and carried a bouquet of pink carnations.

Bridesmaids were Miss Karen Mullins of Martinsville and Mrs. Gale France of Axton, both sisters of the bride; Mrs. Delta Williams of Cascade; and Miss Audrey Gravelly of Martinsville. Their dresses, hair decorations and bouquets matched that of the

**Mrs. James Donald Pritchett  
(Germaine Anette Mullins)**

honor attendant.

Calvin Williams of Cascade, cousin of the bridegroom, was best man. Ushers were Joseph France of Axton, brother-in-law of the bride; George Mullins of Martinsville, brother of the bride; James Carter, cousin of the bridegroom, and Herbert Wade, both of Axton.

A reception was held at the church.

Following a southern wedding trip, the couple will live in Martinsville.

The bride is a 1980 graduate of Martinsville High School and is employed by Pannill Knitting Co.

The bridegroom attended G.W. Carver High School and is employed by Pannill Knitting Co.

Martinsville Bulletin Sun, Jun 22, 1986



Shot to Death?

COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA - CERTIFICATE OF DEATH  
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH - DIVISION OF VITAL RECORDS - RICHMOND

COPY A FOR DIVISION OF VITAL RECORDS

REGISTRATION AREA NUMBER 215

CERTIFICATE NUMBER 462

MEDICAL EXAMINER'S CERTIFICATE

STATE FILE NUMBER 94-043131

DECEDENT

1. FULL NAME OF DECEDENT (first) (middle) (last) GERMAINE ANNETTE PRITCHETT

2. SEX male female ☐ ☒

3. DATE OF DEATH (mo.) (day) (year) Nov. 6, 1994

4. AGE 33 years

5. DATE OF BIRTH (mo.) (day) (year) July 6, 1961

6. WAS DECEDENT EVER IN U.S. ARMED FORCES? yes no ☐ ☒

PLACE OF DEATH

7. NAME OF HOSPITAL OR INSTITUTION OF DEATH (if none, so state) Martinsville Memorial Hospital

8. COUNTY OF DEATH (if independent city, leave blank)

9. CITY OR TOWN OF DEATH Martinsville

10. STREET ADDRESS OR RT. NO. OF PLACE OF DEATH Hospital Drive

USUAL RESIDENCE OF DECEDENT

11. STATE (OR FOREIGN COUNTRY) OF DECEDENT'S RESIDENCE Virginia

12. COUNTY OF DECEDENT'S RESIDENCE (if independent city, leave blank)

13. CITY OR TOWN OF RESIDENCE Martinsville

14. STREET ADDRESS OR RT. NO. OF RESIDENCE 403 Fourth Street

15. NAME OF DECEDENT'S FATHER

16. MAIDEN NAME OF DECEDENT'S MOTHER Mabel Hailey

17. EDUCATION (Specify only highest grade completed) Elementary/Secondary (0-12) 12 College (1-4 or 5+)

18. BIRTHPLACE (state or country) Virginia

19. NEVER MARRIED ☐ DIVORCED ☐ MARRIED ☒ WIDOWED ☐ IF MARRIED OR WIDOWED, NAME OF SPOUSE (if divorced leave blank) James D. Pritchett

20. USUAL OR LAST OCCUPATION Sewing machine operator

21. KIND OF BUSINESS OR INDUSTRY Towel mill

22. INFORMANT - OR SOURCE OF INFORMATION Mabel H. Mullins

28. PART I. Enter the diseases, injuries, or complications that caused the death. Do not enter the mode of dying, such as cardiac or respiratory arrest, shock, or heart failure. List only one cause on each line.

IMMEDIATE CAUSE (Final disease or condition resulting in death) (A) Gunshot wound to chest

Sequentially list conditions, if any, leading to immediate cause. Enter UNDERLYING CAUSE (Disease or injury that initiated events resulting in death) LAST

(B) DUE TO (OR AS A CONSEQUENCE OF):

(C) DUE TO (OR AS A CONSEQUENCE OF):

PART II. Other significant conditions contributing to death but not resulting in the underlying cause given in Part I.

28a. AUTOPSY? AUTHORIZED BY: yes no ☒ ☐

28b. IF FEMALE, WAS THERE A PREGNANCY IN PAST 3 MONTHS? yes no unknown ☒

28c. IF EXTERNAL CAUSE, IT WAS PRIMARY ☒ or CONTRIBUTING ☐ TO CAUSE OF DEATH

28d. DESCRIBE HOW INJURY RELATING TO DEATH OCCURRED Shot by another

28e. TIME OF INJURY (mo.) (day) (year) noon A.M. 11-6-94

28f. INJURY OCCURRED while at work ☐ not while at work ☒

28g. PLACE OF INJURY (home, farm, factory, street, office bldg., etc.) Trailer Chest Ridgeway, VA?

28h. (city or town) (county) (state)

29. SIGNATURE OF MEDICAL EXAMINER (Typed name) John P. Bing

30. PLACE OF BURIAL, REMOVAL, ETC. Carver Memorial Gardens - Martinsville, Virginia

31. (Signature of funeral director or person legally filing this certificate) Agnes Scott Hairston

32. (Signature of registrar) Linda C. Cogswell, Deputy

DATE RECORD FILED: 11-18-94

RESERVED FOR REGISTRAR'S USE

Sewing machine operator

Towel mill

Mabel H. Mullins

28. PART I. Enter the diseases, injuries, or complications that caused the death. Do not enter the mode of dying, such as cardiac or respiratory arrest, shock, or heart failure. List only one cause on each line.

IMMEDIATE CAUSE (Final disease or condition resulting in death) (A) Gunshot wound to chest

Sequentially list conditions, if any, leading to immediate cause. Enter UNDERLYING CAUSE (Disease or injury that initiated events resulting in death) LAST

(B) DUE TO (OR AS A CONSEQUENCE OF):

(C) DUE TO (OR AS A CONSEQUENCE OF):

PART II. Other significant conditions contributing to death but not resulting in the underlying cause given in Part I.

28a. AUTOPSY? AUTHORIZED BY: yes no ☒ ☐

28b. IF FEMALE, WAS THERE A PREGNANCY IN PAST 3 MONTHS? yes no unknown ☒

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28f. INJURY OCCURRED while at work ☐ not while at work ☒

28g. PLACE OF INJURY (home, farm, factory, street, office bldg., etc.) Trailer Chest Ridgeway, VA?

