

Facing Domestic Violence

A murder that couldn't be ignored

Murder proved changes were needed to protect domestic violence victims

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A murder-suicide on International Women's Day 20 years ago forced police and the courts to delve into systemic failings in dealing with domestic violence.

On March 8, 1996, Randy Iles climbed into a rented truck with a shotgun he'd purchased that morning, drove to Craigeleith, and killed his ex-girlfriend, Arlene May.

May's murder sparked a coroner's inquest that was the first in Ontario to examine the roots of domestic violence and how police and the courts treat victims and perpetrators.

"I just hope that things get better for women in the future," said May's daughter, Pauline May. "It's hard to think about, and to deal with it is harder. I wouldn't wish that upon my worst enemy."

My Friend's House executive director Alison FitzGerald was a front-line worker at the women's crisis shelter at the time. She was home at the time of the murder and saw the police vehicles heading to Craigeleith.

"I saw all these cop cars and wondered, 'Oh my God, what's happening', and then I watched the news," she said. "I had a gut feeling that it was one of ours."



It's hard to think about, and to deal with it is harder."

Pauline May

Arlene May's daughter, Pauline. IAN ADAMS PHOTO

May had gone to the shelter for the first time about three months before she was killed. Iles had assaulted her on several occasions.

May was a single mom of five kids, ranging in age from 20 to four. Son Adam was living with his dad while the eldest, Pauline, had her own apartment in Colling-

wood, where she lived with her own son.

"She was just a typical mom, always tried to do stuff with us and take us places, when she could afford to," Pauline said.

May brought her children to Collingwood to escape Toronto. They had been living in a rough neighbourhood where there had been

drug dealing and shootings. Pauline remembers one woman was raped and killed near the family's home.

"It was getting bad. My brothers were getting beaten up by the neighbourhood kids, there was lots of drugs, and a couple of people had been shot," she said. "We wanted to get up here to get a bet-

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ter life, because it was getting scary down there."

In 1994, May started a relationship with Iles, not realizing he was still with his wife.

"He had an infatuation with my mom from the beginning. At first, he was a great guy and treated my mom like a princess," Pauline said. "He changed later on; as soon as something happened that didn't go his way you started to see his true colours."

May became pregnant but miscarried. It was during the pregnancy that Iles began to physically abuse her.

In November 1996, a week after Iles assaulted her, May went to My Friend's House for help. Staff urged her to go to police.

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She knew something was going to happen: daughter

● A, from Page 8

“Her only option was to report it to the police,” said Susan Hanna, then a child and youth worker with My Friend’s House, and now the shelter’s outreach worker. “She was always welcome to stay at the shelter, but her only protection was the police.”

In the three months leading up to the murder, Iles terrorized May, calling her and leaving messages, saying they would be together for a “honeymoon in heaven.”

Collingwood Police and the OPP in Grey County charged him with assault, criminal harassment and numerous breaches of recognizance for contacting May while his other charges wound their way through the courts.

May was about to move back to Collingwood, to get away from the isolation of living in Craigeleith and being so far away from help if she needed it.

“She wanted to get back into town to get closer to me, and closer to a police station,” Pauline said.

Two days before Iles killed her, May gave her eldest daughter a letter.

“She knew something was going to happen,” Pauline said. “[The letter said] that if anything was to happen to her, I needed to take care of my younger sister and to separate out her belongings.”

Early on the day of her murder, May came into Collingwood to get her hair done in the hope it would be a pick-me-up, said Pauline.

“Because of everything that had been going on, she was depressed and she wanted to make herself feel better. She stopped by my place to show me and she just teared up,” Pauline said.

That afternoon, Iles waited outside May’s Timmons Road home until she returned. He forced his way in. He barricaded the three children in a closet, but eventually let them go and told them to go to the Craigeleith General Store to call police.

The children, then ranging in age from four to 15, ran across Hwy. 26 to the store.

Meanwhile, Pauline, who had been out with a friend, came home in the middle of the afternoon to a message from her sister to call the Craigeleith General Store. She called back and spoke to an officer, who filled her in on what was happening.

She got a ride to Craigeleith and spent the next several hours in a police cruiser speaking with an officer, while police attempted to make contact with someone in the house. Officers eventually forced their way in just before midnight, finding the couple dead in a bedroom.

