

The case of the

By Melynda Jarratt

The Chantal Daigle case raises an issue everyone seems to have missed: women have had, and will continue to have abortions for as long as there are unwanted pregnancies. Yet unlike forty, or even twenty-five years ago, it was relatively easy for Daigle to defy the Quebec provincial court injunction which prevented her from obtaining an abortion. Refused access in Canada, she simply fled to Boston where the operation was performed quickly and out of the public eye.

At least Chantal Daigle had an alternative. As the tragic story of Audrey Gertrude Waldron illustrates, the "Boston" alternative simply did not exist forty years ago. Like Chantal Daigle in the summer of 1989, Waldron's story made headlines in the Saint John Telegraph Journal the winter of 1946. . .but for an altogether different reason.

Pregnant and desperate for an abortion, she sought out the only alternative she could find, and died because of it. Her story, gleaned from the pages of the Telegraph Journal and based on interviews with some of her contemporaries, turns back the page on an otherwise forgotten chapter in the history of New Brunswick women.

FROZEN BODY OF YOUNG WOMAN IS FOUND AT SPRUCE LAKE

Manner And Hour When Mrs. Audrey Waldron Lost Her Life Still To Be Determined

POST-MORTEM YET TO BE COMPLETED

The New Brunswick **Telegraph Journal**

They found her frozen body before noon on Friday, January 11, between the main highway and the railroad track at Spruce Lake, outside of Saint John.

Her name was Mrs. Audrey Gertrude Waldron, and she had lain there for nearly 12 hours. Her clothes were dishevelled, there were bloodstains on her underclothes, and the contents of her purse were strewn about her, as though it had been thrown from afar.

At first, the horrified CPR sectionmen who found her body and the RCMP who came to investigate thought they had a classic murder case on their hands. There were tracks in the snow leading from the road to the spot where the body was found. Had there been a fatal struggle? Had the woman been killed in anger or left there in the freezing winter night to die of the cold?

Many questions surfaced as the RCMP tried to come up with some clues to the death of Waldron, a 25 year-old divorcee and mother of one. Friends of the woman claimed she has been last seen on Thursday night, January 10. Her father, Mr. Stanley of Adelaide St., recalled that he last saw Audrey Waldron alive about 7:30 pm Thursday night, when she put aside some crocheting she was doing and said she was going out for a while to visit a girlfriend. He remembered that she "seemed perfectly alright" that evening.

Because the body was found at Spruce Lake, outside the city limits, the RCMP were called in to investigate. Normally, the Saint John city police would not get involved unless the crime had occurred within the city.

But as the tragic series of events leading up to the discovery of Mrs. Waldron's body began to unfold, the city police were soon called in. The woman had indeed died in the city, on Durham Street in the city's north end.

She died on a bed in the home of a local woman, Mrs. Audrey Delia Dunlop, a striking 23 year-old whose husband was overseas with the Canadian forces. Mrs. Dunlop had a secret very few people knew about - she knew how to perform illegal abortions. Mrs. Waldron also had a secret - she was eight weeks pregnant.

2 HELD AS MATERIAL WITNESSES

The New Brunswick **Telegraph Journal**

Young Woman's Death Now Said The Result Of Illegal Operation

It took until Saturday morning for police to follow the path of clues to Audrey Dunlop, and her alleged "accomplice" Ernest Walter Pittman, Dunlop's friend and roommate. Both were called in as material witnesses for an inquest to be held the following Monday morning.

At the inquest, the provincial pathologist Dr. R.A.H. MacKeen, read the results of the postmortem which indicated Mrs. Waldron likely died from an attempted abortion.

Accused In Death Of Young Woman



Mrs. Dunlop surprised those present when she freely took the stand and underpinned her story. She had started to perform an abortion on Mrs. Waldron when the woman suddenly died. She told the inquest and the three separate trials which followed.

"The reason I wish to testify is that all the evidence gone before. . . points to me," Mrs. Dunlop said. "I met (Waldron) in August (1945). She came and said she was pregnant and I said 'no' but that I could contact a party who could. I phoned an abortionist but he was not available. I saw her once more on the street after that."

"Then on Wednesday, the day before she died, I got a phone call," Mrs. Dunlop said. "I explained the ins and outs of an abortion and told her to do it herself. She didn't come back."

"I said to come back at 7:30," Mrs. Dunlop explained. "She came back at 7:30. I had a premonition that something was wrong." Nonetheless, at 8 o'clock Dunlop prepared to perform the abortion.

Mrs. Dunlop then inserted the catheter into Mrs. Waldron's vagina, and during the operation she felt "The first time she said 'fine'." Mrs. Dunlop then asked Waldron a question. "Was she kind of faint?" "I asked her again. She just smiled. I told her to 'snap out of it'."

Realizing the gravity of the situation, Mrs. Dunlop hurried into another room to put in Waldron's mouth. To no avail, she rubbed Waldron's wrists and tried to revive her but couldn't.

"I then went out into the kitchen and hoped somehow by a miracle she would revive but couldn't."

Afraid of what might happen, Dunlop tried to phone her friend and roommate Mrs. Pittman at Durham Street since October. Pittman was a post office employee who had been working on his parcel post delivery route. He was unaware of Mrs. Dunlop's activities when he arrived at the apartment minutes later in his panel truck.

Charged with being an accessory after the fact, Pittman described the scene before he returned home to Durham Street after supper at about 8:15, parking the truck on Metcalf Street. "I was very excited." She told him of "a woman dying upstairs in the bedroom." Going into the bedroom, he found a woman on the bed, with her feet on the floor.

He said Mrs. Dunlop told him the woman had taken a fit and fallen back on the floor. He tried to revive her but she was dead. "I wanted to phone a doctor but (Dunlop) was afraid. Instead, Pittman agreed to help Dunlop take the body away."

Mrs. Dunlop, Pittman Commit In Woman's Death

Sent Up For Trial As Preliminary Hearings Conclude; To Face Circuit Court Opening Here On April 9

The New Brunswick

In the hushed courtroom Pittman recalled how he and Dunlop put the woman's lifeless body and carried it out the back door to the truck. He remembered how they waited for the pitch black of night to descend upon the city.

Pittman said they went out to Three-Mile House, up Cranston Avenue and on to Adelaide. The couple continued to drive with the corpse in the back of the truck for a while and back as far as the Gault Road. Still undecided what to do, they turned onto the St. Stephen Highway.

Pittman described how they crossed the railway at Spruce Lake, stopped the truck, and Mrs. Dunlop, who had been in the front seat with him, helped him to remove the body from the truck and roll it down into the knoll.

Waldron's purse had been on the floor of the truck, in front, and Mrs. Dunlop threw it towards the body. They returned to the city sometime after 11 pm, tried to sleep but couldn't. The next morning, Friday, two CPR sectionmen discovered the body and immediately notified the RCMP. By Saturday, Dunlop and Pittman were arrested.

Evidence Before Grand Jury Today In Murder And Manslaughter Cases

The New Brunswick

In his testimony before the grand jury, the provincial pathologist told of performing a postmortem on Mrs. Waldron on January 11. He said pregnancy was about six to eight weeks advanced and the placenta had been loosened.

The vagina was "gaping," and in the womb, the placenta had been loosened.