28h. (city or town) (county) (state)



# Convicted Murderer Kills Wife

Martinsville, Virginia

## Pritchett felon in '78 death

By GLENN WOHLTMANN  
Bulletin Staff Writer

James D. Pritchett — a man charged Sunday with two counts of murder in the shooting deaths of his estranged wife and her boyfriend — had killed before, court records show.

Pritchett, 40, of 1161 Yorkshire Road, Martinsville, admitted shooting Roy Grey Robertson, a farmer, in a dispute on July 26, 1978. He pleaded guilty to second-degree murder under a plea agreement and received 15 years in prison on that charge. He also received an additional year in prison on a related charge of use of a firearm in the commission of a felony, according to Henry County Circuit Court records.

He served four years' active prison time for the killing, according to a state corrections official.

Karl Hellriegel, chief of the area office of the Virginia Department of Corrections Parole and Probation, said Pritchett was paroled in 1984.


"He served about four years," Hellriegel explained. "Back in those days, it was one-fourth of your time before you became eligible."

According to Hellriegel, Pritchett was no problem while on parole.


"He was released from parole in October of 1989; his parole was finished. That was the last we heard of him, back in '89," the parole chief said.

Robertson, a farmer whose lands ran near the Henry County line not far from Pittsylvania County, was shot in an argument with

See PRITCHETT, Page 2-A



J. Pritchett



G. Pritchett

## Charge upgraded to capital murder

By SHARON BERRY  
Bulletin Staff Writer

A first-degree murder charge was upgraded to a capital murder charge Friday in the case of a Martinsville man arrested in the deaths of his estranged wife and her male friend.

The change means James D. Pritchett will face a preliminary hearing on a charge that could send him to the electric chair.

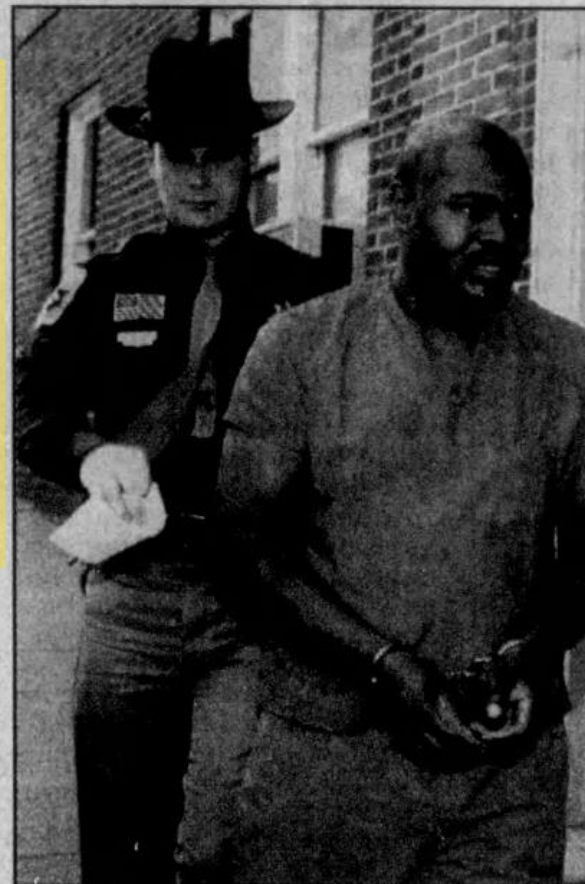
Henry County Commonwealth Attorney Bob Bushnell said the charges against Pritchett, 40, of 1161 Yorkshire Road, were upgraded because the law allows two related first-degree murder charges to be tried as one capital murder charge and one first-degree murder charge.

A person convicted of capital murder faces either life in prison or death, Bushnell said. A person convicted of first-degree murder may be sentenced to 20 years to life in prison, he said.

Pritchett was arrested Nov. 6, hours after the slaying that left the pair dead. He also is charged with possession of a firearm after being a convicted felon, use of a firearm in the commission of a felony in relation to the murder of Germaine Pritchett, and use of a firearm in the commission of a felony in the murder of Jerry Wayne Dickerson.

Police later confirmed that the Pritchetts' 6-year-old daughter watched the slaying. The girl was with her father when he was taken into custody hours after the deaths, according to Hen-

See CHARGE, Page 2-A



Deputies escorted Pritchett from court.

Martinsville Bulletin Sun, Nov 20, 1994

Martinsville Bulletin Tue, Nov 08, 1994

## Grand jury issues murder charges

By MAURA SINGLETON  
Bulletin Staff Writer

A grand jury indicted a 40-year-old Martinsville man on capital and first-degree murder charges Monday in Henry County Circuit Court.

James Donald Pritchett, 1161 Yorkshire Road, is charged in the slaying of his estranged wife, Germaine Pritchett, 33, and her male friend, Larry Wayne Dickerson, 43, on the afternoon of Nov. 6.

At a preliminary hearing on Dec. 22, Pritchett's 6-year-old daughter, Nicole, provided an eyewitness account of the slayings.

She testified that her father shot her mother while she was sitting in a car with Dickerson outside a mobile home at Kings Mill Trailer Park in Ridgeway. Dickerson was shot as he tried to flee on foot.

Pritchett faces charges of first-degree murder in the death of Germaine Pritchett and capital murder for Dickerson. He also is charged with two counts of using a firearm in the commission of murder, possession of a firearm by a convicted felon and shooting into an occupied vehicle. He could be sentenced to life in prison or death by lethal injection if convicted on the capital murder charge.

Martinsville Bulletin Wed, Apr 05, 1995

Martinsville Bulletin, Wednesday, April 5, 1995—Page 3-A

A first degree murder charge can be upgraded to capital murder — which is punishable by death — when more than one slaying takes place.

Trial is set for June 26.

Others indicted by a Henry County grand jury Monday and their charges are:

- James Edward Frith, 19, Eden, N.C., malicious wounding. On Nov. 15, 1994, a man shoplifting two packages of steaks from Kroger on U.S. 220 south left the store through the "in" door, knocking down Patsy Ray and causing damage to her left eye. Ray was transported by rescue squad to Memorial Hospital of Martinsville and Henry County.

Frith also was indicted on two misdemeanor charges of petty larceny and assault and battery in connection with the same incident,



# Child Testifies Against Father in Mother's Murder Trial

## Girl: '... my daddy shot her'

Stories by MAURA SINGLETON  
Bulletin Staff Writer

Seven-year-old Nicole Pritchett told a Henry County jury Tuesday that her father gave her a dollar bill so she would stop crying, after he stepped from his car to shoot her mother and a male friend execution-style.