Iles had shot May in the chest at short



This is the last photo of Arlene May before her murder, taken by her then 14-year-old daughter, Kelly. SUBMITTED PHOTO

“I had to stay strong for everybody ... I know she wouldn’t want me to give up.”

Pauline May

range, paused for a cigarette, reloaded, and shot her again before turning the gun on himself.

Pauline was suddenly faced with the job of arranging a funeral for her mother.

“I had to stay strong for everybody. I didn’t get counselling, which I probably should have because I’ve never dealt with it properly. I just was trying to be strong for my kids and my siblings,” she said. “I know she wouldn’t want me to give up. She would want me to be a good person; she raised us to be good people, and have morals. She was a strong woman.

“She tried, and unfortunately it didn’t work out.”

In the months and years following her mother’s death, Pauline raised her siblings and took part in the inquest, hoping it would make a difference for other women who found themselves in the same kind of abusive relationship.

“I had guilt for a while, because I told her I would move in and stay with her until he went to jail, that I would protect her any way I could, but she wouldn’t let me because she was protecting me,” she said. “I miss my mom every day ... I would give anything to have my mom back.”

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Facing Domestic Violence

The murder that launched life-saving questions

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Arlene May's murder in 1996 changed everything from public perception to the way police and the courts handle cases of domestic violence.

That's according to Peter Jaffe, a professor in the Faculty of Education at the University of Western Ontario and the Academic Director of the Centre for Research and Education on Violence Against Women and Children.

"One death is one too many, but I think Arlene May's story is one of the turning points in the province. I think it galvanized people to look at how different parts of the system failed," he said.

"It strikes me that although her life was lost, she's saved many other lives by all that was found and analyzed by picking up the pieces of her life."

On Feb. 16, 1998, the jury of two men and two women charged with the inquest into May's murder began to hear testimony of 76 witnesses over 51 days. The jury eventually delivered 213 recommendations for the province, police, and the courts.

According to a summary by the Office of the Chief Coroner in 1999, nearly 160 of those recommendations had been implemented, or were in the process of being implemented.

"This was one of the first major inquests where they recognized there were a lot of systemic fail-



My Friend's House executive director Alison FitzGerald looks over a binder of news stories and other documents related to the murder of Arlene May. FitzGerald was a front-line crisis worker at the women's crisis shelter when May was killed by her ex-boyfriend, Randy Iles.. IAN ADAMS PHOTO

ings," said Alison FitzGerald, the executive director of My Friend's House, who was a front-line crisis worker at the shelter at the time of the death.

When Randy Iles murdered May, he was facing a litany of charges for assaulting May, criminal harassment, and numerous breaches of recognizance for contacting May.

Days before the murder, Iles had

appeared in front of a justice of the peace in Grey County on charges of uttering threats and breaching a condition of his release. He was released on \$200 bail and the condition he stay out of the jurisdiction.

However, the court didn't realize there was a warrant for his arrest in Simcoe County connected to an assault on May earlier in the month.

"The problem was not that the

police didn't do their job, but it was the systemic failure that she lived in Grey (County), which was a different police service, and they didn't communicate what was happening (in other counties)," FitzGerald said.

Iles also didn't surrender his Firearms Acquisition Certificate (FAC), which allowed him to buy the shotgun he used to kill May.

The jury inquest made several rec-

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ommendations related to improved access to the Canadian and provincial police online databases, reporting requirements, FACs, and the requirement for officers to actively determine whether an accused has access to an FAC or weapons.

May's daughter Pauline took an active role in the inquest.

"I wanted to get up there and tell them how things were not done right, between the charges in Grey County and Simcoe County, nobody looked into whether he had an FAC – I couldn't believe that," she said. "They basically gave him the key to go and kill my mom. It shouldn't have happened."

Jaffe was called as an expert witness at the May-Iles inquest, and the 2002 inquest into the death of Gillian Hadley, a Pickering woman who was shot to death by her estranged husband in 2000. Jaffe is also a founding member of Ontario's Domestic Violence Death Review Committee (DVRDC), which was created as a result of recommendations from both inquests.

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Still more work to do: expert

● **The**, from Page 8

The DVDRC reviews all domestic homicides and domestic homicide-suicides that take place in Ontario with a view to developing a comprehensive understanding of why domestic homicides occur and how they might be prevented.

Since 2003, the committee has reviewed 199 cases involving 290 deaths.

Jaffe believes the results of those inquests, and the recommendations that are produced by the committee on an annual basis, are making a difference.

