

# Moorby murder was the talk of the town in 1970

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the head and once in the back. She had been raped. The couple's 18-month-old son, Brent, although unharmed, was pinned beneath his mother's lifeless body. She was face down in the hallway. Two years ago, DNA evidence and

the long memory of an OPP criminal investigator, Don MacNeil, linked West to the murders. Moorby's death, described as a callous and cold-blooded murder, left a family paralyzed in grief and a community in the grip of fear. When word spread that the mother of a toddler had been raped and mur-

dered, residents of rural Whitchurch-Stouffville were afraid to go out at night. For the first time in their lives, people locked their doors, while uniformed police officers were seen everywhere. It was the talk of the town, said then-Stouffville Tribune editor Jim Thomas. "It was a real whodunit," said Thomas. "There were all kinds of assumptions."

Thomas arrived on the scene a few hours after the woman's body was found. The sight through the window saddened Thomas. "I saw a rocking horse and a kiddie car. Of course, the toys belonged to the little fellow. It was sad. The property was such a beautiful setting. The house was set back in the woods. It was very secluded."

The Whitchurch Township police were told that the victim was careful about answering her door, said Thomas. "I believe West arrived at the house in (police) uniform," said Thomas.

A crown attorney read details of the crimes into the records, telling the court there was no evidence that West knew

his victims. While both were killed with the same gun, Moorby and Ferguson didn't know West or each other.

Police believe a trusting Moorby opened the door to West, a former captured drifter, thief and eventual killer. Thirteen days later, West knocked on another door. This time in western Ontario, Helen Ferguson was home. Dale Ferguson, then 8, one of her three children, was down with the mumps. Dale told the court that his mother answered the door and then told him a man needed help with a sick child.

After a while, Dale went to check on his mother. He found her on the living room floor. His mother was dead — from one gunshot wound to the head and two to her spinal column. "I'll never forget her expression when I saw her lying on the floor, her eyes half open, in a pool of blood," said Dale, now 39.

During the court proceeding, the bearded West appeared emotionless, declining the judges' offer to make a statement.



RONALD WEST: Man in police sketch admitted Tuesday to killing two nurses, including Doreen Moorby of Gormley in 1970.

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