



## ***NEWS RELEASE***

### **UNITED STATES ATTORNEY'S OFFICE WESTERN DISTRICT OF VIRGINIA**

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#### **FEDERAL JURY CONVICTS BRENT K. SIMMONS OF PREMEDITATED MURDER AND INTERSTATE STALKING**

United States Attorney John L. Brownlee and Special Agent in Charge John P. Malone of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives announced today that a federal jury sitting in Abingdon, Virginia, convicted Brent K. Simmons of premeditated murder and interstate stalking of former James Madison University students Ann M. Olson and Keith J. O'Connell. The jury sentenced Brent Simmons to two life sentences to be served consecutive to one another. Simmons will never be released from federal prison.

On October 12, 1996, Ann M. Olsen and Keith J. O'Connell, two students at James Madison University, were murdered while in an apartment in Harrisonburg, Virginia. Both victims had been killed "execution style." Each suffered two 9 mm gunshot wounds to the head, at close range. Officers discovered no signs of a forced entry or a struggle. Cash and valuables were left, in plain view, near the victims. The evidence indicated that Brent K. Simmons hunted down and killed Ann Olsen and Keith O'Connell.

At the time of the homicides, Ann Olson was a 25-year old waitress at Spanky's, a Harrisonburg restaurant. She had come to Harrisonburg from her family home in Wisconsin to attend James Madison University some years before. On the day before her death, Ann had successfully completed a teaching examination.

Keith O'Connell was a 23-year old JMU student who also worked at Spanky's. Keith had been accepted and attended the United States Air Force Academy and was studying business at JMU. Keith's family lives in Long Island, New York. Ann Olson and Keith O'Connell had been dating each other for several months at the time of the homicides.

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In April of 1997, the Commonwealth of Virginia charged Brent Simmons with two counts of capital murder and the illegal use of a firearm during the commission of a crime of violence. The evidence at trial indicated that Simmons, who had been romantically linked to Ms. Olsen, had traveled from Florida to Harrisonburg with the intent to cause harm to Ms. Olsen and Mr. O'Connell. At the conclusion of the Commonwealth's proceedings, the United States reviewed the evidence for possible violations of federal law.

On March 3, 2004, a federal Grand Jury sitting in Charlottesville, Virginia, returned a two-count indictment against Brent K. Simmons. In the federal indictment, Simmons was charged with two counts of using a firearm during the commission of a crime of violence, the interstate stalking of Ann Olson and Keith O'Connell.

This case was prosecuted by United States Attorney John L. Brownlee and Assistant United States Attorney Timothy J. Heaphy. The case was investigated by ATF Special Agent Scott Fairburn and members of the Harrisonburg Police Department.

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