Perched on the edge of the witness chair in striped shorts and blue Keds tennis shoes, her braided hair ornamented with white ribbons and beads, the girl smiled at her questioner and told the jury how her father killed her mother.

Her father, James Donald Pritchett, 41, is charged with the capital murder of Jerry Wayne Dickerson, 43, of Eden, N.C., and the first-degree murder

of Pritchett's estranged wife, Germaine Pritchett, 33. He also is charged with two counts of using a firearm in the commission of a murder, shooting into an occupied vehicle and possession of a firearm by a convicted felon.

He faces the death penalty if convicted of capital murder.

Six years of age at the time of the slaying, Nicole said she accompanied her father on the Sunday morning of Nov. 6, 1994, to the home of her aunt, Gail Wanda France, in Kings Mill Trailer Park in Ridgeway. She sat in the passenger seat of her father's Chevy Blazer when he drove up alongside her mother's black Mazda, which

See TRIAL, Page 2-A

## Attorneys' opening statements center on premeditation, passion

In opening arguments Tuesday, Henry County Commonwealth Attorney Robert Bushnell told the jury that James Pritchett and his wife, Germaine, had signed a separation agreement eight months prior to her fatal shooting, and that theirs was a marriage "in name only."

Pritchett, 41, is charged with capital murder and first-degree murder in the Nov. 6, 1994, slaying of his estranged wife and her male friend, Jerry Wayne Dickerson, at a mobile home park in Ridgeway.

On Saturday, the day before the shooting, Germaine Pritchett, 33, and Dickerson, 43, had attended a family party hosted by her sister, Gail Wanda France, in Kings Mill Trailer Park, located off Garrett Road at the southern end of Henry County. The two arrived in separate cars but left several hours later in Pritchett's car, Bushnell said in his opening statements.

The couple probably was romantically

See ARGUMENTS, Page 2-A

## Trial

(Continued from Page 1-A)  
was parked in front of her aunt's home. Her mother and Dickerson were sitting in the Mazda.

Nicole said her father reached under the car seat and pulled out a gun. When she started to cry, he told her to shut up, she told the court.

"Do you love your Daddy?" asked Henry County Commonwealth Attorney Robert Bushnell. The girl nodded.

"Where's Mommy now?" he asked gently.

"In heaven," the girl told him. "Why?" Bushnell asked.

"Because my daddy shot her," she said, her voice clear and unhesitating. "She was screaming and he shot her. He shot her two times."

Dickerson struggled out of the rear driver's side door and ran, she said.

A police K-9 unit found Dickerson's body in the woods, several hundred yards from the mobile home park.

Nicole's testimony in Henry County Circuit Court Tuesday provided the jury of nine women and six men with the only complete eyewitness account of the double homicide. Residents in the mobile home park who testified heard or saw only snatches of the incident.

Kenneth Dreher Sr., a neighbor of Gail France, told the court that he was sitting in his living room

watching television on Nov. 6 when he heard several gunshots fired in rapid succession, and a woman screaming. He opened his front door and saw Pritchett — whom he knew — "standing there with a gun in his hand, extended out across the top of (Germaine's) car," Dreher said. He saw Pritchett aiming down a path between his mobile home and France's.

"He was smiling," Dreher told the court. "I could see his teeth. James has real white teeth."

Dreher testified that he went back inside to load a shotgun to protect himself, but when he went outside, Pritchett was gone. He and another neighbor then approached the Mazda. The passenger side window had collapsed inward with two bullet holes. Germaine Pritchett was slumped motionless in the driver's seat, her head leaning against the door and her eyes open, Dreher said.

Randall T. Young, who lives next door to France in the mobile home park, was in his yard that morning when he saw Germaine Pritchett's car drive up, followed shortly by a Blazer. He heard three gunshots and saw an unidentified man running through the area between France's and Dreher's mobile homes. He then saw another man he did not know get into the Blazer and back out of the neighborhood, he said.

Young told the court that he had seen the Blazer an hour or two earlier

that morning. At that time, two men were in the car. The car had stopped in front of another home, beeped its horn twice, and left, he said.

Lewis Waller, a distant cousin of Germaine Pritchett who worked with James Pritchett, testified that Pritchett often discussed his marital problems. In February 1994, he confided to Waller that he wanted to patch things up with his wife who was living apart from her husband at that time.

"He wanted her back," Waller testified.

In June, however, "he said he was going to kill her," he told the court. And following an argument with Germaine Pritchett and her sister, James Pritchett "said he would kill them all if he had to," Waller said.

He made the threats more than once, Waller said, but could not recall how many times he had heard them.

When asked if Pritchett was angry when he told Waller of his deadly intentions, Waller said he was calm. "I always keep my promises," he recalled Pritchett saying.

When police searched Germaine Pritchett's car in the aftermath of the November shooting, a .22-caliber revolver was found behind some papers in the back of the glove compartment. It was fully loaded, but no rounds had been fired, according to P.G. Puckett,

an investigator with the Henry County Sheriff's Office.

In the car's back seat were a Bible, a bag containing women's lingerie and a handbag, Puckett said.

Dr. David Oxley, deputy chief medical examiner for Western Virginia, said Dickerson had been shot at extremely close range — from a distance of less than 6 inches. A sooty gunpowder residue surrounded the entrance wound in his neck, Oxley told the court.

No gunpowder residue was found on Germaine Pritchett, which was evidence that the gun was fired from a distance of about 2 feet or more, he said.

A firearms expert compared the bullets found in the two bodies to bullets from a box of ammunition police recovered from James Pritchett's car. It was determined that the bullets that killed the couple were "similar in every aspect" to the ammunition in the box, said Richard Roberts, a senior forensic scientist with State Division of Forensic Science in Roanoke.

He could not be certain, however, because the weapon that fired the fatal shots never was recovered by police.

Pritchett is expected to testify today in Henry County Circuit Court.

## Arguments

(Continued from Page 1-A)

cally involved, he said, adding that "there is powerful circumstantial evidence that they spent the (Saturday) night together."

They did not return to the park until the next morning, he said.

About noon Sunday, shortly after Germaine Pritchett had driven up the gravel road in front of her sister's home, where Dickerson's car had been parked from the day before, James Pritchett arrived. He got out of his car, leaving his 6-year-old daughter, Nicole, in his car, and stood on the passenger side of his wife's Mazda and shot through the tinted glass at her and Dickerson, Bushnell said.

