

The two Audreys

Melynda Jarratt

by Melynda Jarrett

When she freely took the stand and under protection of the court admitted she was pregnant when the woman suddenly died. The following is a synthesis of separate trials which followed.

"The evidence gone before... points to murder, and it was not that," Dunlop said. She came and said she was pregnant and asked me if I could help her out. I phoned an abortionist but she said that she already had a lot of abortions. I knew how (to perform an abortion). I said I did, so I performed an abortion.

"When she died, I got a phone call," Mrs. Dunlop continued. "I wasn't sure it was a personal talk. The next afternoon at 2 she came again. I talked to the girl and told her to do it herself. She didn't want to."

Dunlop explained. "She came back at 7:25 and I warned her again. I had a syringe. Nonetheless, at 8 o'clock Dunlop prepared the solution in a catheter which

was inserted into Mrs. Waldron's vagina, and during the operation she asked her twice how she felt." Mrs. Dunlop then asked Waldron a second time how she felt. The reply was "I just smiled. I told her to 'snap out of it.' Then she fainted."

Mrs. Dunlop hurried into another room and got about two ounces of liquor. She rubbed Waldron's wrists and tried to bring her to, "but I knew she was

dead. I hoped somehow by a miracle she would be all right. Then I went back and

tried to phone her friend and roommate Ernest Pittman, who had lived with Mrs. Waldron. He was a post office employee who had been discharged from the navy and was on his way home. He was unaware of Mrs. Dunlop's secret, and got quite a surprise when he later in his panel truck.

At the fact, Pittman described the scene before him that night. He had returned home at 8:15, parking the truck on Metcalf Street. Mrs. Dunlop met him and "was dying upstairs in the bedroom." Going up to the bedroom, he saw the body lying on the floor.

Mrs. Dunlop had taken a fit and fallen back on the bed. He felt Waldron's pulse and tried to phone a doctor but (Dunlop) was so excited she didn't want me to. "I had to take the body away."

Pittman Committed For Trial On Woman's Death

Preliminary Hearings
at Court Opening
April 9

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called how he and Dunlop put the woman's coat, shoes and bandanna on her back and put her in the trunk. He remembered how they drove around the city for about an hour to descend upon the city.

They drove to 5-Mile House, up Cranston Avenue and to Somerset Street and back to the city with the corpse in the back of the truck for about 23 miles to the St. Stephen's Hospital. Still undecided what to do, they turned around again and went out towards

the railway at Spruce Lake, stopped the truck, and took the body out. He sat on the front seat with him, helped him to remove the body from the back. Then he got out and rolled it down into the knoll.

At the front of the truck, in front, and Mrs. Dunlop took it out, passed it to him and they drove to the city sometime after 11 pm, tried to eat but couldn't. Both said they were hungry. On Friday, two CPR sectionmen discovered the frozen body of Mrs. Waldron. On Saturday, Dunlop and Pittman were apprehended by the police.

More Grand Murder Cases

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Dr. J. H. G. MacKenzie, the provincial pathologist told of performing an autopsy on the body of Mrs. Waldron. Her pregnancy was about six to eight weeks advanced and that damage had been

done to the womb, the placenta had been loosened at one place. There was a slight

amount of blood in the abdominal cavity, the lungs were congested with blood, and in the heart was a mixture of air and blood. He claimed the cause of death was an "air embolus". He explained that air had no place in the heart, and had got there by way of a uterine vein.

Upon questioning from Pittman's defense lawyer, Kenneth P. Lawton, Dr. MacKeen had admitted that the loosening of the placenta, which had admitted air to the veins and caused death could have been caused by a fit, but the gaping of the outer genital organs was not consistent with the injury having been caused by a fit.

The veins of the uterus are very dilated in pregnancy, the doctor explained to the jury, and if an instrument is introduced into the womb causing an injury, air easily gets into the veins and reaches the heart. In such cases, death is a matter of a few minutes. This explains why Mrs. Waldron began to feel faint and died short after.

