

Kimberly Ann Byrne
November 1, 1970 – December 10, 2000



During the early morning hours of December 10, 2000, 30 year-old Kimberly Ann Byrne was beaten to death in her Cardigan home by her common-law spouse Frederick Francis Sheppard.

Background

Sheppard had been drinking with a friend on Saturday, December 9. Kim and their son, seven year-old Culyer arrived at the friend's place late afternoon. Kim joined the men in drinking while Culyer watched movies. An argument between Kim and Sheppard broke out around 10 – 11 p.m., when he shoved her and grabbed her by the hair. Their friend broke it up and Kim left for home with her son, refusing to let Sheppard in the car. He began to walk the two kilometers home.

The friend called Kim to warn her that Sheppard was very angry and that she should leave. She went back to the friend's place, telling him that she planned to leave Sheppard right after Christmas. Although the friend tried to persuade her to stay for the night, she went home around 2 a.m.

When she got back home Sheppard was there and they began to argue. Culyer witnessed his father giving his mother a bloody nose and kicking her while she was on the floor. Culyer fled to his bedroom where he cried and covered his ears so he would not hear the "thumping and screaming and bad words" his father was saying.

Following the attack, Sheppard left and went to a friend's home looking for liquor. He told his friend that he had beaten Kim and that he planned to go after the man who he thought she was having an affair. He reported that he returned home and found Kim in a pool of blood and not breathing. He said he attempted mouth-to-mouth resuscitation. At 5:42 a.m. he called 911. When the paramedics arrived at 5:55, Kim had no vital signs.

Legal proceedings

Sheppard was charged with second-degree murder. His plea-bargain to the lesser charge of manslaughter sparked public demonstrations of protest. Weekly vigils were held at the courthouse in Charlottetown and over 2,600 Islanders signed petitions asking that Fred Sheppard receive a life sentence with no chance for parole. He was sentenced to 10 years imprisonment in May 2001, with eligibility for parole after three years.

Warning signals

- Sheppard was known in the community and to police as someone who abused alcohol.
- Sheppard threatened to kill the person he thought was having an affair with Kimberly.

Postscript

Following the Sheppard decision, the PEI government held public and private consultations across the province to develop a family violence strategy that was implemented through the Premier's Action Committee on Family Violence. A key component of the strategy is awareness, education and training in the area of domestic violence.

In January 2004 Sheppard was granted 3 day leaves. In July 2004 he was granted day parole. In July 2005 he was caught drinking alcohol (a parole violation) but kept day parole. His parole was revoked in August 2005 when he didn't return to his halfway house. In January 2008 he was given 6 months day parole.

In August 2008, Sheppard was ordered returned to a minimum to medium-security correctional facility in Alberta. The incident that led to this penalty was an altercation that occurred after Sheppard harassed a woman on the street. Police arrived on the scene and told Sheppard to leave the woman alone. Sheppard, who was drinking, yelled at the police and then tried to punch one of the officers in the head.

Notes

As a licensed practical nurse, Kimberly was a member of the PEI Union of Public Sector Employees (UPSE). In December of 2004 family, friends and co-workers constructed a life-sized wooden "silhouette" of Kimberly, through the "Silent Witness" project. This Minnesota project commemorates women who have been killed by their partners or ex-partners. UPSE sponsored Kimberly's silhouette, the first on PEI.

Sources

Sources used are public documents and include PEI Supreme Court transcripts R vs Sheppard (2001); CBC News (2000-2009); Journal-Pioneer and Guardian newspaper reports (2000 –2009); UPSE Silent Witness Project.