“With domestic homicide, there’s different circumstances, but what’s different today is nobody just says, ‘well, bad things happen, we can’t do anything.’ There’s a thorough analysis to look at those lessons and make sure they get shared across the province, and that really started with Arlene May’s death,” said Jaffe. “There’s a lot more work to do ... there’s a great need for much better coordination of services, such as community services and justice professionals, getting people to share information on a timely basis when you’re looking at a high-risk situation.”

Other recommendations that have made a difference, say My Friend’s House staff, include the creation of the Victims Assistance Program, and the development of a danger-assessment tool that assesses a perpetrator’s likelihood of killing his or her partner.

My Friend’s House outreach worker Susan Hanna uses the 20 questions as a counselling tool. “The one that’s most revealing [is the question], ‘do you believe he is capable of killing you?’

“That’s pretty sobering. The ‘yes’ comes into her head,” Hanna said. “It’s very rare, when I do it, that (the response is) not in the ‘high’ or the ‘extreme’ (range). It really informs her that she’s in danger. Denial is a powerful thing.”

According to Jaffe, a case such as Iles would be less likely to escalate today to the point it did 20 years ago.

“He wouldn’t have been able to manage getting through the system as long as he did to avoid any kind of accountability,” Jaffe said, noting the incorporation of domestic violence coordinators at the local policing level assists in keeping an eye on both the victim and the accused. “There would have been more done to hold him accountable.”

Pauline May hopes the laws are tightened in order to protect potential future victims of domestic violence.

“You can’t believe it still happens, but it’s always going to happen – someone, if they’re that sick in the head and they want to do that, they will find a way,” May said. “It’s sad, because Iles should have been put in jail – between all those charges, it shouldn’t have happened the way it did.”

10 RECOMMENDATIONS INCLUDED IN THE INQUEST INTO THE DEATH OF ARLENE MAY

1. The victim/witness assistance program must be migrated to all jurisdictions in the province immediately.
2. Where there is no victim service program currently in place, victim/witness assistance program staff must contact the victim prior to the commencement of the bail hearings to ensure all important information has been brought to the attention of the Crown.
3. Where police become aware of current intimate partners other than the victim in a particular incident, they should make an effort to contact the woman and inform/warn her of potential risk to her and her children.
4. All police officers should be directed to investigate the first reported incident of domestic violence as a serious, high-priority call based on the fact that on average women experience 35 assaults before reporting to the police.
5. The detection and effects of domestic violence should be included in the curriculum of medical schools, the licensing examinations for physicians, and other medical health professionals, and their continuing education programs.
6. The Integrated Justice Initiative should be directed to develop policy and systems software that can easily facilitate collection and insertion of information flagging charges, reports, checklists, bail conditions, convictions, etc., as domestic-violence-related.
7. In all instances where an accused is charged with an offence involving domestic violence, the police shall recommend a firearms/weapons prohibition. Procedures should call for immediate enforcement by the police.
8. Sentences in cases of domestic violence must reflect society’s abhorrence of these crimes, and the determination to take all appropriate steps to eliminate the problem.
9. The policing services branch should conduct an audit of domestic violence cases to determine whether there are any deficiencies in the investigation of such cases, and to make recommendations in areas where additional training and education is required.
10. Every police officer involved in the investigation of domestic violence cases should be instructed to examine each case for evidence of stalking behaviour.



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Facing Domestic Violence

Murder victim's life reveals warning signs

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The inquest into the death of Arlene May provided a way to better identify the warning signs of domestic violence, and protect future victims.

