

## Story Behind A Murder Victim

# The WOMAN NOBODY KNEW

By SYLVIA SYLVIE  
Telegram Staff Reporter

Geraldine Pickford, 40, reported as usual at 7 a.m. Saturday, Sept. 18, for her job as waitress at St. Andrew's College.

She worked through the day, taking the regular two-hour breaks at 10 a.m. and 2.30 p.m.

She seemed no happier or unhappier than she had since she came to work at the college in April.

At 8.45 p.m. Mrs. Pickford went off duty.

She did not report Sunday. That evening her body was found by a creek near the cricket field of the exclusive Aurora boys' boarding school.

She had been manually strangled. Her body was found by a group of students.

Who was Geraldine Pickford?

### Nameless

To most she was a nameless, faceless individual for her 40 years on this earth. She married in 1962, but the marriage lasted six months.

Few people at St. Andrew's College remember her at all, even though they had seen her day in, day out since April.

Not even the salesmen, who often pay particular attention to the girls who work as waitresses in the school dining room, can remember her.

Geraldine Pickford stood out to nobody. The most attention that has ever been paid to her has been since she died.

She was born Geraldine Devine in Hamilton. Her husband, Joseph Pickford, has no idea where she went to school or how long she went.

### Lone Relative

Her only living immediate relative, airline pilot William Devine, her brother, said she went to school in London, Noranda, Toronto and Timmins. She quit in Grade 8 in Timmins.

Her father was a wholesale grocer. Her mother died when she was nine. After that, the family frequently lived with relatives.

Her brother said that she was a normal child who was quiet and liked to read a lot.

She found employment as a domestic, assistant nurse or waitress. Outside of reading she had no interests.

"She was a reader," said her only friend, Margo Iula, of Queen st., w. Mrs. Iula met Mrs. Pickford 23 years ago.

### Insignificant

"Gerry read and read and read. Everything... love stories, detective stories, biographies. But she seldom read all a book. She'd skip pages if she was bored or came to a section she didn't like," recalled Mrs. Iula.

"She was the most insignificant person who's ever worked here," said her boss, Norman Stewart, who is in charge of the kitchen and dining room at St. Andrew's.

"Some people stand out because they are good workers. Some because they are bad. Some are good looking. Some are ugly. But Gerry Pickford didn't stand out at all," said Mr. Stewart.

She had red hair and weighed a little over 100 pounds. She had chronic respiratory trouble and a great scar under one shoulder blade. No one, not even her brother, knows the origin of the scar.

Mr. Stewart said she suffered from asthma and would periodically take a day off to come to Toronto to see her doctor.

### Not Worried

"She would come back with a note from the doctor saying where she had been. She wouldn't usually tell us before she went. That's why I wasn't terribly worried when she didn't report to work Sunday," said Mr. Stewart.

"She was very moody," her husband said. "If company came she might talk to them or she might not."

Mr. Pickford said when he first met his wife she "seemed like a reasonably happy type."

"She just changed, that's all," he concluded.

Mrs. Pickford stayed with Margo and Lou Iula on and off for more than 20 years. Sometimes she would come for a day, other times for a week



This is Geraldine Pickford who had few friends when she was alive. To most people she was a nameless individual... a "most insignificant person," said her boss at St. Andrew's College.

end, and at one period she stayed for three months.

She had given St. Andrew's the Iulas' name to contact in case of emergency. She called their place "home". They were the only friends she had.

"She never talked about her personal life," said Mrs. Iula.

"When she did say something, she would often lie. You never knew when to believe her."

The Iulas would sometimes not see Mrs. Pickford for a month or more. Then she would suddenly reappear. She usually said she had been going out with somebody. She would never say who.

The only man she brought to the Iula home was Joe Pickford — the man she eventually married.

Mr. Pickford is a quiet little man who works as a male nurse at Dewson Private Hospital on Dewson st. It was there that he met his wife, who was a nursing assistant in 1962. They were married in June of that year.

During the six months of their life together, Mrs. Pickford became more and more remote. Finally she quit her job at the hospital and left.

Mr. Pickford rarely saw her after that.

### Aggravating

"She could be very aggravating. She might say hello or she might not. If company came in and she was reading, she would often leave the room without so much as a word," said Mrs. Iula.

"She could be aggravating to another woman. She could be particularly aggravating to a man," she commented.

Mrs. Iula thought it was strange that Mrs. Pickford never had any money.

"Not even on pay day. She had very little in the bank and she never spent any on herself. Everything she bought was of the cheapest... \$2 and \$3 dresses. Anything good she had, somebody had given it to her."

Mrs. Iula said this shortage of money first became apparent after Mrs. Pickford disappeared for a year and a half 18 years ago.

"We never heard from her for 18 months. Then one day we got a letter postmarked Toronto. She never said where she had been or what she had been doing. After that, she never had a cent."

Mrs. Pickford had the mysterious scar before

this period, so this was not the cause of her disappearance.

In the back of her mind, although she admits she has no evidence to base it on, Mrs. Iula thinks that Mrs. Pickford may have been being blackmailed.

Neither the King Township Police nor the OPP will reveal any of the results of their investigations to date. They are in possession of the autopsy report from the Attorney General's laboratory which would reveal the nature of Mrs. Pickford's scar and whether or not she ever had a child.