Germaine Pritchett died from a single gunshot wound that entered her upper arm and penetrated her chest. Dickerson died from a single gunshot wound to his neck. His body was found face down in a wooded area several hundred yards from the scene, Bushnell said, but evidence suggests he was shot while in the car.

Pritchett "willfully, deliberately and with premeditation killed them both," Bushnell said.

"The defense will ask you to overlook all that" with a claim of heat of passion, he said, and asked the jury to consider how it was possible that Pritchett "drove to an isolated park in Henry County, to a dead-end spur and 'just happened upon' his estranged wife."

Defense attorney Patrick Sharpe said in his opening arguments that he did not dispute that James Pritchett killed his estranged wife and friend.

Determining "why it happened is your job," he told the jury.

Pritchett killed Dickerson in a split-second fit of rage, fear and jealousy, Sharpe said — "suddenly, quickly and in anger. He had no intention whatsoever to harm his wife, he will tell you."

Pritchett drove to the Ridgeway mobile home park in search of his wife, because she had not collected their daughter, Nicole, the previous evening as planned, Sharpe said.

Nicole lived with her mother and grandmother in Martinsville but visited her father in Henry County on weekends.

"James didn't really want to go over there," he said, but went at Nicole's request. "Bushnell didn't

tell you they went over there twice."

The first time, Pritchett pulled up to France's residence and honked his horn, but no one was home, Sharpe told the court.

"If you're going to kill somebody, are you going to blow your horn two times first?" he asked the jury.

When Pritchett returned some time later, after taking Nicole to breakfast at a Biscuitville in Eden, N.C., he saw his wife's Mazda but could not see through its tinted windows if anyone was inside.

Pritchett got out of his car and noticed Dickerson in the passenger seat — a man he'd never seen before — and he asked his wife to step out of the car, Sharpe said.

"Dickerson says, 'she's not your wife anymore,' and starts cursing and says, 'I'll kill you,' and started moving in the car toward the glove compartment," Sharpe said.

Pritchett "will tell you he went out of control. He knew Germaine kept a gun in the glove compartment ... in that fit of rage, he reached under his seat and fired one time at Jerry in the car," Sharpe said. "He wasn't thinking. He fired again" because Dickerson was still moving, trying to

climb out of the rear driver's side door.

Pritchett "shot one or two more times as he (Dickerson) ran off because he didn't know what to do," Sharpe continued, emphasizing the rapid sequence of shots as an indication of impulsive behavior.

In a state of shock, Pritchett left the park with Nicole and dropped her at a relative's home. Less than two hours after the shooting, he turned himself in at the Henry County Sheriff's Office, he told the court.

"It was heat of passion. It couldn't be capital murder," Sharpe said.

The defense entered as evidence several crude crayon drawings by Nicole to her father, which carried scrawled messages that she loved and missed him.

"There is no stronger love in this world than a parent's for his children. That is the strongest evidence in this case that it was not premeditated. He never intended this to happen," Sharpe said.

Martinsville Bulletin Wed, Jun 28, 1995



# Husband Sentenced in Wife's Murder

## Pritchett gets 2 life terms

Stories by MAURA SINGLETON  
Bulletin Staff Writer

The man his friends said didn't smile much offered a broad grin to his slain wife's sister moments before a verdict was read, sentencing him to two life terms in prison.

After hearing mitigating evidence and an impassioned speech by the defense on behalf of convicted killer James Donald Pritchett, a Henry County jury deliberated for 15 minutes on Thursday before choosing to impose life in prison rather than the death penalty.

Pritchett, 41, also received the max-

imum penalty of 10 years in prison for maliciously shooting into an occupied vehicle and five years on each of two counts of using a firearm in the commission of murder.

In 25 to 30 years, Pritchett will receive his first hearing for parole eligibility, according to defense attorney Patrick Sharpe.

Pritchett was convicted earlier Thursday of the capital murder of Jerry Wayne Dickerson, 43, of Eden, N.C., and the first-degree murder of Germaine Pritchett, 33, his estranged wife, in a Ridgeway mobile home park on

See PRITCHETT, Page 2-A

## Murdered wife's sister: 'I don't think he's sorry'

For months, Karen Mullins Adams debated whether James Donald Pritchett deserved the death penalty for killing her sister.

In court Thursday, she changed her mind.

"All of my family wanted the death penalty, but I wasn't sure because I had Nicole," she said, looking drained after the four-day trial in which Pritchett was convicted of killing her

sister, Germaine Pritchett, and Jerry Wayne Dickerson, a male friend.

"Then he looked at me and smiled and I wanted it (the death penalty) ... he's just a bad person. I don't think he's sorry for what he did," said Adams, remembering the scene in the Henry County Circuit Courtroom just before the sentences were read

See SISTER, Page 2-A

## Pritchett—

(Continued from Page 1-A)

A remaining charge of possession of a firearm by a convicted felon was nolle prossed, or abandoned by the prosecution.

Proving the firearm charge essentially would require a retrial, which Henry County Commonwealth Attorney Robert Bushnell explained would be a waste of resources and emotionally devastating to the families involved.

The offense carries a maximum punishment of five years in prison.

Before the trial, the defense asked that Pritchett be tried separately on this firearm charge because it was prejudicial to tell a jury up front that Pritchett had a criminal history.

Pritchett objected to the dropped charge, telling Williams he wanted to be retried because he had nothing to lose.

Bushnell said after the hearing that the five-year sentence tacked onto the two life sentences would not have affected Pritchett's parole eligibility.

Pritchett will receive his first hearing for parole eligibility in 25 to 30 years.



Martinsville Bulletin Fri, Jun 30, 1995

## Pritchett gets life sentences

By MAURA SINGLETON  
Bulletin Staff Writer

James Donald Pritchett was sentenced to two life terms in prison Tuesday for the murders of his wife and her male friend in November.

Pritchett, 41, was convicted in June of the capital murder of Jerry Wayne Dickerson and the first-degree murder of Pritchett's estranged wife, Germaine Pritchett. A Henry County Circuit Court jury returned a verdict recommending life imprisonment rather than the death penalty.

Circuit Court Judge David Williams upheld the jury's recommendation and imposed the sentence Tuesday.

Pritchett's then 6-year-old daughter, Nicole, provided key eye-witness tes-

timony about the double slaying. Taking the stand against her father, the girl testified that Pritchett drove to Kings Mill Trailer Park in Ridgeway the morning of Nov. 6, 1994, and shot her mother and Dickerson while the two sat chatting in the woman's car.

