

# Vickers guilty of brutal Warkworth murder

'I fear you have killed us all,' says grieving sister

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OSHAWA -- Marc Vickers has been found guilty of first-degree murder in the brutal killing of Michelle Barnoski, a crime that shocked Warkworth with its ferocity and brazenness.

A jury delivered the verdict late in the afternoon Saturday, on their fourth day of deliberations.

The verdict marked the culmination of a tense wait for relatives of the slain woman.

They delivered emotional victim impact statements, speaking directly to the man they say could have stopped the murder of their beloved "Mimi," but did not.

"You have not only murdered Michelle," said Linda Epstein, Ms. Barnoski's sister, "I fear you have killed us all."

The lanky Mr. Vickers, 36, betrayed little reaction when the verdict was announced shortly after 4 p.m. at the Oshawa courthouse.

He quivered slightly, clenched and unclenched his hands, and exhaled. He remained silent, as he has throughout this trial, during which no evidence was called by the defence.

Behind him sat his mother, staring silently and sadly at the floor.

The verdict means the jury accepted the Crown's theory that Mr. Vickers helped plan and conceal the killing of Ms. Barnoski, 33, who was bludgeoned, shot eight times, then bound in blankets and a tarp and buried in a shallow grave in the backyard of Mr. Vickers's Concession Street home.

The jury heard evidence that Ms. Barnoski's son Cody, 14 at the time, likely carried out the execution of his mother.

But Mr. Vickers, the former common-law partner of the slain woman's sister who shared the house with Michelle and Cody, was a full participant and partner in the crime, the Crown alleged.

Cody was convicted of first-degree murder after a sensational trial last year in Peterborough. Mr. Vickers's trial was

held in Oshawa, where potential jurors had less exposure to reports of the murder and Cody's trial.

During the trial, which began in early October, prosecutors David Thompson and Nancy Rae presented evidence they said proved Mr. Vickers had planned to get away with murder.

Court heard that prior to the killing on May 27, 2008, Mr. Vickers had quit his job and planned to move away from Warkworth and had disposed of a .22 calibre rifle at a gun shop.

The Crown said that move was a ruse: Mr. Vickers actually had two rifles.

The .22 used in the murder had been given to him by Ms. Barnoski's father and Mr. Vickers kept that gun.

**"I want you to know I have closed my heart and my door to you forever."**  
Marianne Pelletier

He taught Cody to load and shoot it, jurors heard.

And neighbours said that days prior to the murder, they had seen Cody and Mr. Vickers digging at night in the yard, an odd sight one took to be "midnight gardening" -- growing marijuana.

Mr. Vickers admitted helping bury Ms. Barnoski and cleaning up the house -- he and Cody did such a thorough job that high-tech forensic testing failed to find traces of blood -- and ditching Ms. Barnoski's car in a field outside the village.

He and Cody cooked up a story that Ms. Barnoski had argued with her son -- a regular occurrence -- and stormed out of the house, never to be heard from again.

And Mr. Vickers provided police investigating Ms. Barnoski's disappearance with a phony alibi, saying he'd been in Brampton the night of May 27.

But when an OPP detective confronted Mr. Vickers about the alibi, he collapsed -- visibly -- and began providing details about what had really happened.

Sobbing and slumped in a chair, he told police what had happened -- grudgingly at first -- always stressing that Cody had committed a sudden, savage killing and then ordered him to assist with the aftermath.

"Do it," he quoted the boy as saying, "or you're next."

Ms. Barnoski's body was recovered June 12, 2008, after Mr. Vickers told police where to find her.

Mr. Vickers was originally charged with being an accessory after the fact to murder but as police continued to investigate his role, the charge was upgraded to second-degree murder, then first-degree.

