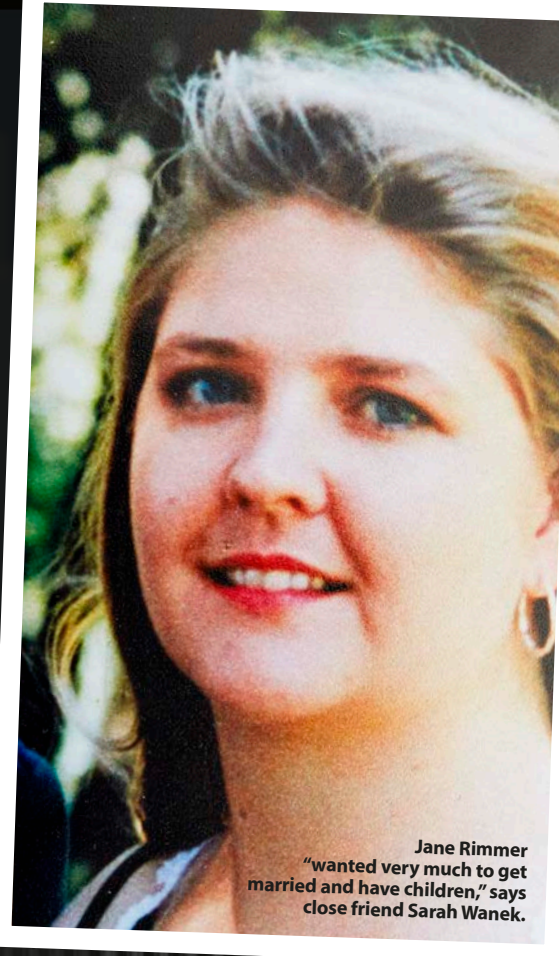


# CLAREMONT SERIAL MURDERS 20 YEARS ON

# 'There's still a killer out there'

Two decades after the murderous spree began, victim Jane Rimmer's mother, Jenny, shares her ongoing heartache—and her hopes for an arrest



Jane Rimmer "wanted very much to get married and have children," says close friend Sarah Wanek.



Following the disappearance of Sarah Spiers following a night out at Claremont's Continental Hotel (in 1996), the Claremont killer's second victim, Jane Rimmer, had expressed concern for her friend Sarah Wanek, who looked similar to the missing teen. "It was very sweet of her," says Wanek.

Sarah Wanek is fascinated by serial killers. Unlike most people, though, her interest isn't stoked by TV's glut of CSI offerings nor Hollywood's fixation with fictional murder. Wanek's self-described "obsession" is underpinned by horrid reality: the unsolved slaughter of her close childhood friend Jane Rimmer in Perth in 1996. "I read serial-killer stories all the time," says Wanek, 43. "It's like I've been constantly trying to figure it all out in my brain for all these years."

So, too, have countless detectives, a panel of international experts who reviewed the case in 2004, investigative reporters and, not least, the families of Jane Rimmer, Sarah Spiers and Ciara Glennon. The three women are victims of a predator known as the Claremont serial killer who, despite Australia's longest-running murder investigation, Taskforce Macro, remains at large. January 26 marks 20 years since the first victim, 18-year-old Spiers, vanished after leaving a nightclub in the upmarket Perth suburb of Claremont with plans to catch a taxi home. Although she was never seen again, the bodies of childcare worker Rimmer, 23, and 27-year-old lawyer Glennon—who disappeared afterwards in June 1996 and March 1997 respectively, also after a night out in Claremont's fashionable entertainment district—were found dumped in bushland. Police have not revealed the cause of death in either case.

For Rimmer's mother, Jenny, two decades hasn't dulled the agony of losing her "beautiful, caring, fun-loving" daughter, whose body was found 40km south of Perth 54 days after she went missing from Claremont's Continental Hotel (now called the Claremont Hotel). "It was just very sad, the home was never the same," Jenny, 73, tells WHO. "At times, it's still quite raw."

Jenny believes Jane's murder contributed to husband Trevor's death from illness eight years ago. "Jane was just his little girl," says Jenny, who herself suffered a debilitating stroke 18 months ago. "I would like to see justice done. I really would like to know what happened, how it happened."



**MISSING BRIDESMAID**  
Rimmer would have been a bridesmaid at the recent wedding of close friend Sarah Wanek (left, on Dec. 3). "It would have been a wonderful thing," says Jane's mother, Jenny (in Perth on Dec. 1).

**"I would really like to know what happened"**

—Jenny Rimmer

A purported breakthrough in the case in October gave some hope to answering those questions. DNA evidence has reportedly emerged linking the unsolved rape of a 17-year-old girl in 1995 to the murder of Glennon, the killer's third known victim. According to WA's *Post* newspaper, the girl was plucked off the street after she left a Claremont nightclub just after midnight on Feb. 12.

A man pulled a hood over her head, bound her with cables and threw her into the back of a van. He drove her to Karrakatta Cemetery where he sexually assaulted her before letting her go. She ran, naked, to a nearby hospital. She never saw his face.