In defense of Pittman

Kenneth P. Lawton, counsel for Mr. Pittman, recommended at the May 8 session that Pittman be given a light sentence. Lawton said there was considerable doubt Pittman knew Dunlop had caused the death of Mrs. Waldron, and that he had committed no crime in removing the body, which they left where it would be easily found.

He emphasized the accused (Pittman) wanted to call a doctor, and said he only consented to assist in removing the body to leave it near Waldron's home. He reminded the jurors that the accused was entitled to the benefit of the doubt existing on any of the points of the indictment of manslaughter set forth towards Mrs. Dunlop.

The all-male jury agreed, and recommended mercy for Pittman. The jury cited their belief the accused was "an unfortunate victim of circumstances and in view of the time he has already served in jail and his service to his country we therefore unanimously recommend that the utmost leniency be shown him." Pittman was thus given one year in the county jail for being an accessory.

Pittman Convicted On Accessory Count, Gets Year In Jail

The New
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Compared to Pittman's light sentence, Dunlop was not so fortunate. Having failed to convince judge and jury that she had not killed Waldron, her lawyer George Clark made a final plea for mercy. The plea fell on deaf ears and she was sentenced to six years in the penitentiary. Dunlop faded into anonymity after her release and cannot be located for comment on the case. Pittman, also cannot be located.

Looking back now

Speaking on the basis of anonymity, a contemporary of Dunlop's who remembers the case very clearly believes she "didn't get a break" from the judge and jury who heard her case.

"Oh she was guilty, no doubt about that, but she was no professional!" the person said. "She was a nice girl, married with a husband overseas in the service. This was probably just something she came to do out of necessity."

According to the source, there were two or three similar cases in the province at the time when women accused of performing abortions got off lightly. Calling her long sentence "cruel and unusual punishment" the person suggested it was predetermined by the religious and cultural background of the French Roman Catholic judge who over saw the case, Justice A.T. LeBlanc.

"Dunlop was very unfortunate to have that judge. If you could read the court records you would see that he was very direct in his convictions." (Unfortunately, the original court records were destroyed in a fire in 1956 and a vast wealth of information about the case is lost forever.)

Not only the judge, but prevailing attitudes towards abortion and sexuality predetermined that Dunlop would receive a heavy sentence, the source claimed. "It was a time when attitudes towards illegitimate children and abortions were very backwards."

Making matters more difficult for women "in trouble" was the unavailability of legal abortions. "I was born in a time when fetus' were flushed down toilets. A poor woman simply did not have access to abortions. I suppose the richer women with connections may have gone to their private doctors and had the operations, but it wasn't spoken about." Illegal abortions were done in secret, the source concluded.

Audrey Waldron's story provides an interesting contrast with which to look at last year's Supreme Court decision in the Chantal Daigle case, says Arlene Glencross, President of the New Brunswick Chapter of the Canadian Abortion Rights Action League (CARAL). "Unlike Daigle, whose private life has been splashed over every newspaper in this country, we know few facts about her. All we know is that she wanted an abortion, and wasn't going to let anything get in her way of obtaining one."

Kit Holmewood, National President of CARAL, adds that Chantal Daigle "is an example of what women will do when politicians and judges put legal roadblocks in front of them preventing them from having an abortion. Once a woman has made the decision to have an abortion, and when it is in the best interests of her health, she will get an abortion whether it's illegal or legal."

But unlike Daigle, Audrey Waldron didn't have the choice of the hospital, clinic or even a hurried trip to Boston. "When Waldron sought an abortion, it was illegal, risky and dangerous," Glencross explains. "Her needless death forty-three years ago illustrates with tragic finality what lengths women will go to terminate an unwanted pregnancy, and her story serves to confirm that if this country turns back the clock on women's right to safe medical abortions, we will return to the days when women died at the hands of the only alternative they had."

The views expressed here are not necessarily those held by The Brunswickian

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