

# The husband (almost) always did it

It's almost always the husband or boyfriend, and if she's pregnant, it was the father of the baby.

Those words of investigative wisdom used to chap my reporter hide. But in more than a dozen years of covering hundreds of murder cases, I've come to learn it really is almost always the husband or boyfriend or baby daddy.

Prior to coming to the Telegram, I spent about a year writing freelance about unsolved murders and missing people. I had honed the skill while writing for The Daily News in Jacksonville and surrounding sister newspapers.

One of the freelance jobs was writing about a couple of unsolved murders for the Asheboro Courier-Tribune. One of those cases involved the bloody slashing death of a mother of two young daughters. She was killed in her kitchen while her boyfriend of eight years was across town — or so he said.

Nova Nicole Robinson, "Nikki" to family and friends, a 31-year-old nursing student, was knifed to death on Jan. 28, 2013. I wrote about her still-unsolved murder two years later.

There was no evidence of forced entry. She wasn't robbed or sexually assaulted. She didn't have alcohol or drugs in her system. The murder weapon hadn't been found.

Of course there are exceptions to the husband-did-it rule. Every once in a while a wife really does go missing and meet a nefarious end while out jogging.

But in Nikki's case, it was pretty obvious the alibi-less boyfriend did it.

Nikki's mom provided me with pictures of the bloody scene. The overkill alone was indicative of someone intimate with Nikki.

It made it clear who the only real suspect was.

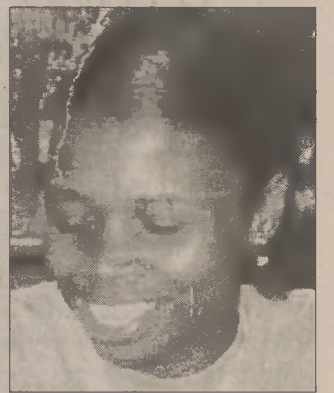
Nikki's mom asked me what she could do to see justice for her daughter. I said to keep her in the public eye. Hound the police, make the news stations pay attention and keep her story going in the newspaper.

The mom did all those things. She wrote frequent letters to the editor, appeared on local newscasts and set up a Facebook page. She made sure no one could forget.

In these cases, once the public forgets, once the attention of the fickle public diverts to another tragedy, it's hard to get back.

I'm reminded of 21-year-old Denise Williams. She was also a mother of two young children.

In the summer of 2003, Denise went out for a night on the town, went missing and a week later her decomposing body was found float-



Denise Williams

ing face down in Cokey Swamp along Pleasant Hill Road just outside Rocky Mount.

The investigation was — for a time — swept up by the case of the Seven Bridges Road Killer. The public and news media tied Denise to that case although she didn't fit the victimology.

But the detectives working her homicide weren't distracted. They kept their eyes on — you guessed it — the boyfriend.

Little evidence has surfaced in the case, but only one real suspect remains. His identity is being withheld pending further legal developments. But I know who he is, the Edgecombe County Sheriff's Office knows who he is and people in the position to break the case wide open by coming forward know who he is.

Denise was a mother as well. Her family deserves to know what happened to her. It's been long enough.

And Nikki's case? Her boyfriend, Roger Lee Martin, was arrested earlier this month by the Asheboro Police Department and charged with her murder.

"There were many questions surrounding the case that Roger Martin could not give a logical response to," Asheboro Police Chief Jody Williams said in a press release. "Advanced DNA testing enabled our detectives to satisfy all open questions that they had surrounding the investigation. We are completely satisfied without question that Roger Martin killed his then-girlfriend Nova 'Nikki' Robinson."

We can have that closure here for Denise's family if someone who was there during her final hours does the right thing.

Twin County CrimeStoppers is offering a cash reward of up to \$1,000 for information leading to an arrest in the case. The tip line number is 252-977-1111.

Lindell Jon Kay can be reached via email at lkay@rmtelgram.com.

**Are You Waiting for Your Kids to Talk to YOU About Pot?**

Partnership for a Drug-Free North Carolina

1-888-732-3362 www.hugoburns.org



LEWIS HOGGARD / Windsor/Bertie Chamber of Commerce

Riders from Cycle NC take a break at a rest stop at Scotch Hall Preserve.

