

PART VI: PROFILING THE KILLER AND IDENTIFYING A SUSPECT

Outward Characteristics

From Part V and elsewhere, a profile of Mrs. Alford's murderer can be constructed. We should look for a person with the following attributes:

1. A man
2. Employed in a day job
3. Right-handed
4. A Fishpond Community resident
5. Known to Mrs. Alford
6. Possessed familiarity with the store
7. No alibi between 4:45 p.m. and 5:30 p.m. the day of the murder
8. Traveling on foot the day of the murder
9. May have stopped at Alford's to purchase Brunswick stew
10. May have cut his right hand committing the murder
11. May have concocted an excuse to hide bloodstains.

Personalities

The person who killed Mrs. Alford entered her grocery the afternoon of the murder with no intent to harm her. Mrs. Alford has been described by a relative as one who never harmed a soul unless it was with her high temper and sharp tongue. Another person referred to her as "feisty." These weren't derogatory comments but descriptions of a strong-willed person not afraid to stand her ground. Mrs. Alford was described by her daughter as "not afraid very much."

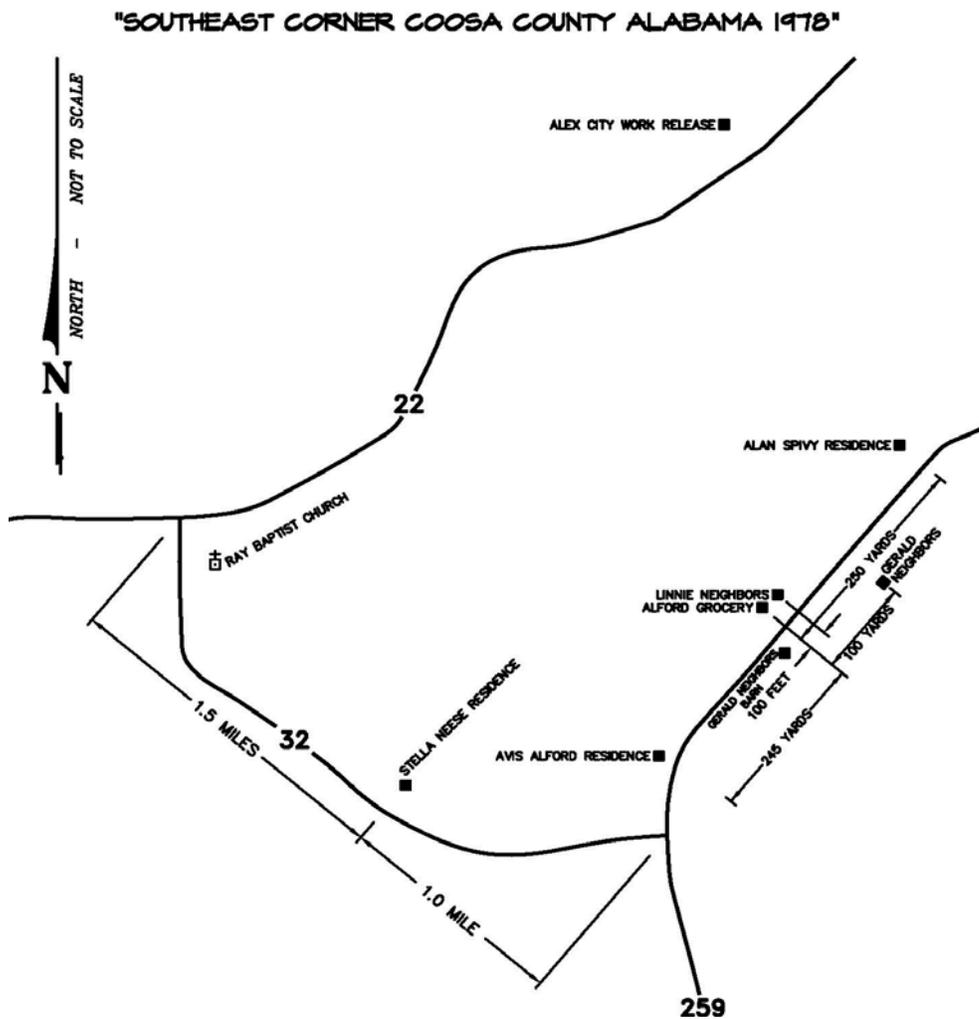
While in Alford's Grocery, the killer may have faced a threat to his personality he could not handle rationally, and the resulting rage cost Mrs. Alford her life. The trigger for the attack may have come from something as simple as Mrs. Alford telling the man who would brutally stab here to death moments later to "Go home to your Mama."