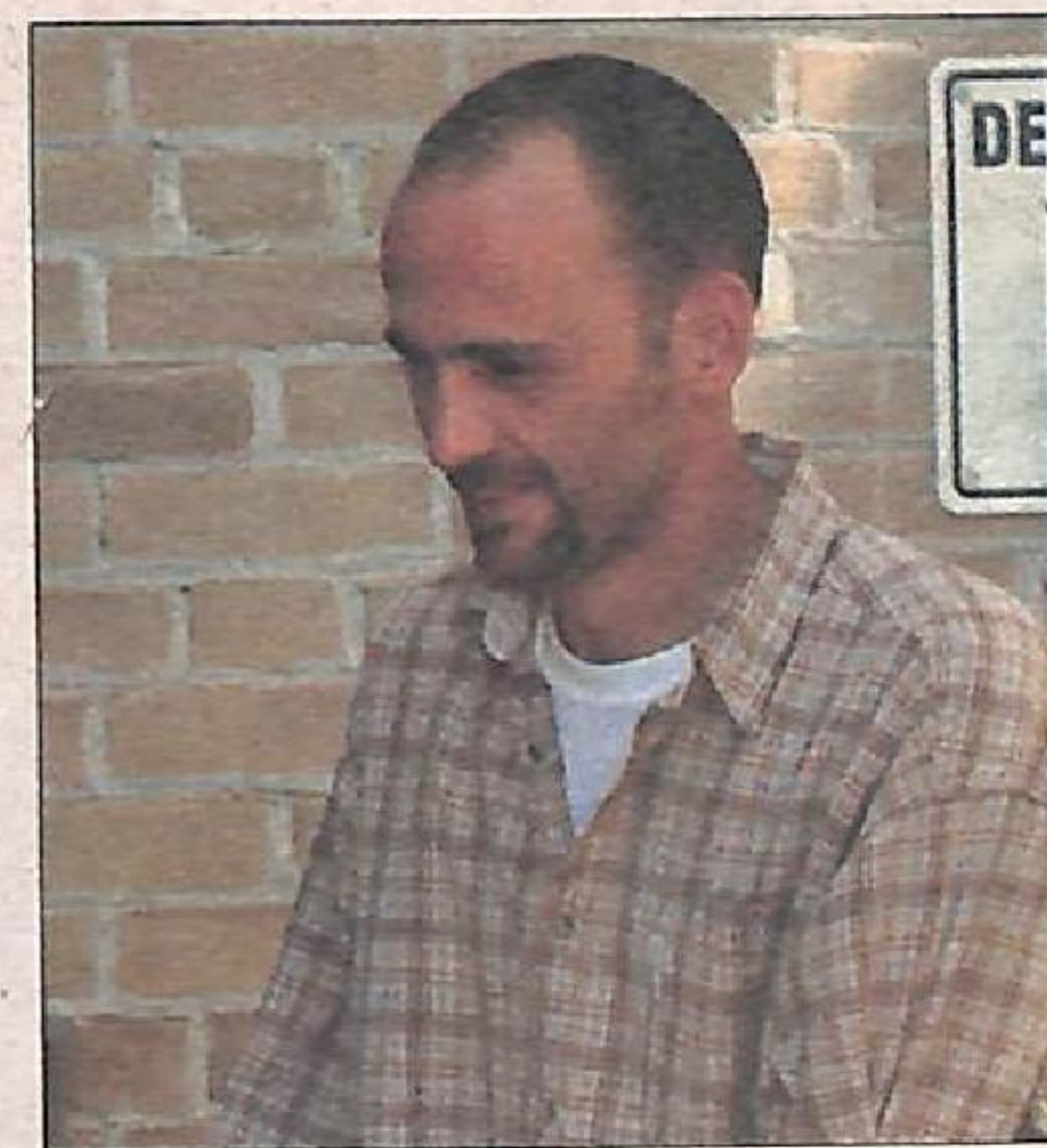
The conviction carries an automatic life sentence with no parole eligibility for 25 years.

He will be formally sentenced by Superior Court Justice Bryan Shaughnessy Dec. 3.

After Saturday's verdict, the judge allowed Ms. Barnoski's loved ones to read their victim impact statements into the record.

They were expressions of raw emotion, telling of the pain over Ms. Barnoski's violent death and the betrayal dealt them by Mr. Vickers, a shy and damaged man who had been welcomed into their family during his relationship with Ms. Barnoski's sister, Nina.

"You crushed me, Marc," said Ms. Bar-



MARC VICKERS

noski's mother, Marianne Pelletier, said. "I invited you into the family, giving you the mom's seal of approval."

The frail Ms. Pelletier, moving with the assistance of a walker and breathing from an oxygen tank, grimly condemned Mr. Vickers for deceiving Ms. Barnoski's family after she went missing.

"I want you to know I have closed my heart and my door to you forever," she said, gazing at the man in the prisoner's dock.

"Goodbye, Marc."

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**Deaths**

**COTTER, Betty Lenore.** Peacefully at the Northumberland Hills Hospital on Thursday November 25th, 2010 in her 72nd year. Beloved wife of the late Bruce Cotter. Loving mother of Brad (Nancy) and Brice (Sue). Cherished grandma of Danielle, Chase, Kolton and Chad. Dear mother-in-law of Michelle. Daughter of the late Ellis and Beatrice Isaac and step-daughter of Mary Isaac. Fondly remembered by her step-sister Cathy Geddes (Jim). Lovingly remembered by her foster son Aaron Bedard. Sadly missed by her sister-in-law Patricia Wellwood (Maurice) and their family. Friends are invited to call at the MacCoubrey Funeral Home, 11 King St. W. Colborne on Sunday November 28th, 2010 from 1-4 pm. A funeral service will be held in Colborne United Church on Monday November 29th, 2010 at 11:30 am. Interment in Salem Cemetery. Donations may be made to the Aplastic Anemia and Myelodysplasia Association or Eden United Church. Condolences received at www.MacCoubrey.com.

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**FAMILY FUN**

## Skate with Santa in Colborne Dec. 4

CECILIA NASMITH  
Northumberland Today

COLBORNE — Community Care Colborne invites the little ones to Skate With Santa Dec. 4, from 1 to 4 p.m. at the Keeler Centre.

It's a fun family event, with draws for raffle prizes that include a gingerbread house and gift baskets.

Children will receive a free photo of themselves with Santa, with John Brunke Photography also offering to take 8x10 family photos that day for \$10.

The Keeler Centre is located at 80 Division St., Colborne.

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