## Cyclists

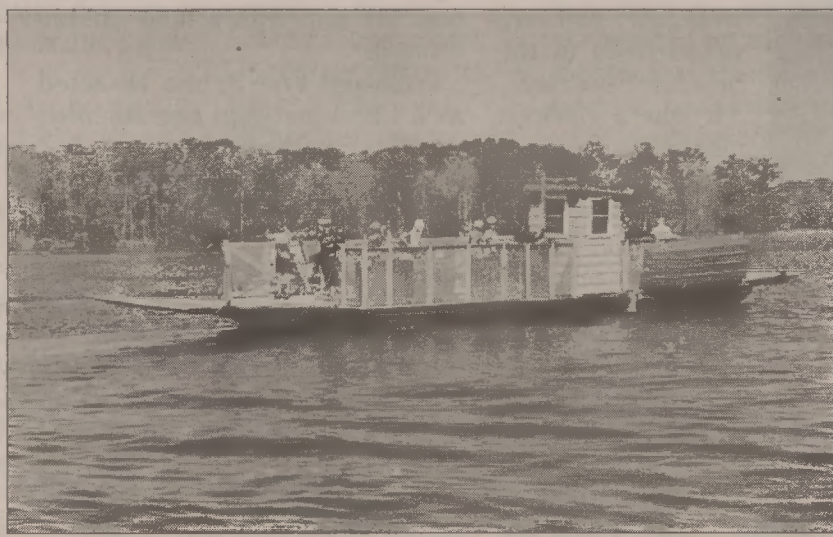
From A1

ers, and render aid whether mechanically or medically. There were five stops in Bertie County — Windsor, San Souci, Scotch Hall, Leggett's Grill and Capehart's Church.

There were over 30 local citizens, who volunteered their Saturday to help make the event go smoothly. Windsor Commissioner Randy K. Whitaker was at the Windsor stop and Bertie County Commissioner Greg Atkins, County Manager Scott Sauer, Register of Deeds Annie Wilson were all at the San Souci stop. At San Souci, there were support boats in the water in case anything happened on the ferry rides across the Cashie River.

The North Carolina Department of Transportation (DOT) was helpful in coordinating the use of the ferry by the cyclists. DOT also procured for our use, 20 type one life jackets that were required by the U.S. Coast Guard to make sure everyone was safe.

The cyclists come in all ages and sizes. Even the equipment varies from participant to participant. The traditional road bike is the standard mode of travel. Names like Trek, Cannondale and Specialized are commonly seen. There are also ebikes (electric), tandem bikes, recumbent (pedaled with the



SCOTT SAUER / Bertie County

Cyclists take the Sans Souci Ferry.

rider horizontal) and some specially designed unique bikes.

Cycle NC worked closely with Windsor Tourism Director Billy Smithwick and the staff of the Windsor/Bertie Chamber of Commerce to plan the routes and coordinate with volunteers.

The point man from Cycle NC in Bertie County was Chris Wicker.

Wicker said, "The people of Bertie County were outstanding and their hospitality made the riders feel right at home. (There were) lots of neat places to visit with interesting stories behind those places made Bertie an excellent choice for the 2019 Coastal Ride."

Bertie County Emergency

Services Director Mitch Cooper led the way in making the roads and intersections as safe as possible for these cyclists.

Cooper expressed his gratitude to all of the agencies that lent support and people for this event, including: Bertie County Sheriff's Office, Bertie County Emergency Services, Merry Hill Fire Department, Windsor Police Department, Currituck County Fire/EMS, Gates County Emergency Management, Hertford County Emergency Management, Martin County Emergency Management, North Carolina Forest Service, North Carolina Wildlife Commission, North Carolina Highway Patrol and Vidant Police.

## Water

From A1

lic's introduction to the nearly one-half mile of beach on the coastal waters of North Carolina's inner banks," he added.

Payne led discussions, which helped the group identify the potential users of the 137-acre property.

"We must make clear to residents of Bertie County this is their facility to utilize," Commissioner Ronald D. Wesson pointed out during the discussions.

Other potential users included the general traveling public and school trips.

Education, ecotourism and history preservation were key facts the group deemed "of potential interest" to visitors as well as uninterrupted nature.

"We see the stars every night," Sauer pointed out. "It's no big deal, but to others it would be."

Discussions included ideas for an interpretive visitors' center as well as an outdoor entertainment venue which could accommodate a large variety of events.



SARAH HODGES STALLS / Bertie Ledger-Advance

Bertie County Economic Development Director Steve Biggs was one of the county officials taking part in the Tall Glass of Water Planning Session on April 24.

"In the coming months, the Board will continue its visioning and planning efforts to incorporate all of Bertie County's world class recreational waters from the Roanoke, Cashie and Chowan rivers, and onto Salmon Creek and the Albemarle Sound," Sauer said.

Throughout the planning process, Payne will document the Board's discussions and

charting the program objectives from last week's planning session. The outcome of her documentation will be used for incorporation with the meeting minutes, and to document the governing body's planning efforts.

Sarah Hodges Stalls can be reached via mail at shstalls@ncweeklies.com.