

## SUSPECT DESCRIBES RAPING, CURSING, KILLING -- 11 TIMES

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Once he started, confessed serial killer **Benjamin** (Tony) **Atkins** couldn't stop.

For 12 hours, **Atkins** poured out to police the gruesome details of how hatred for women drove him to rape and strangle 11 of them in Detroit and Highland Park.

"I killed all 11 of them so I didn't have to worry about them pressing charges," he said in confessions made available to the Free Press.

Again and again, **Atkins** described how he simultaneously choked and raped, choked and raped a woman out of sheer hatred.

"I never really planned to kill her," **Atkins** said of a woman later identified as Juanita Hardy, 23, who was killed at the abandoned Monterey Motel.

"After raping her, having sex and hating her for being a woman, I had the desire to kill her for being a woman. I just wanted to hate her and cause her harm."

In his Aug. 21 confession about Hardy's killing to Detroit Homicide Detective Ronald Sanders, **Atkins**, 24, said that one night shortly after Christmas "about 3 a.m. . . I decided to take a walk. I saw a prostitute walking in the snow."

He offered her crack cocaine, and led her alongside the Monterey Motel. He pushed her inside a bathroom window, put his hand over her mouth, and forced her to walk across the rubble-strewn courtyard and up a flight of stairs into one room, where he threw her on a bed.

Then, **Atkins** said, "I choked her until there was no fight left in her."

But he didn't kill her. Using what he'd read in a book on the respiratory system, he checked her vital signs. Then he undressed her, tied her hands behind her back, and began choking and raping her. "I kept choking her until she was lifeless . . . I kept calling her bitches and whores. 'You bitch, you whore.' "

Asked if he had killed and raped others, **Atkins** said "Yes, women, at least nine more, 10 altogether in Detroit and Highland Park."

After the first confession, the rest came pouring out as **Atkins** wolfed down five cheeseburgers, investigators said.

**Atkins** talked after being picked up by State Police Detective Royce Alston, who had spent days and nights driving through the streets in and around the 1.4-mile stretch of Woodward Avenue where nine women's bodies had been found strangled since mid-December.

Alston was accompanied by a woman who told police she had survived being raped and attacked by **Atkins** last fall. It was after she escaped that he began to kill, although he didn't consciously plan it, he said.

It happened for the first time in the fall of 1991, about 11 p.m. "I saw an older lady, about 40," **Atkins** said, as he walked down a Woodward side street.

"I was looking for a place to sleep. As I walked past this abandoned house, this woman walked up and asked me, 'What's up?'"

"I told her I was looking for someone, and she said, 'You found me.' "

**Atkins** gave this account:

They went into the abandoned building, and he asked her if she wanted to smoke crack first or have sex first. She told him she preferred to smoke the crack. They did, and she then tried to leave without having sex. She told him: "I'm not a good bitch; I'm too old."

After they smoked more crack, he said, she started to walk out; **Atkins** was enraged, and began to choke and curse at her. When she passed out, he dragged her upstairs to a porch, undressed her, and raped and cursed her.

When he realized she was dead, "I left her there, uncovered and everything . . . I was scared because I had never killed anyone before. True enough, I choked her, but I didn't know she had died until she didn't move."

When he checked on the building months later, he saw that it had been torn down. On Jan. 3, a wrecker's bulldozer hit the corpse at 74 Kenilworth in Detroit. It took four months for police to identify it as that of Patricia Cannon George, 36, of Detroit.

Meanwhile, **Atkins** said, he killed 10 more women.

He told detectives that he had trouble sleeping after the killings, and that all of the women have "visited" him in nightmares.

In a confession to Detroit homicide Detective Lee Caudill, **Atkins** said he strangled a third woman late last year near where he was living in Highland Park.

He said they shared some crack in the cavernous, darkened basement at 170 Elmhurst St., then he choked her as she struggled for 10 minutes. When she passed out, he stripped her, stuffed a sock in her mouth, dragged her between two poles, and tied her hands behind her back and her legs to two poles.

As the woman, later identified as Debbie Ann Friday, 31, started to wake, gasping for air, **Atkins** said, he repeatedly raped and choked her. After he was done, he said, "I got up and choked her to

make sure she was dead."

A 30th District Court judge Friday ordered **Atkins** tested for mental competency to stand trial.

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