Pritchett maintained that the execution-style murders resulted from a sudden, jealous rage, testifying that he accidentally shot his 33-year-old estranged wife while trying to kill Dickerson, 43.



Pritchett

Each died of a single gunshot wound.

On Tuesday, defense attorney Wayne Baucino made a motion to set aside the capital and first-degree murder convictions on the grounds that the evidence introduced during the June trial did not prove that Germaine Pritchett's death was premeditated. Williams overruled the motion.

Williams also imposed the jury's recommendation that Pritchett receive a total of 10 years in prison on two counts of using a firearm in the commission of a murder.

He dismissed Pritchett's conviction of maliciously shooting into an occupied vehicle, for which the jury recommended the maximum punishment of 10 years in prison.

Invoking the double jeopardy clause in the U.S. Constitution — which states that an individual cannot be tried twice on the same charge — Baucino said Pritchett could not be found guilty of both malicious shooting and murder.

According to the state statute, "when death results from shooting into an occupied vehicle, the violation ... merges with the common law offense of murder," Baucino said.

See PRITCHETT, Page 8-A

Martinsville Bulletin Wed, Aug 30, 1995



# WHAT'S THE TEA WITH...

## MARGIE PRITCHETT MARTIN



- Margie Ree Pritchett, born April 10, 1931 in Pittsylvania County, VA
- Great Aunt
- Married Frank Edward Martin on December 24, 1948.



She Died From What?!?!?!?

Form V. S. 12—Rev. 4-50

60M—3-50

MARGIN RESERVED FOR BINDING

PLEASE WRITE PLAINLY, WITH UNFADING INK. Every item of information should be carefully supplied. The correct age is especially important. Physicians: Please write the causes of death clearly and legibly.

**CERTIFICATE OF DEATH**  
COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA  
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, BUREAU OF VITAL STATISTICS

Registration District No. 2710 State File No. 23953  
Registered No. 470

1. PLACE OF DEATH  
a. COUNTY Pitts. MAGISTERIAL DISTRICT Tunstall  
b. CITY OR TOWN Danville ☒ Inside ☐ Outside } Corporate Limits  
c. HOSPITAL OR INSTITUTION 0 d. LENGTH OF STAY

2. USUAL RESIDENCE (Where deceased lived. If institution: residence before admission)  
a. STATE Virginia b. COUNTY Pitts.  
c. CITY OR TOWN Cascade ☐ Inside ☒ Outside } Corporate Limits  
d. STREET ADDRESS (If rural, give mailing address) Rt. # 1 Cascade, Va.

3. NAME OF DECEASED (Type or Print)  
a. (First) MARJIE b. (Middle) REE c. (Last) MARTIN 4. DATE OF DEATH Sept 2, 1951

5. SEX Female 6. COLOR OR RACE Colored 7. MARRIED, NEVER MARRIED, WIDOWED, DIVORCED (Specify) Married 8. DATE OF BIRTH Apr. 10, 1931 9. AGE last birthday 20

10a. USUAL OCCUPATION (Give kind of work done during most of working life, even if retired) Tobacco Worker 10b. KIND OF BUSINESS OR INDUSTRY Factory 11. BIRTHPLACE (State or foreign country) Pitts., Co., V

13. FATHER'S NAME Felix Pritchett 14. MOTHER'S MAIDEN NAME Maggie 17. INFORMANT'S SIGNATURE Frank E. Martin ADDRESS Rt. # 1 Cascade, Va.

15. NAME OF HUSBAND OR WIFE OF DECEASED Frank E. Martin 17. INFORMANT'S ADDRESS Rt. # 1 Cascade, Va.

18. CAUSE OF DEATH  
Enter only one cause per line for (a), (b), and (c)  
\*This does not mean the mode of dying, such as heart failure, as-themia, etc. It means the disease, injury, or complication which caused death.

I. DISEASE OR CONDITION DIRECTLY LEADING TO DEATH\*  
ANTECEDENT CAUSES  
Morbidity conditions, if any, giving rise to the above cause (a) stating the underlying cause last.  
DUE TO (c) between floor of elevator and edge of shaft.

II. OTHER SIGNIFICANT CONDITIONS  
Conditions contributing to the death but not related to the disease or condition causing death.

19a. DATE OF OPERATION 19b. MAJOR FINDINGS OF OPERATION

20. AUTOPSY?  
YES ☐ NO ☒

21a. ACCIDENT (Specify) accident 21b. PLACE OF INJURY (c. g., in or about home, farm, factory, street, office bldg., etc.) Tobacco factory 21c. (CITY, TOWN, OR COUNTY) Danville Va. (STATE) Va.

21d. TIME (Month) (Day) (Year) (Hour) (Minute) OF INJURY See above. 21e. INJURY OCCURRED While at ☐ Not While ☐ at Work See above. 21f. HOW DID INJURY OCCUR? See above.

22. I hereby certify that I attended the deceased from Sept 2, 1951, to Sept 2, 1951, that I last saw the deceased alive on Sept 2, 1951, and that death occurred at 7:45 a.m., from the causes and on the date stated above.

23a. SIGNATURE W. H. Cunningham (Degree or title) M.D. 23b. ADDRESS Danville Va. 23c. DATE SIGNED 10.25.51.

24a. BURIAL, CREMATION, REMOVAL (Specify) Burial 24b. DATE Oct. 27, 1951 24c. NAME OF CEMETERY OR CREMATORY Pritchett Fam. Cem. 24d. LOCATION (City, town, or county) (State) Cascade, Va.

DATE REC'D BY LOCAL REG. 11-21-51 REGISTRAR'S SIGNATURE R. W. Garnett 25. FUNERAL DIRECTOR'S SIGNATURE Cunningham & Hughes ADDRESS Danville, Va.

International Classification of Diseases, Revision 6  
www.wolfbane.com/icd(1948).htm

912 Accident caused by machinery  
912.3 Industrial place and premises



# Woman Dies After Elevator Mishap

## *Tobacco Worker Killed In Mishap At Factory Here*

A 19-year-old colored leaf factory worker was killed early today when her head was crushed by an elevator at the Imperial Tobacco Company plant on Craghead street.

The victim was Margie Ree Martin, whose home is in the West Fork community on the Martinsville Highway, according to Patrolman R. S. Hall, one of the investigating officers.

The girl was crushed as the freight elevator moved between the third and fourth floors of the plant. She was alone on the carrier at the time and position of the body indicated that she was leaning over looking down on the floor below as the elevator moved upward.