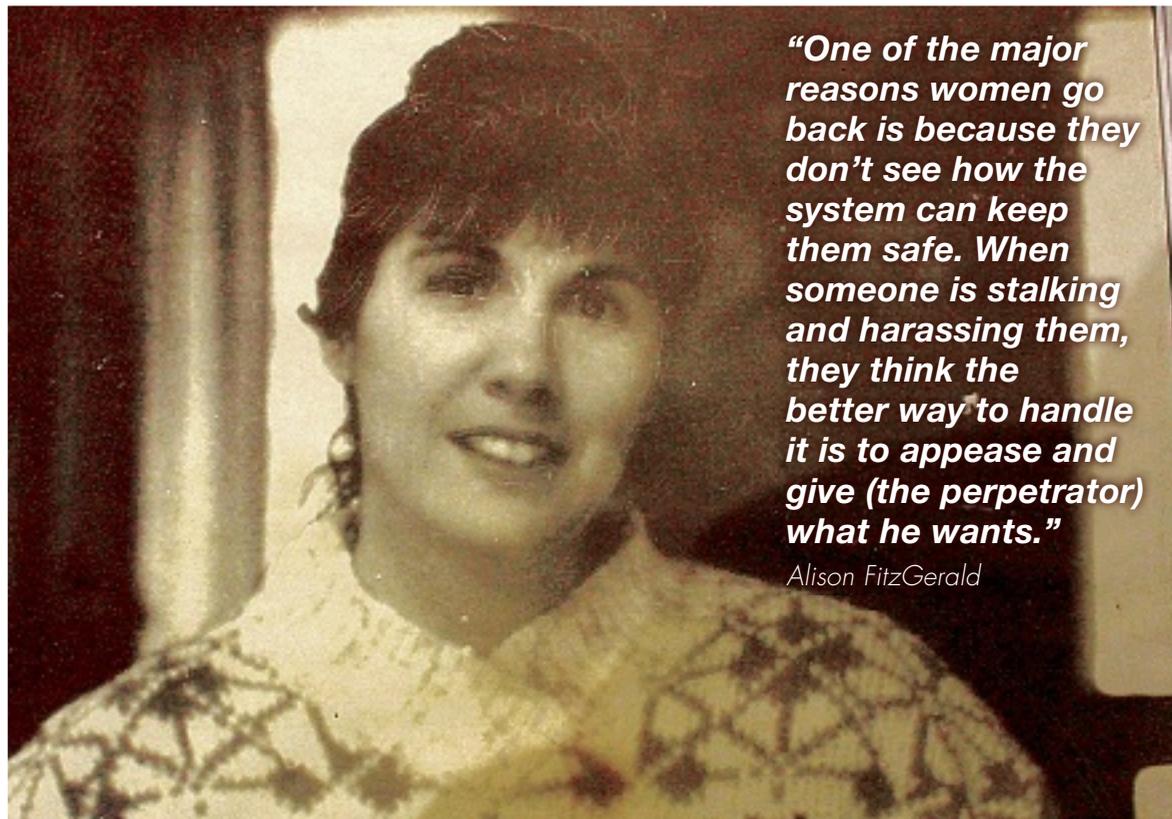
Randy Iles had a lengthy criminal record before he began to terrorize and eventually murder his ex-girlfriend May.

To friends, he gave the appearance of a man who desperately wanted out of his relationship with May. In truth, he was constantly harassing her in the three months before killing her, leaving messages that they would have a "honeymoon in heaven."

Iles assaulted May in November, 1995, but that wasn't his first brush with the law. Married three times, Iles had been convicted for indecent exposure, harassing phone calls, breach of probation, and a weapons offence. Following his first two marriages, there were instances of child abduction and stalking.

Iles had started off as a charmer in the beginning of his relationship with May, but his demeanor changed after May became pregnant, and the abuse escalated until she finally went to police.

"That's the form we tend to hear about the most, and for most women, it does not start with physical violence ... physical violence is when it's escalated, and there's been other forms of abuse that have occurred prior to that," said Marlene Ham, provincial coordi-



Arlene May was murdered by her ex-boyfriend Randy Iles in 1996. An inquest into her death has led to recommendations and changes in the system that have helped identify warning signs to protect other victims. SUBMITTED PHOTO

"One of the major reasons women go back is because they don't see how the system can keep them safe. When someone is stalking and harassing them, they think the better way to handle it is to appease and give (the perpetrator) what he wants."

Alison FitzGerald

nator with the Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses (OAITH), a coalition of women's shelters and second-stage housing organizations.

Iles was exhibiting several of the risk factors now identified by Ontario's Domestic Violence Death Review Committee (ODVDRC) as potential warning signs, including obsessive behaviour, and an escalation of violence.

May, too, showed signs – an intuitive sense of fear towards the per-

petrator – expressing her concerns to a neighbour the morning before her murder.

However, there were times when she did go back, a survival tactic My Friend's House executive director Alison FitzGerald often sees as women try to manage their own safety.

"The police at the time were really concerned for her safety, but then saw her go back, and saw that as not as serious as they had originally perceived it," said FitzGerald.

"One of the major reasons women go back is because they don't see how the system can keep them safe.

"When someone is stalking and harassing them, they think the better way to handle it is to appease and give (the perpetrator) what he wants."

