

Basic Training*

Did you know Teresa Neves,
Jennifer Wright, Marilyn Griffin,
Or perhaps Andrea Floyd?
Surely you would have had you lived
in Fayetteville, North Carolina,
in the year two thousand two.
One of them might have occupied
the house down the road, or lived
in an apartment across the street,
perhaps engaged you in conversation
at the supermarket or on the sidewalk.

Perhaps.

But everyone who lived
in Fayetteville read the papers,
or saw reports on TV after Teresa
was stabbed seventy times
on June 11, when Jennifer
was strangled on June 29, and
then, in July, because Marilyn
and Andrea were both
shot in the head.

No, there was no serial killer,
on the loose during June and July
of 2002 in Fayetteville,
North Carolina. Instead each
of these young women
was murdered by her own husband—
military men of Ft. Bragg, trained
very precisely, in the art of killing:
of killing as problem-solving.

Such a man, it is well documented,
is far more likely to use a weapon
in a domestic dispute, to strangle
his spouse until she is unconscious,
or else simply terrorize her
by talking of the finesse by which
he is able to kill bare-handed.

Thus four men returned
after tours of duty in Afghanistan.
And when each felt
he had a problem on his hands,
went about resolving it
the way a soldier can.

Of course, in this,
the 21st century,
a more enlightened Pentagon
has a program to deal
with such difficulties: Whenever
a soldier's wife feels threatened,
flees to the shelter in Fayetteville,
the U.S. Army generously donates
ten dollars per day.

Steve Bloom
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