

# MYSTERY AT MOUNT NEMO

## DETECTIVE NOT CONVINCED DEATH WAS AN ACCIDENT, WRITES STEPHEN METELSKY



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Column

It was an unseasonably warm day on Nov. 23, 2003, when 911 was notified about a woman who had fallen from Mount Nemo.

The call was placed by the victim's husband, Milorad Polimac, after he walked to a nearby residence to summon help for his wife, Angie Pauls.

Detective Chris Clarke was sitting at his desk in the Burlington investigations office when he got the call. When he arrived at Mount Nemo, 19 firefighters and seven EMS attendants worked in a treacherous area of terrain, attempting to rescue Pauls.

"They were doing an extraction, so I couldn't get to the scene," said Clarke. "It was a rescue and I couldn't see the victim or the scene." It was too dangerous to venture into.

Initially it appeared to be a hiking accident. Regardless, Clarke attempted to establish what caused Pauls to fall 70 feet off Mount Nemo.

The detective's first opportunity to question Polimac occurred at the scene when he saw him in an ambulance. Pauls did not survive and was pronounced dead. Clarke had to deliver the horrendous news.

"I've done a lot of death notifications, and everyone reacts and grieves differently," Clarke recalled.

Still, something about Polimac's reaction to the news of his wife's death seemed unusual to Clarke. The detective made a note of this in his files.

Polimac was asked to attend the police station. At this point, there was no evidence to suggest this was anything but an accident so the detective "treated him as a victim."

However, Clarke had a "gut feeling" that led him to believe something ominous had transpired.

During the interview, Clarke asked Polimac for details. There were no witnesses, and investigators had already noted the cou-



ple of 25 years had ventured past the warning signs and beyond where anyone was allowed to hike. Why?

"Polimac said they were looking over the edge when she saw a deer, slipped and fell," Clarke recalled. Polimac then described how he scaled down the cliff to where his wife had fallen. Clarke remembered Polimac telling him his wife was able to say, "go get help" as she gasped for air.

The detective established (from Polimac) that Angie was still alive after she had fallen.

"Initially, I didn't have any reasons not to believe him," said Clarke.

That would soon change.

The detective started with Halton police in 1995 and left no stone unturned. When he visited Angie's family the next day to speak with them about the tragedy, he asked about their marriage and other possible extenuating issues.

Clarke was greeted with "everything's fine" so he left his number and mentioned to call if anything came up.

The next day, something did. Clarke received a call from one of Angie's relatives.

"We need to talk to you. We think he killed her," were the words Clarke said he heard on the other end of his cellphone. The detective confirmed Polimac had a pregnant girlfriend during his common-law relationship with Angie Pauls. The family also shared that Angie had an extreme fear of heights.

When Clarke called the coroner to request a forensic post-mortem to determine a "criminal cause of death" due to his "strong gut feelings" that this case was a homicide, the detective was faced with a differing point of view. The coroner disagreed with the detective, and due to a lack of tangible evidence, there was nothing to support conducting the forensic examination.

"I'm on this for 10 days

"That blew the investigation wide open. This was a homicide now."

- Detective Chris Clarke

non-stop trying to convince them it's a homicide," Clarke said.

When Clarke notified the Halton police homicide unit, they sent an investigator to work alongside him.

"We started interviewing everybody," Clarke said, once he was officially seconded to the homicide unit. In the meantime, the incident was still classified as an "accident" and Angie Pauls was laid to rest.

The detective began to interview all the fire and EMS personnel who were at the Mount Nemo scene. One EMS attendant had also noted that Polimac appeared "insincere in his grief," Clarke recalled.

After interviewing the 18th firefighter, Clarke felt dejected. None of them had made any notes or had any viable information to provide. His last chance was with the 19th person on the list to interview — the fire captain. At that moment, the alarm bell went off inside the fire station for a call. The captain couldn't

provide any information at that time.

Clarke was almost out the door when he quickly asked, "Anything else you can think of?"

"He covered up her face with a sweatshirt," the captain told Clarke.

"Like they do with dead people?" Clarke astonishingly asked.

"Yes, when people die," the captain confirmed.

Clarke had already been able to establish Polimac was blocked by EMS from returning to the Mount Nemo scene after calling 911. If Angie was truly alive, gasping for air, why would someone cover her face?

"That blew the investigation wide open. This was a homicide now," Clarke said.

Stay tuned for Part 2: Wired for sound.

*Stephen Metelsky is an author, professor, and retired HRPS detective. Twitter @StephenMetelsky. Have a story idea? Reach him at HaltonCrimeConfidential@gmail.com.*