She thinks another possibility may be the fact that she had a child in that period and was supporting it. If she did, no one has heard from, or of, the child.

"Just a while ago she called me from the college saying she wanted to come to Toronto to the doctor's but didn't have the money for the fare. Often she wouldn't even have the 30 cents to call from Aurora. There are two calls of hers totalling 60 cents on my phone bill... She couldn't even afford that," said Mrs. Iula.

Mrs. Iula thought Mrs. Pickford had been withdrawing more and more ~~with~~ <sup>to</sup> herself in the past few months. She doesn't know why.

If she doesn't, probably no one else does. The last time her brother saw her was the day she was married.

"We were never close," her brother said.

"I think she was a person who was very lonely and wanted love but didn't know how to receive love. She always fouled it up," Mrs. Iula said.

At St. Andrew's College she seemed like a quiet, friendly person.

"She minded her own business and everybody liked her because of it," said Mr. Stewart.

"She never opened a conversation, but would join in briefly if someone else did."

"Not even the masters she served every day remember her. After the murder they'd ask me which one it was. 'The red-headed one', I'd tell them. And they still wouldn't remember," he said.

How did this quiet, unobtrusive woman, with no friends, no interests and no money, meet such a violent death?

Her routine that last day at work was the same as any other day — at 7, out at 10, in at 12, out at 2.30, in at 5.45, out at 8.45.

"As far as we know she spent her spare time in her room that day," said Mr. Stewart.

"But you can never be sure. She was so quiet you never knew whether she was in or out."

Mr. Stewart said some of his staff told him she used to walk down to the college gate at night. Others said she walked into Aurora—about a mile and a half away.

"But nobody seems to know for sure what she did," he added.

He was not alarmed when she didn't show up for work on Sunday. He thought her asthma had sent her off to Toronto.

Instead, she was lying in a ditch on the college grounds. Her body was found there at 10 p.m. by a group of students who found her handbag on the driveway.

Five weeks before, Mrs. Pickford had asked the Iulas if she could go to their cottage with them for her holidays.

"This was the first time she ever made that request," said Mrs. Iula.

They left for the cottage at Port McNicoll on Friday Aug. 13.

"Everything was all right for the first two or three days. Oh, she read a lot, but was fairly sociable," said Mrs. Iula.

Monday evening Mrs. Pickford went to see a doctor in Port McNicoll.

### 10-Minute Trip

A day or two later she asked Mrs. Iula if she wanted anything at the store — 10 minutes from the beach area.

Mrs. Iula said she didn't, but Mrs. Pickford went anyway. She didn't return for a couple of hours.

She said nothing of where she had been or what she had been doing.

After that she went to the store several times, staying more than an hour each time.

When she was at the cottage she was more and more moody.

The following Monday, she went into Midland, about 10 miles away, on the bus. She did not return until 9.30 p.m. The last bus from Midland to Port McNicoll on a week-night leaves at 5 p.m.

### Mystery Visit

"She said she had been to the doctor's, but my husband saw her coming from the beach area which is nowhere near the doctor's, when he went out for cigarettes," said Mrs. Iula.

She said nothing of her visit to Midland except that she had bought a bus ticket for Toronto (she didn't say when she was leaving) and: "It's a small world. When I was in town I ran into a man from the college."

She didn't say who.

The next morning Mrs. Pickford left. All she said was, "Well I'm going now," and walked away with her bag.

There was no bus at the time she left from Midland or Port McNicoll for Toronto.

"She must have got a ride with someone farther down the road," said Mrs. Iula.

On Sept. 5, when she returned from the cottage, Mrs. Iula found a letter awaiting her from Mrs. Pickford.

In it, she said she was sorry for leaving the way she did, but that the doctor at Port McNicoll told her she had better see her own doctor in Toronto.

### The Last Time

Margo Iula never heard from Gerry Pickford again.

Joe Pickford said he understood his wife had been going out with a man she met before she knew him. He doesn't know the name of the man.

"She knew plenty of men though," said Mr. Pickford.

No one at the college can recall her going out with a man. No one in any of the restaurants in Aurora can recall seeing her at all, let alone with a man.

As far as can be determined, the last people to see Mrs. Pickford alive were the people she said goodnight to when she left work at 8.45 p.m., Sept. 18. And her murderer.

## ... And Terry, The Little Girl Buried In The Rain

A little girl was buried yesterday.

Donald Kully, 22, is charged with capital murder.

It was raining as the white coffin of five-year-old Terry Alcorn was carried to a small grave in St. John's Norway Cemetery as if

Brought together for the funeral of the youngest of their three children were Maria and Charles Alcorn.

Afterwards Mr. Alcorn had to be helped to a car.

Rev. B.L. Hodder, Minister of Kew Beach United Church, told the parents and 75 relatives and friends

who passed three score years and 10 "a grand old servant of God who had finished his earthly pilgrimage," he had been able to read words of comfort from

al approach to the theology of the church can stand here and say: "The Lord giveth, the Lord taketh away"

Half of those in the chapel were in tears.

Other flowers were from grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins and there was a basket of red gladioli from neighbors on Magnolia ave. who were among the 500 searching for Terry when