The accident occurred about 12:45 p. m. during supper hour at the factory. The girl was employed in the hanging room in another section of the plant.

Officer Hall said he learned the girl had been across Craghead street to a restaurant and returned to the plant with several other workers.

She left her friends, went to the elevator and started up. Seconds later, those who remained on the main floor heard a scream. They rushed to the shaft, looked up and saw the girl's head caught. The young worker was dead.

## **Girl Crushed By Elevator At Factory**

### **Tobacco Worker Loses Her Life**

Margie Ree Martin, 19-year-old colored tobacco worker, was instantly killed at 12:45 o'clock this morning in an elevator accident at the Imperial Tobacco Company plant on Craghead Street where she was employed.

The girl, whose home is in the West Fork community on the Martinsville Road, was crushed as the freight elevator moved between the third and fourth floors of the plant during supper hour.

Patrolman R. S. Hall, one of the investigating officers, said that she was alone and that the position of the body indicated that she was leaning over and looking down on the floor below as the elevator moved upward, crushing her against the fourth floor.

Officer Hall said that the girl had just left a group of other workers shortly after returning from a restaurant across the street. The workers below, attracted by a scream, rushed to the shaft, looked up and saw that the girl's head had been caught. She was already dead when assistance reached her.



# What Really Happened To Margie Martin?

## New Version Of Elevator Tragedy Given

Continuing an investigation into an elevator tragedy at the Imperial Tobacco Company plant early Wednesday, detectives have learned that the circumstances are different from the first versions.

Margie Ree Martin, 19-year-old colored girl, lost her life when her head became wedged between the floor of the ascending elevator and the third floor of the building.

At first other workers said she was alone on the elevator at the time.

Working throughout last night on the investigation, Detective Capt. Thornton Link and Detective Frank Chaney secured an entirely different version. However, they added, no foul play is involved, nor suspected.

The officers said they determined that another girl was with the victim on the elevator at the time proceeding to a top floor, where they were to be met by two boys

(Turn to Page 3, Story No. 7)

## NUMBER 7

(Continued from Page One)

who at the time were going up by stairway.

The officers today expressed this theory: the Martin girl peered out to see if the boys were coming up. Her hand became wedged between the side floor of the elevator and the side of the building floor. The machine stopped. The girl called out "Help me get out" at least twice. The boys by this time reached that floor via the stairway and one of them, trying to do something to liberate the girl, pulled the rope which sent the elevator moving downward again. This time her head struck a protruding spike, doing most of the damage to the side of her head. The elevator was stopped again. Coroner Dr. H. A. Wiseman told the officers the girl suffered a broken neck in addition to the gaping wound believed to have been made by the spike. However, there was no way to determine if this happened during the ascendancy of the elevator or when it was started downward again.

Capt. Link said that all workers except one, now has been questioned anew and told the new version.

## Elevator Death Probe Continues With New Version

Circumstances surrounding the death of Margie Ree Martin, 19, colored, who lost her life at the Imperial Tobacco Company plant early Wednesday, have proved to be different from the first versions.

The young girl was fatally injured when her head became wedged between the floor of an elevator and a floor of the building.

At first it was said that the victim was alone on the elevator at the time of the tragedy.

Danville detectives who have been working on the case now have learned that another girl was on the elevator at the time it was proceeding to a top floor, where they were to be met by two boys who were going up by stairway.

The officers, including Detective Captain Thornton Link and Detective Frank Chaney, theorized that the Martin girl peered out to see if the boys were coming. Her head apparently became wedged between the side floor of the elevator and the side of the building floor.

At this point, the officers said, the machine stopped. The girl called out "Help me get out," at least twice. The boys by this time reached that floor via the stairway and one of them, trying to do something to liberate the girl, pulled the rope which sent the elevator moving downward again. This time her head struck a protruding spike, doing most of the damage to the side of her head. The elevator was stopped again. Coroner Dr. H. A. Wiseman told the officers the girl suffered a broken neck in addition to the gaping wound believed to have been made by the spike. However, there was no way to determine if this happened during the ascendancy of the elevator or when it was started downward again.

Capt. Link said last night that he talked with one of the two boys, Russell Pritchett, again yesterday. The youth admitted, Link said, that after the girl became wedged by the elevator he ran the lift down and then back up in an effort to free the girl.

He claimed that he was only "trying to help the victim and didn't realize that he may have been injuring her still more.

Link is to confer further with Dr. Wiseman on the death, he said.



# WHAT'S THE TEA WITH...

## WILLIE JAMES WATKINS SR.



- Willie James Watkins Sr, born December 13, 1922 in Tifton, GA
- WWII Veteran
- Maternal Grandfather



# Who Is John Watkins?

STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA  
COUNTY OF FORSYTH  
OFFICE OF REGISTER OF DEEDS

No 2327 C

SEPTEMBER 21 19 51

To Any Ordained Minister of Any Religious Denomination Authorized By His Church, or Any Justice of Peace of Forsyth County:

WILLIE WATKINS having applied to me for a LICENSE for the marriage of

WILLIE WATKINS and FANNIE BROWNLOW

a resident of 712 N RIDGE AVE., WINSTON SALEM, N.C. a resident of DANVILLE, VIRGINIA

age 28 years, colored the son of age 29 years, colored the daughter of

JOHN WATKINS Father now ~~living~~ ~~dead~~ DAVE BROWNLOW Father now ~~living~~ ~~dead~~

Father's residence EDNA WATKINS Mother now ~~living~~ ~~dead~~ SAWYERVILLE, ALA. ANNIE BROWNLOW Mother now ~~living~~ ~~dead~~

Mother's residence WINSTON SALEM, N.C. Mother's residence

And the written consent of the of the said

to the proposed marriage having been filed with me;  
And there being no legal impediment to such marriage known to me, you are hereby authorized at any time within sixty days from date hereof, to celebrate the proposed marriage at any place within the said County.  
You are required, within sixty days after you shall have celebrated such marriage, to return this License to me, at my office, with your signature subscribed to the certificate under this License and with blanks therein filled according to the facts, under the penalty of forfeiting two hundred dollars (\$200.00) to the use of any person who shall sue for the same.

being duly sworn, says: That he is of one of the above named parties this day applying for marriage license, and to his own knowledge he is eighteen years or more of age, and that there is no lawful cause or impediment forbidding such marriage.

