



"I missed what?"  
 YES, I want to subscribe!  
 ONLY \$9/mth\*

**ASHLEY**  
 FURNITURE INDUSTRIES, INC.  
 Everyday Low Prices  
 555 Shelburne Rd. 865-9911  
 See more furniture selections - Click Here

**TOP STORIES** Wednesday, March 23, 2005  
 Subscribe!

More Top Stories      Top Story Archives for: [Mon](#) [Tue](#) [Wed](#) [Thu](#) [Fri](#) [Sat](#) [Sun](#)

- SECTIONS**
- News Gateway
  - Top Stories
  - Local
  - Sports
  - Business
  - Opinion
  - Living
  - Nation/World
  - Entertainment
  - Health
  - Bride 2005
  - Dating
  - TourismVT.com
  - Classifieds
  - Shopping
  - Careers
  - Real Estate
  - Business Directory

## Killing frightened neighborhood even before suspect was named

By Andy Netzel  
 Free Press Staff Writer

For two weeks, Kerri Bartlett has been nervous about walking alone along Burlington's Manhattan Drive in the Old North End. A woman was killed a few blocks away. She was scared.

Bartlett took precautions any time she went outside, even to see her sister just a half a block away. She would meet her sister halfway so they could see each other's homes as they walked.

That halfway point is in front of a murder suspect's home.

Gerald Tyrone Montgomery lived in the duplex with his wife and children, across the street from H.O. Wheeler Elementary School. Montgomery pleaded not guilty Tuesday to raping, strangling and killing Burlington resident Laura Winterbottom.

Neighbors also learned for the first time Tuesday that Montgomery is a registered sex offender.

Learning her neighbor was in custody brought Bartlett no relief. It only made her more upset.

"I don't like how the police said it wasn't a random act, but it obviously was," she said. She said it is disturbing that she lived down the street from a sex offender and a murder suspect. "He's been walking up the street for two weeks smiling and laughing. How can you be that sick?"

Several people in the neighborhood voiced frustration about the police's handling of the case. Police have not ruled whether the killing was random, but the investigative officer wrote in court documents that he has found no connections between Montgomery and Winterbottom.

Montgomery was well known in the Old North End neighborhood, although few people knew his name. He was just known as "Wisdom" to some. Others said they had received angry phone calls during the past few years from his wife, trying to track down her husband. She would ask for her husband by the names Gerald, Tyrone, Wisdom and Jamal, neighbors said.

**VERMONT RADIOLOGISTS**

State-of-the-art  
 Digital Mammography

Evening &  
 Weekend Hours

[Click Here for Details](#)

**FILENE'S**  
 Wedding Registry

**PET FOOD WAREHOUSE**

Visit Us  
**TODAY!**



©2001 The Burlington Free Press. Use of this site signifies your agreement to the Terms of Service updated December 17, 2002.



Rick Tyler, 20, said Montgomery regularly entered his house without knocking. He lives two doors down from the Montgomerys. Montgomery was still coming in last week, hitting on his wife, staring at his pregnant cousin and making phone calls, Tyler said.

"He was just a creepy guy," Tyler said. "It was getting to the point that I was going to ask him to stay away."

Tyler said the day the news of the killing was on television, Montgomery came in to Tyler's house shortly after the story aired. He ignored the television and tried to pull Tyler aside to talk to him. Tyler snubbed him. A private conversation usually meant Montgomery would try to talk him into doing something illegal, Tyler said.

Krystal Tyler, Rick's wife, said she never would have let him in the house if she had known of his past. Montgomery had been charged with rape. He was convicted of lewd and lascivious conduct in 1996 and of failing to register as a sex offender a couple of years later.

Police would have told Krystal Tyler that she lived near a sex offender only if she mentioned Montgomery by name. Police did not notify the neighborhood ahead of time because the crime Montgomery was convicted of was not severe enough to trigger notification.

"He was in my house," Krystal Tyler said, looking around her kitchen. "My house."

Rick Tyler grew up on Manhattan Drive -- a street lined with older, wood-frame, rented homes, children playing and late-model cars. He said the neighborhood has gone from a quiet, close-knit community to an increasingly scary strip of shady characters.

The neighborhood changed overnight for 79-year-old Claire Prim. She locked herself in her home Tuesday after hearing the news that her neighbor was a murder suspect. The windows were locked. The door was bolted. Even the storm door was secured.

A knock at the door means peering through the blinds. If she doesn't know the person, she doesn't answer the door. Monday, she said, she didn't worry about any of her neighbors.

"I felt like I could leave my door unlocked," she said. "I don't dare do it now. I don't know who is in my neighborhood."

Contact Andy Netzel at 660-1867 or [anetzel@bfp.burlingtonfreepress.com](mailto:anetzel@bfp.burlingtonfreepress.com)

#### Personal safety tips

Trust your instincts. If someone or something doesn't feel right, get away to a public place or attract the attention of other people.

Pay attention to your surroundings.

Travel in groups.

Report suspicious behavior to the police.

Check your car before you get in -- inside, outside and under.

Consider taking a self-defense class.

Minimize the places around your home, apartment or residence hall where a person could hide, such as tall plantings and bushes.

Always lock your doors and windows.

Be wary of people who don't respect your boundaries, even about little things.

Assistance for victims and additional information are available on 24-hour confidential hot lines at:

Women's Rape Crisis Center: 863-1236

Women Helping Battered Women: 658-1996

Or during business hours at:

SafeSpace: 863-0003 or toll-free in Vermont (866) 869-7341; 9 a.m.-9 p.m. Monday, Wednesday and Thursday; 10 a.m.-6 p.m. Tuesday and Friday.

UVM Victim's Advocate: 656-7892; 8 a.m.-4:30 p.m. Monday-Friday.

Source: Women's Rape Crisis Center

[Respond to this story in a Letter to the Editor](#)

Email this news item to:

[Back to index](#)