

Psychic's new book explains her work

By Reed Williams
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Noreen Renier, a local psychic, helps law enforcement solve crimes. The Daily Progress/ Rachel Zahumensky

She has had her throat slit, been shot, knifed, stabbed, raped, drowned and strangled. She says she has been inside the minds of murder victims in their final moments.

"I feel their pain, I speak their words, I live their deaths. I see the faces of their murderers, and sometimes I become them," nationally known psychic investigator Noreen Renier writes in her book, "A Mind for Murder." "I don't like to get killed more than two or three times a week - it's just too exhausting."

Renier, who moved away from Central Virginia in the '80s and returned last year, says she has worked on more than 400 homicides and missing-person cases, including high-profile investigations such as the Laci Peterson killing in California. Renier is credited with predicting the assassination attempt on President Reagan, and appears frequently on the Court TV show "Psychic Detectives" and, recently, on NBC.

The Free Union resident seeks to assist desperate family members and police detectives who have run out of clues by performing readings while holding evidence that a victim has touched, such as bloody earrings, shirts or shoes worn by a victim, she says.

Renier started her book nearly 25 years ago. The Penguin Group published it earlier this year.

She said she wrote "A Mind for Murder" so her readers could understand how she works, particularly since so many people, including many of the detectives she works with, are skeptical.

"I wanted to share how I use my ability and the struggles I had in getting where I am now," Renier said. "A lot of the time, they're new and they've never worked with a psychic before. I always have to prove myself every time I start."

Chapter 6 in the book - Rape in a Small Town: The Stocking-Masked Rapist - details Renier's first police case, the 1979 search for a masked serial rapist in Staunton.

She doesn't take credit for catching the rapist, but she gave detectives clues that turned out to be right, reinforcing authorities' theories and easing their minds, according to Ronnie Whisman, an investigator who worked the case.

Renier has offered to help Charlottesville police in their hunt for another serial rapist, one who has been preying on women since at least 1997. She has met with Timothy J. Longo, the city's police chief, but he has not requested her services, she said.

"We had a nice little conversation, but there was no way of knowing whether he was or wasn't interested," she said.

Renier is used to doubters in the law enforcement community. There are plenty of other detractors out there, too. One of them is **Gary P. Posner, founder of the Tampa Bay Skeptics**, a nonprofit group that casts a critical eye on paranormal claims. Posner wrote a review of Renier's book that compliments the writing and calls it an "entertaining adventure."

But he adds: "Noreen Renier's ability to enchant such an array of law-enforcement personnel, some to the point of praising the value of her assistance despite contrary evidence . . . is nothing short of astounding. But as even a tasty meal begs dessert, 'A Mind for Murder' leaves me hungry for a morsel of compelling scientific evidence to substantiate this sort of 'psychic' power as fact rather than fiction."

Renier says, though, that she has received relatively little criticism of her book, which will be sold in airports and bookstores.

"I haven't heard a thing," she says. "Is this the quiet before the storm? Uh-oh."

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