Sworn to and subscribed before me this day of 19

Register of Deeds

EUNICE AYERS  
Register of Deeds  
Cozette Fulton  
Deputy

STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA, COUNTY OF FORSYTH:

Rev. E. Y. Williams, an ordained minister of the missionary Bapt. Ch., united in matrimony Willie Watkins and Fannie Brownlow.

the parties licensed above, on the 22 day of September 1951, at 1836 E 4th St in Winston Salem NC. in Forsyth County, according to law.

WITNESSES PRESENT AT MARRIAGE

Mrs. E. Y. Williams of 1836 E 4th St.  
Mrs. Edna Watkins of 712 N. Ridge Ave.

Rev. E. Y. Williams  
(Officiating Off. Use)

COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA—CERTIFICATE OF DEATH  
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH—BUREAU OF VITAL RECORDS AND HEALTH STATISTICS—RICHMOND

COPY A  
FOR BUREAU OF VITAL STATISTICS

REGISTRATION AREA NUMBER 207  
CERTIFICATE NUMBER 202  
STATE FILE NUMBER 82-012466

DECEDENT

1. FULL NAME OF DECEASED (first) (middle) (last) Edna Eliby Watkins  
2. SEX male female ☒ ☐  
3. RACE Black  
4. DATE OF DEATH (mo.) (day) (year) April 27, 1982  
5. AGE 77 years  
6. DATE OF BIRTH (mo.) (day) (year) June 18, 1904  
7. WAS DECEASED EVER IN U.S. ARMED FORCES? ☐ ☒  
8. NAME OF HOSPITAL OR INSTITUTION OF DEATH (if none, so state) Memorial Hospital  
9. COUNTY OF DEATH (if independent city, leave blank)  
10. CITY OR TOWN OF DEATH Danville  
11. STREET ADDRESS OR RT. NO. OF PLACE OF DEATH 142 S. Main St.  
12. STATE (OR FOREIGN COUNTRY) OF DECEASED'S RESIDENCE Virginia  
13. COUNTY OF DECEASED'S RESIDENCE (if independent city, leave blank)  
14. CITY OR TOWN OF RESIDENCE Danville  
15. STREET ADDRESS OR RT. NO. OF RESIDENCE 236 Grant St.  
16. NAME OF FATHER OF DECEASED Ed Eliby  
17. MAIDEN NAME OF MOTHER OF DECEASED Sally Williams  
18. CITIZEN OF WHAT COUNTRY U.S.A.  
19. BIRTHPLACE (state or country) (Tifton) GA  
20. NEVER MARRIED ☐ DIVORCED ☐ MARRIED ☐ WIDOWED ☒  
21. IF MARRIED OR WIDOWED, NAME OF SPOUSE John Watkins  
22. USUAL OR LAST OCCUPATION Tobacco Worker  
23. KIND OF BUSINESS OR INDUSTRY Tob. Processing  
24. SOURCE OF INFORMATION Willie J. Watkins  
25. INTERVAL BETWEEN ONSET AND DEATH 17 days  
26. CAUSE OF DEATH (Enter only one cause per line for (A), (B), and (C).)  
PART I. DEATH WAS CAUSED BY:  
IMMEDIATE CAUSE (A) Arteriosclerotic Heart Disease  
DUE TO (B) Congestive Heart Failure  
DUE TO (C) Diabetes  
PART II. OTHER SIGNIFICANT CONDITIONS CONTRIBUTING TO DEATH BUT NOT RELATED TO THE TERMINAL DISEASE CONDITION GIVEN IN PART I (A)  
26a. AUTOPSY? AUTHORIZED BY: ☐ ☐  
26b. IF FEMALE, WAS THERE A PREGNANCY IN PAST 3 MONTHS? yes ☐ no ☐ unknown ☐  
26c. IF EXTERNAL CAUSE, IT WAS PRIMARY ☐ or CONTRIBUTING ☐ TO CAUSE OF DEATH  
NOTE: IF EXTERNAL CAUSE, NOTIFY MED. EXAMINER  
26d. DESCRIBE HOW INJURY RELATING TO DEATH OCCURRED  
26e. TIME OF INJURY (mo.) (day) (year) A.M. P.M.  
26f. INJURY OCCURRED while at work ☐ not while at work ☐  
26g. PLACE OF INJURY (home, farm, factory, street, office bldg., etc.)  
26h. (city or town) (county) (state)  
26i. To the best of my knowledge, death occurred at 1:57 (a.m.) (p.m.) on the date and place and from the cause(s) stated.  
ACTUAL SIGNATURE John E. Watkins  
DATE SIGNED 4-28-82  
NAME OF ATTENDING PHYSICIAN (Type or Print) J. J. Neal, Jr., M.D.  
ADDRESS OF ATTENDING PHYSICIAN 1045 Main St., Danville, Va.  
FUNERAL DIRECTOR  
27. BURIAL REMOVAL CREMATION ☒ ☐ ☐  
28. PLACE OF BURIAL, REMOVAL, ETC. (name of cemetery or crematory) (city or county) (state) Flora Hills Cemetery, Danville, Va.  
29. (Signature of funeral director or person legally filing this certificate) John E. Watkins, Jr.  
NAME OF FUNERAL HOME AND ADDRESS: Fisher & Watkins Funeral Home  
707 Wilson St., Danville, Va.  
REGISTRAR  
30. (signature of registrar) Leggett M. Ezzell, Deputy  
DATE RECORD FILED 4-29-82  
24541



# Where Is John Watkins?

Name	Willie J Elerbe	
Birth Year	abt 1923	
Gender	Male	
Race	Negro (Black)	
Age in 1930	7	
Birthplace	Georgia	
Marital Status	Single	
Relation to Head of House	Son	
Home in 1930	Winston-Salem, Forsyth, North Carolina, USA	
Map of Home	<a href="#">Winston-Salem, Forsyth, North Carolina</a>	
Street Address	Fallin Street	
Ward of City	Third	
House Number	1409	
Dwelling Number	199	
Family Number	223	
Attended School	Yes	
Father's Birthplace	Georgia	
Mother's Birthplace	Georgia	
Household Members (Name)	Age	Relationship
Edna Elerbe	26	Head
Mary Gaslin	19	Roomer
Mary Mason	20	Roomer
Velma Goodson	19	Roomer
Ruth Elerbe	9	Daughter
Willie J Elerbe	7	Son
Neighbors	<a href="#">View others on page</a>	