The end result, added FitzGerald, can still be unfortunate, based on statistics.

In a review of the 199 cases of domestic violence incidents that ended in death, the ODVDRC

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found 72 per cent involved a couple where there was a history of domestic violence, and 69 per cent were cases where there was a pending or actual separation.

Collingwood man Paul Faria, convicted last fall of murdering his former girlfriend Vicki Doyle, also had a history of domestic violence in his previous relationships.

"What (Doyle) did is let him know she was leaving, which is the most dangerous time," FitzGerald said.

FitzGerald said women need to be conscious of how the man describes previous relationships.

"They frame (previous) relationships as 'the woman was the problem'," she said.

One of the keys is to get one or both people in the relationship to recognize what's happening, said Peter Jaffe, a professor in the Faculty of Education at the University of Western Ontario and the Academic Director of the Centre for Research and Education on Violence Against Women and Children.

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Depression, unemployment can trigger murder attempts

● **Murder**, from Page 8

“That’s a challenge ... there’s some analogy to alcoholism, in the sense there’s so much denial about somebody having a problem,” Jaffe said. “There’s a strong need to reach out and get help for men in a timely manner, and there’s a need for more outreach for men in high-risk situations.”

Jaffe said there are a couple of pilot projects in Ontario offering outreach services to men after they’ve been charged to make sure they have appropriate counselling, housing, and economic supports in place.

“A lot of men who get charged are in crisis, and often all they know is there’s a court date in the future, and they get told by a lawyer not to say anything to anyone, and we see many men who are just ruminating about what happened and thinking about ways to get even, and sometimes making a bad situation worse,” he said.

Ham said domestic violence can take many forms, often beginning with emotional abuse and evolving into other aspects such as financial control, sexual violence, and stalking.

Stalking itself has evolved, from physically following the victim to tracking them using mobile technology or monitoring of social media accounts. Ham said some perpetrators have gone to the extent of installing tracking applications on cell phones and other mobile devices.

“Women really need to pay attention to their devices, if they see anything new or apps that have been added, it’s important to look into what that app is,” she said. “Technology abuse is happening more and more.”

Ham said most women may not experience all of the warning signs all at once.

“Something may happen and it might raise a red flag, but then things might be good for a period of time ... there’s a real progression, and those warning signs won’t happen in one day, they will happen over a period of months or years,” she said. “People might think it might not be too bad, or things will change, it won’t happen again, but we know that it escalates and it gets worse and worse over time.”

For those who are in contact with the couple – friends, family members and neighbours – there are warning signs and steps someone can take to help.

“A lot is what it means to be a good friend in terms of having a difficult conversation, telling somebody you’re worried about them. For both the victim and the perpetrator, it’s about approaching people in a non-judgmental way, knowing that what’s going on is damaging, both for themselves and

RISK FACTORS THAT INCREASE THE LIKELIHOOD OF MURDER:

- a perpetrator who is depressed
- prior threats or attempts to commit suicide
- prior threats to kill the victim
- prior attempts to isolate the victim
- a perpetrator who is unemployed

“Often with friends and family, what they may struggle with is understanding the more subtle signs, and that’s really when we want to start intervening ...”

Marlene Ham

their relationship, but also their children,” Jaffe said. “Sometimes men and women involved in abusive relationships are motivated to change when they realize what the violence is doing to their children who are being traumatized or who are looking to them as role models for their own future relationships.

“Often with friends and family, what they may struggle with is understanding the more subtle signs, and that’s really when we want to start intervening, understanding what control looks like, understanding what financial abuse looks like, understanding stalking,” Ham added. “The more that friends and family learn about these issues, the more they can intervene at a much earlier time to identify with a loved one that something might be going on.”

Ham said the May-Iles inquest, and the inquests into the domestic violence deaths of Gillian Hadley and Lori Dupont – a nurse killed by a colleague and ex-partner – have served to create a greater awareness of warning signs, and how to support women who are experiencing violence.

“There’s more entry points where women can have those conversations, whether that’s at a hospital, different counselling agencies, police or women’s shelters,” she said. “It’s not perfect, and it’s not done in a seamless and consistent way, but the tools and resources are there for those organizations to certainly be aware of what domestic violence and what sexual violence looks like.

“That’s the part we really need to look at to make the system and all of the sub-systems to be a little bit more coordinated and responsive and consistent when women are coming in when they experience violence.”



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