Mrs. Alford's assailant may not be considered a mean or dangerous person to people who know him. In fact, the killer's personality may be quite the opposite. His killing Mrs. Alford may be the only serious act of violence in his life. He may have held a deep-seated hatred toward his mother, and the only noticeable outward expression of his personality disorder would be an awkwardness or inability to relate to females,

especially self-assertive females. Readers may wish to consult Louie Schlesinger's *Sexual Murder: Catathymic and Compulsive Homicides*.

Identifying a suspect

The Fishpond Community is a rural area in sparsely-populated Coosa County, Alabama. A search for suspects began by reviewing residents who lived within about 300 yards or less from Alford's Grocery and therefore likely walking distance. Four residences met the criteria.



Fishpond Community 1978

1. Linnie Neighbors lived next door to the store. Because she was an eighty-five year old widow, she is an unlikely suspect and was seen at her son's house by Gene Harris as soon as one minute before he entered Alford's Grocery.
2. Mrs. Alford and her husband, Onis, lived 250 yards down the highway from the store. Onis suffered from acute emphysema and required oxygen. He lacked the stamina to commit the crime.
3. Alan Spivey and his wife lived about 250 yards up the highway from the store. Minutes before Harris walked into Alford's Grocery he spoke with Alan Spivey, who was sitting in his front yard reading the afternoon newspaper.
4. Gerald Neighbors, his wife, Wilka, and two small children lived across the highway and 100 yards up from the store. Gerald's property extended from his house down the highway and past Alford's Grocery for some 200 to 300 yards. In 1978 Gerald Neighbors kept cattle on his property. Immediately before stopping at Alford's Grocery, Gene Harris made a quick visit to the home of Gerald and Wilka Neighbors. Harris spoke with Wilka and Linnie Neighbors. Gerald was not at home.

Conversations with Gerald Neighbors

In October 2006 I called Gerald Neighbors by telephone, and we spoke for the first time. Gerald said that on the afternoon of the murder he had walked across his cow pasture to check on some cattle (he had about 15 head) when he heard sirens from the police cars.

Gerald Neighbors said that Deputy Joe Neighbors was Gerald's second cousin and that the deputy's father and Gerald were first cousins. In this conversation Gerald made the strange comment that since he didn't see anything he was never questioned by a police officer.

Gerald Neighbors and I spoke several times, mostly face-to-face. I soon discovered that whenever I asked anything specific, he remembered only where he was when he heard the police sirens.

Gerald Neighbors has no alibi between about 5 p.m. and 5:30 p.m. Linnie Neighbors' statement says she ended her visit with Mrs. Alford at 4:40 to 4:45 p.m., locked her doors and walked to Gerald's house because they ate supper at 5:00 p.m. Gerald confirmed he and his family routinely ate supper at 5 p.m. but for an unknown reason they had not eaten the day of the murder. It's unlikely he left home at suppertime to wander around in his cow pasture. But he left home, and he went to Alford's Grocery.

In the following audio clips, I try to get specific information relating to the murder.

In this clip I ask Gerald Neighbors if he went to Alford's Grocery:



(Click to play)

Gerald Neighbors says he was at Alford's Grocery
The day Mrs. Alford was killed.
GN Clip 4 Sep. 2007 Outside.mp3

Gerald retracted his admission he was at Mrs. Alford's store with an explanation that the crime occurred before he retired. In the next clip Gerald's wife, Wilka, corrected the time he left home and confirms his lack of an alibi.



(Click to play)

Gerald Neighbors left home a few minutes before 5 p.m.
GN Clip 2 Sep. 2007 part 1.mp3

When Gerald left his home he did not walk down the back of his property, he walked down the highway where he would have an open view down the hill to Alford's Grocery. The gate to his cow pasture was directly across the highway from the store.



(Click to play)

Gerald Neighbors walked down the highway from his home to the store.
GN Clip 6 Sep. 2007 Outside.mp3

This Google Map opens on [Fishpond Road](#) (Hwy 259) facing north toward Alexander City. Rotating left, the strip of widened pavement marks the turnoff into where Alford's Grocery stood. Linnie Neighbors lived in the white house north of the store. Directly across the highway from the store Gerald Neighbors' gate opens to his cow lot where the knife was found. Up the highway Gerald Neighbors and his family lived in the first house on the right. Alan Spivey and his wife lived in the next house up the highway, 150 yards past Gerald's and on the left.

The following is another admission he was at the store:



Neighbors would have seen what happened.
GN Clip 5 Sep. 2007 Outside.mp3

(Click to play)

It would have taken about 10 minutes for Mr. Neighbors to walk the 100 yards from his home to the gate across from Alford's plus another 100 yards from his gate to his pasture down the hill. By his own reckoning he leaves 30 minutes of unaccounted time.

The emergency vehicles stopping at Mrs. Alford's store (or maybe his mother's home from his view in the cow pasture) apparently did not alarm Gerald Neighbors.