1930 Census

Name	Willie J Watkins [Willie J Eliby]
Age	17
Estimated Birth Year	abt 1923
Gender	Male
Race	Negro (Black)
Birthplace	Georgia
Marital Status	Single
Relation to Head of House	Son
Home in 1940	Winston-Salem, Forsyth, North Carolina
Map of Home in 1940	Winston-Salem, Forsyth, North Carolina
Street	Granville Drive
House Number	201
Inferred Residence in 1935	Winston-Salem, Forsyth, North Carolina
Residence in 1935	Winston-Salem
Sheet Number	11B
Occupation	Clothier Chacker
Attended School or College	No
Highest Grade Completed	High School, 1st year
Duration of Unemployment	48
Class of Worker	Wage or salary worker in private work
Weeks Worked in 1939	4
Income	8
Income Other Sources	No
Neighbors	<a href="#">View others on page</a>

Household Members (Name)	Age	Relationship
Edna Watkins	35	Head
Sally R Watkins	19	Daughter
Willie J Watkins	17	Son
Jacqueline Watkins	2/12	Granddaughter



1940 Census

## U.S., Social Security Applications and Claims Index, 1936-2007

View record

Name	Willie James Watkins
Gender	Male
Race	Black
Birth Date	13 Dec 1922
Birth Place	Tipton, Georgia
Death Date	2 Jan 1998
Claim Date	22 Jul 1976
Father	John Watkins
Mother	Edna Watkins
SSN	243286151
Citizenship or Alien Status	U.S. citizen.
Type of Claim	Duplicate request; evidence of identity only submitted.
Notes	15 Apr 1993: Name listed as WILLIE JAMES WATKINS; 16 Jul 1976: Name listed as WILLIE J WATKINS





You and Michael

2nd cousin | Maternal side

3% shared DNA: 192 cM across 8 segments

Connect to tree

Message

Edit Relationship

+

Add to group

📝

Add note

Trees

Ethnicity

Shared Matches

How are you and Michael related?

Common Ancestors

We can't find any common ancestors for you and Michael. This can happen if your Ancestry family trees aren't linked to your DNA results, or if you don't have the same people in your trees. If we find any common ancestors for you and Michael, you'll be able to see them here.

Unlinked Tree

Michael has an unlinked public tree.

You can view any of Michael's unlinked public family trees, but Michael may not appear in any of them. Invite Michael to link a tree to their DNA results. Comparing trees is one way to find out how you might be related.

Contact Michael

Select a tree to view

Public Tree

Family Tree

186 People



AD

Anita Dillard and Michael

1st cousin 1x removed | Paternal side

5% shared DNA: 363 cM across 11 segments

Connect to tree

Message

Edit Relationship

+ Add to group

📝 Add note

Trees

Ethnicity

Shared Matches

How are Anita Dillard and Michael related?

Common Ancestors

We can't find any common ancestors for Anita Dillard and Michael. This can happen if their Ancestry family trees aren't linked to their DNA results, or if they don't have the same people in their trees. If we find any common ancestors for Anita Dillard and Michael, you'll be able to see them here.

Unlinked Tree

Michael has an unlinked public tree.

You can view any of Michael's unlinked public family trees, but Michael may not appear in any of them. Invite Michael to link a tree to their DNA results. Comparing trees is one way to find out how you might be related.

Contact Michael

Select a tree to view

Public Tree

Family Tree

186 People



# What About Isaac Banks?

1920 United States Federal Census for Isaac Banks  
Georgia, Tift, Brookfield-District 0136

1920 United States Federal Census for Edna Elerbe  
Georgia, Tift, Brookfield-District 0136

STATE Georgia DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE—BUREAU OF THE CENSUS (71-578) SUPERVISOR'S DISTRICT No. 2 SHEET No. 10 B  
COUNTY Tift FOURTEENTH CENSUS OF THE UNITED STATES: 1920—POPULATION ENUMERATION DISTRICT No. 136  
TOWNSHIP OR OTHER DIVISION OF COUNTY Brookfield-District NAME OF INCORPORATED PLACE Brookfield WARD OF CITY Brookfield  
NAME OF INSTITUTION Brookfield-District ENUMERATED BY ME ON THE 21-22 DAY OF January, 1920. Edna Elerbe ENUMERATOR

PLACE OF BIRTH	NAME	RELATION	SEX	AGE	MARRIED	CITIZENSHIP	EDUCATION	NATIVITY AND MOTHER TONGUE		OCCUPATION	
								Place of birth	Mother tongue		
188	194	Banks	Ellie	Head	1	0	M	F	14	0	W
			Isaac	Son			M	B	20	5	

STATE Georgia DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE—BUREAU OF THE CENSUS (71-578) SUPERVISOR'S DISTRICT No. 2 SHEET No. 9 B  
COUNTY Tift FOURTEENTH CENSUS OF THE UNITED STATES: 1920—POPULATION ENUMERATION DISTRICT No. 136  
TOWNSHIP OR OTHER DIVISION OF COUNTY Brookfield-District NAME OF INCORPORATED PLACE Brookfield WARD OF CITY Brookfield  
NAME OF INSTITUTION Brookfield-District ENUMERATED BY ME ON THE 17 DAY OF January, 1920. Edna Elerbe ENUMERATOR

PLACE OF BIRTH	NAME	RELATION	SEX	AGE	MARRIED	CITIZENSHIP	EDUCATION	NATIVITY AND MOTHER TONGUE		OCCUPATION
								Place of birth	Mother tongue	
157	159	Richardson, Dora	Head	1	R	M	B	25	M	
			Wife			F	B	46	M	
		Edna	Step Daughter			F	B	16	S	
		Belle	Step Daughter			F	B	14	S	
		Dora	Step Son			M	B	12	S	



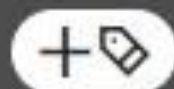
# Two Sons Named Willie?



**Willie Lee Banks**

**BIRTH** 13 JUN 1922 • Tift County, Georgia, USA

**DEATH** 21 MAY 1949 • Tift, Georgia, USA



**Willie James Watkins Sr.**

**BIRTH** 13 DEC 1922 • Tifton, Tift, Georgia, USA

**DEATH** 2 JAN 1998 • Danville, Independent Cities, Virginia, USA

maternal grandfather





## ROBINSON-SPANGLER CAROLINA ROOM

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# DANIELLE PRITCHETT

Genealogy Librarian



[apritchett@cmlibrary.org](mailto:apritchett@cmlibrary.org)



704-416-0150



[www.cmlibrary.org/services/archives-and-special-collections](http://www.cmlibrary.org/services/archives-and-special-collections)

