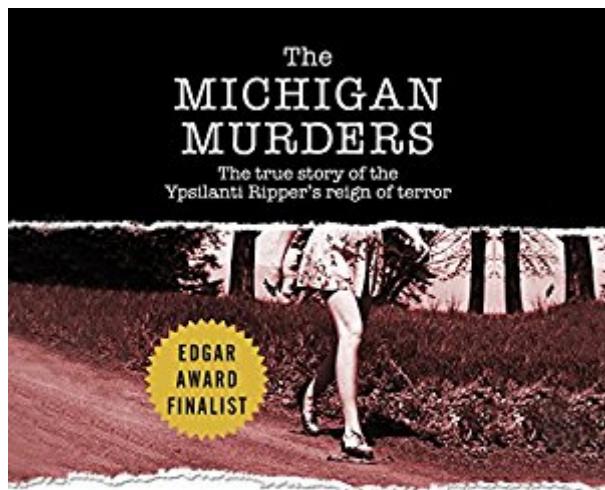


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# The Michigan Murders: The True Story Of The Ypsilanti Ripper's Reign Of Terror



**EDWARD KEYES**  
Coauthor of *The French Connection*



## **Synopsis**

In 1967, during the time of peace, free love, and hitchhiking, 19-year-old Mary Terese Fleszar was last seen walking home to her apartment in Ypsilanti, Michigan. One month later, her naked body stabbed over 30 times and missing both feet and a forearm was discovered on an abandoned farm. A year later, the body of 20-year-old Joan Schell was found, similarly violated. Over the next two years, five more bodies of female students were uncovered around the area. In the wake of these murders, southeastern Michigan was terrorized by something it had never experienced before: a serial killer. But after multiple failed investigations, a chance sighting finally led to a suspect: an all-American boy studying elementary education at Eastern Michigan University who wasn't all that he seemed.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

It's been almost 50 years since the Ann Arbor - Ypsilanti area of Southeastern Michigan was rocked by a series of murders, most of them coeds from Eastern Michigan University (Ypsilanti) and the University of Michigan (Ann Arbor). The seven victims, ranging in age from thirteen to twenty-three, were abducted, raped, tortured, and murdered by a killer who used the same m.o. and similar dump sites, although the police were slow to connect the similarities. The killer's primary hunting ground was Michigan's Washtenaw County, although one victim was murdered in California. Edward Keyes, now deceased, spent several years in the early 1970s investigating these murders, and this book won the Edgar Award for Best Fact Crime in 1977. It is a horrific read. I was an undergraduate at the University of Michigan (1966 - 1969) during the killer's rampage (July 9, 1967 - July 23, 1969),

and this was back before the concept of "serial killer" was popularized by former FBI Special agent Robert Ressler in 1974. The six separate police agencies that were working on the murders did not begin to coordinate their efforts, or even see a pattern to the killings until after the discovery of the third victim. In "The Michigan Murders," the author states that: "Identifications of ...the victims, their families and friends; of bystanders, witnesses, suspects; even of the one finally accused and tried...have been disguised." This made his book a bit confusing for me to read, since I knew the actual names of the victims and the killer from the original press coverage of the murders. Recently, the Investigation Discovery Channel broadcast an episode--'A New Kind of Monster' (first aired December 10, 2013)--about these murders that also used the victims' real names. They are: Mary Terese Fleszar (19) - EMU accounting student went missing on July 9, 1967 Joan Elspeth Schell (20) - EMU art student went missing on June 30, 1968 Maralynn Skelton (16) - Romulus High School student went missing on March 24, 1969 Dawn Louise Basom (13) - Ypsilanti school student went missing on April 16, 1969 Alice Elizabeth Kalom (23) - U of M grad student went missing on June 7, 1969 Roxie Ann Phillips (17) - Salinas, California went missing on June 30, 1969 Karen Sue Beineman (18) - EMU student went missing on July 23, 1969 The killer, John Norman Collins was also a student at Eastern Michigan University (EMU) where, according to the author, he met many of his victims. This book delves into the lives of Collins' victims (under those pesky assumed names) and also into their grisly deaths. The police, most especially Washtenaw County Sheriff Harvey do not always come out looking efficient and well-coordinated, although the author bends over backward to be fair. The reader is allowed to judge for himself or herself, after hearing the stories of the 'store mannequin' or Harvey's attempted suborning of witnesses. "The Michigan Murders" takes the reader through the murders, the imprisonment of the killer and his trial. There is even a chapter devoted to Peter Hurkos, the Dutch housepainter, who allegedly manifested psychic powers after recovering from a head injury and coma caused by a fall from a ladder. Two very grumpy policemen were detailed to transport him to various sites connected to the murders. Although Hurkos showed flashes of insight, nothing came of his insertion into the case. This serial killer is still alive and is incarcerated in the Marquette Branch Prison in Michigan's Upper Peninsula, while his victims have mouldered in their graves for almost half a century. I, who lived and went to school among them will never forget them or the evil that was done to them.

A bizarre case with many twists and turns but Keyes masters it all with a deft touch. The pace never slows and that is a huge plus considering the story. Love the way Keyes retains complete mystery for the first half then once the evidence closes in concentrates on the accused. Once again this

case was new to me though not to a lot of Americans no doubt and that probably added to the appeal from this reader but Keyes is a man who knows how to entertain and his intense research pays off in many ways. First class

An excellent well researched true crime drama. Although written forty years ago, it is still fresh. Not clear why the author changed the names of all the principles. (except for the psychic) There is some gruesome detail, but it was a gruesome crime spree. The author, who co-authored The French Connection gives a captivating narrative.

I was 16 years old when the first girl died, living about an hour away from Ann Arbor\Ypsilanti. The next year proceeded as the deaths piled up. Would I apply to The University of Michigan for my undergraduate degree? Happily for me John Norman Collins was captured and sent to prison just before I started as a freshman at U of M. My boyfriend went to Eastern Michigan University. He said that the guys on EMUs football team would laugh and mock "be a Theta, stab your date". This was a terribly frightful time for young women on Southeastern Michigan. This book was a well written exposé of a difficult crime to solve. The author kept the mystery alive page after page.

Interesting to a point but I cannot fathom why this author felt the need to change the names of the accused and his victims. It was also very drawn out and most disappointing that most of the crimes were not solved (not that the author could help that). I spent more time on google after reading the book chasing down the real info.

I was going to grad school at EMU when all this was going on. Interesting to read all about it again. The trial section on hair analysis was way too technical and way too long...flipped through about 20 or so pages.

Very interesting book, I wasn't aware of these murders. I left Ypsilanti Michigan in 1963, at age 18. I lived very near where these murders took place. It's very scary to think of how close I was. I feel very bad for all of these girls & their families.

I was unaware of these murders so this book was interesting. The last part of the book during the trial drug out way too long with a lot of boring testimony about trace evidence.

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