It is believed the DNA of the girl's attacker was linked to DNA found on Glennon's body. "They have [the killer's] DNA now because of two offences," says Terry Dobson, a Perth lawyer and former Macro detective. Says *Post* editor Bret Christian, who has investigated the case since 1996: "If they solve that earlier

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: NEWSPIX; COURTESY OF JENNY RIMMER; JEFF SINGER; JUSTIN GRIFFITHS; COURTESY OF JENNY RIMMER (3)



A Rosalie Primary School photo of Rimmer.

## MEMORIES OF JANE

"Jane loved Abba," Rimmer's close friend Sarah Wanek recalls. "She used to sing into the broom handle." Growing up in Perth together, the pair played incessantly. "We played hairdressers, all the girly things." When Jane became a childcare worker, it fitted with her dream of one day having kids: "She absolutely adored, loved and cherished children."



Rimmer (aged 15) was a devoted West Coast Eagles fan, says her mum.



Rimmer (on holiday in south-west WA aged 19) "lived life," says Wanek. "She liked to have a good time."



"They will not rest on this one," ex-cop Terry Dobson says of investigators (in Wellard, Perth, where Rimmer's body was found in 1996). "You just can't and nor should they."

**HUNTING A KILLER**  
 "WA Police is committed to solving these crimes and the investigation remains open," Supt Peter De La Motte told WHO. "[We are] utilising the latest advancements in forensic science and modern investigative techniques."



Officers revisit the scene in Eglinton, northern Perth, where Ciara Glennon's body was dumped in 1997. "With the passage of time, how do you get a case to trial?" ponders author Debi Marshall.

crime, they will have solved the other three."

Although WA Police have refused to confirm or deny the link, it would show Spiers was not the Claremont killer's first victim. Indeed many, including Dobson, believe Spiers, Rimmer and Glennon are unlikely to be the only kills. Dobson, however, thinks the murderer may be dead, in jail, incapacitated or no longer in WA. "If he is here, something significant has stopped him, like a car accident," observes Dobson. "To kill three people the way he did and not keep doing it? It's impossible. He's a killing machine."

Crime writer Debi Marshall, author of *The Devil's Garden: The Claremont Serial Killings*, agrees. "The coppers keep telling us there are three victims," says Marshall. "Where do they pull this magic figure from? I'm not convinced it was three girls. One thing we know about serial killers is that their MO [modus operandi] can change and often does."

More than 3,000 people have been interviewed by Taskforce Macro and several suspects were named, but never charged. Bradley John Murdoch—who in 2001 murdered British tourist Peter Falconio and attempted to abduct his girlfriend, Joanne Lees, north of Alice Springs—was once a suspect. "I believe police found 12 people who absolutely fitted the profile, but weren't the killer," says Christian.

With no arrest after 20 years WA Police have come in for criticism, including for withholding until 2008 footage of Rimmer exchanging a greeting with an unknown man outside the Continental the night she disappeared. The vision shows her leaning against a pole and the man approaching her before the rotating vision shows another angle

of the hotel. When the vision returns, Jane is gone. "I wonder, had she possibly seen someone who had caught her eye?" ponders her friend Sarah Wanek, now a pregnant mother of two who lives in San Francisco with her American husband. "Or was she waiting for someone to say, 'Hey, let's go and have a drink inside?' I do know that having a few drinks would have given her a lot of Dutch courage and probably lowered her inhibitions." Early in their investigations, police showed the vision to Wanek: "I did know the Claremont locals, but I didn't recognise that man."

Many, including Jenny, believe the footage should have been made public earlier by WA Police, who declined WHO's request for an interview (see the statement in the circle above). "Right from the start the police held back a lot of really good information," says editor Christian. "Had they instead embraced the community and said, 'Please, help us,' in a realistic way while people's memories and the crime scenes were still fresh, they could have uncovered another piece of the jigsaw."

**"If they got someone at least it would all be over"**

—Jenny Rimmer

Whatever the 20th year of Taskforce Macro brings, one thing remains a constant for the friends and family of Jane Rimmer. Every year on her birthday they visit her grave with a bottle of her favourite sparkling wine, Carrington Blush. They pour a glass each and one for Jane, which they tip on her plaque. Beyond that, there is no cause for celebration. "At least if they got someone it would all be over," Jenny Rimmer muses. "It's not going to bring her or any of them back, but it would mean that we could probably get on with things better than we are at the moment."

■ By Melenie Ambrose and Craig Henderson

## HOW MANY VICTIMS?

"Serial killers can move cities, countries or suburbs," says respected crime author Debi Marshall, who chronicled the Claremont serial murders in a 2007 book. "You have girls missing [in WA] and nobody knows where the bloody hell they are; girls of the night, normal girls ..."

And Marshall isn't the only one who asks, "What happened to Julie Cutler?" The 22-year-old university student disappeared after leaving a Perth Hotel on a June night in 1988. Two days later her car was pulled from the surf at Cottesloe Beach. Cutler hasn't been seen since and is presumed dead.

Years later police reportedly told her family they believed she was the first victim of the Claremont serial killer. Former taskforce cop Terry Dobson suspects the murderer was an itinerant worker and speculates that he could have left victims all over the world. "I always thought he never stayed long enough to get arrested," he says.



Sarah Spiers was the first to disappear.



Ciara Glennon is the last known victim.

FROM TOP LEFT: NEWSPIX (2)