What Gerald Neighbors did when he heard the police sirens. GN
Clip 3 Sep. 2007 Part 1.mp3

(Click to play)

This analysis concludes Mrs. Alford's murder was unplanned. Nevertheless, if the murderer went to Alford's Grocery he had a reason.

One piece of evidence at the crime scene merits a second look. An overturned can of Castleberry's brand Brunswick stew lay beside the body. The body and stew were found near the front door, but the stew was stocked near the rear of the store. The killer may have come into the store simply to purchase the stew for supper.

Gerald's wife, Wilka, said the family was having hot dogs for supper. Perhaps Gerald went to Alford's to get a can of stew to accompany, or maybe replace, the hot dogs. I asked Gerald and Wilka if they liked Castleberry's Brunswick stew (the audio is available but difficult to understand):

- A Are y'all familiar with the can of stew that was there in the store? When she was found, right beside her was a can of Castleberry brand Brunswick stew.
- G I don't remember anything about that.
- A That was, I guess, about the only thing found in the store.
- W It was out of place?
- A Well, there's a picture showing it.
- W But everything else was still where it was supposed to be?
- A Yes, it was really the only thing out of place, and it was at her feet.
- N I don't remember anything about that.

- A Now the question was, the Brunswick stew was on a shelf near the back of the store, but they found a can right beside the body.
- N I don't remember anything about the stew.
- A Now one of two things likely happened: somebody could have been buying a can of Brunswick stew, or there could have been something started near the back of the store, and she picked up a can of stew and beamed him with it.
- N Yeah, she might have; I really couldn't say for sure.
- A Who buys, do you know who buys that kind of stew?
- N We buy some of it, still.
- W We used to, yeah.
- N That's a good brand.
- W Castleberry's, yeah.
- A Do you like that?
- N It's still a valid brand.
- A This was Castleberry brand.

Gerald Neighbors' activities at the time of the murder should be considered with known events at Alford's Grocery immediately following the murder. Gene Harris entered the store because he saw the back door open. Deputy Neighbors testified that when he arrived, the back door was closed and locked from the inside. Harris said the only vehicle he saw was Mrs. Alford's car parked under the overhang beside the gas pumps.

If Gerald Neighbors did not lock the back door and stage the crime scene as a robbery, we have to consider another person on foot with the attributes of the killer who locked the door and staged the scene. The probability of a second person is remote. The probability that the second person exists but Gerald Neighbors failed to see him is extremely remote.

What a psychic says



Michele and Marcel on a visit to the USA.

During the investigation of this case, the author asked a personal friend with clairvoyant ability, Michele Villeneuve, for insight into the murder. Michele lives in the Gaspé Peninsula of Quebec. Her first language is French. To the author's knowledge she knew nothing of the case and did not know the author was investigating a crime.

When Michele agreed to work on the murder she refused any details of the crime except: the victim's name, the place of the murder, the date and time of the murder, and the person's name if someone had been convicted of the crime. Two weeks passed, and Michele reported what she knew from the perspective of the victim. Michele spoke in French, and her husband, Marcel, translated into English.

Michele questioned if the murder actually took place in a store as she was told because she had the sense of a home and a kitchen. [The back of Alford's Grocery included a stove and sewing machine. Mrs. Alford was known to preserve and freeze vegetables and prepare meals in the store. The day of the murder, Mrs. Parish remembered Mrs. Alford was working on a quilt.]

Tim Davis did not kill Mrs. Alford, Michele said. When the murderer came through the door preceding the attack, he had the appearance of a farmer with a large, dark hat. His appearance may have been symbolic. It was hot, and Mrs. Alford's clothing was sleeveless. Mrs. Alford knew the man and spoke to him. He was angry and spoke bad words to her. He hit her in the face and knocked her down. At some time her clothing was off, and he sexually assaulted her. She was lying face-down; he got behind her, grabbed her hair and pulled her head back, possibly breaking her neck. He beat her in the back, and she lost consciousness.

Michele said a child came into the store immediately after the murder, and the killer hid behind a door.

Many skeptics scoff at clairvoyance, saying if it were real the person with the so-called "gift" would provide a name. Some say it has never been done. Michele said when the murderer first walked through the door, Mrs. Alford looked up and spoke to someone she knew, saying, "Hi, Gerald."

Gerald Neighbors' 10 year old son, Clay, was on foot in the vicinity of Alford's Grocery the afternoon of the murder. I mention this because Michele said a child came into the store immediately following the murder. Clay Neighbors declined my request for an interview.

The most amazing part of the investigation is not that Gerald Neighbors is finally named as a suspect. It is that Gerald Neighbors was *never* named a suspect. The reason he was never investigated is explained in Part VII.

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