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Be it ever so humble, rambler is finally chic

By HANNAI COWTIN

Maybe it’s the lack of hills, the run-of-the-mill shape, the austere lines. Or maybe it’s simply the sheer number of low-slung houses, blanketing the suburban landscape like hardly ground cover.

But something about rambler often stirs surprise and even skepticism when presented with the word “historic.”

Some Twin Cities suburbs have been working in recent years to raise the profile of these homes that don’t typically think of preservation in mind.

“People that own those houses don’t typically think of them as historic,” said Becky Woy, a National Register architectural historian in the State Historic Preservation Office. “Still, she added, ‘It’s hard to deny the importance of the largest buildi-

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Sexual assault cases in the Twin Cities and across Minnesota are being investigated poorly or not at all, leaving many women feeling betrayed by a system they once trusted.
Brooke Morath barely saw the man who attacked her. He lunged from the early dark one morning in Minneapolis, blinding her with pepper spray as she scraped snow off her car. Then he tackled her face down onto the frozen ground and raped her.

Bleeding, her eyes burning, Morath staggered to a friend’s house and banged on a window for help, pleading for someone to call 911.

Over the next few hours, the University of Minnesota-premed student did everything she could to help investigators. She went to the hospital for a sexual assault exam. To preserve possible evidence, she didn’t shower or wash her clothing. When police officers arrived, she answered their questions calmly. An investigator assured Morath that her case was his top priority.

Within days, however, she began to have doubts. She discovered that the police crime alert for her rape listed an inaccurate address. And that officers had missed three nearby businesses while canvassing the neighborhood for surveillance video. Eventually, she said, police stopped returning her calls.

That was two years ago.

Today, Morath has lost hope that she will ever see the man who raped her, and she worries that he is still preying on other young women.

“It’s terrifying, humilitating and disorienting,” she said. “It shouldn’t be this hard for a victim.”

It often is. Each year in Minnesota, more than 2,000 women report being raped or sexually assaulted. Hundreds of those women discover a gap in justice: state law in a recent two-year period, reveals chronic errors and investiga- tive failings by Minnesota’s largest law enforcement agencies, including those in Minneapolis, St. Paul and across the state.

In half the cases, police failed to interview potential witnesses. In about one-third of the cases, records show police never assigned an investigator. In almost one-quarter of a quarter of the cases, police never assigned an investigator. In some cases, investigators never even met the victim.

Most of the cases—about 70 percent, including violent rapes by strangers—were never forwarded to prosecutors for criminal charges. Overall, fewer than one in 10 reported sexual assaults produced a conviction. A Star Tribune examination of more than 1,000 Minnesota cases revealed that cases were less likely to be prosecuted when fewer than half of the state’s residents reported rapes or sexual assaults.

“Victims see it as a stark betrayal,” Richard Mankewich, a former Minneapolis police detective, wrote in an article about sexual assault investigations in Austin, Texas. “It’s a terrifying, humilitating and disorienting feel. I felt like I wasn’t important at all,” said the Star Tribune’s findings confirmed.

Gove also said law enfor- cements lack the time and money to fully investigate every case. “If homicides were handled this way, people would be appalled,” said retired Minneapolis police detective Nate Gove, director of the state board that licenses law enforcement officers.

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“The police never assigned an investigator,” she said. The interview, she added, felt “interrogating and controlled.”
“It’s a terrifying, humiliating and defeating feeling. It shouldn’t be this hard for a victim.”

Brooke Morth • 24
Raped in this parking lot
•••

Donegan, the Texas investigator, agreed. She said the transcript read more like an "investigation" than a victim interview. She singled out one of Carlson’s questions to everyone: "Do you tell the truth or right off? You might be lying to me."

Morath said she had no doubts about the investigation. Carlson told her he had been useful on surveillance videos from the neighborhood, including a from a Target Express she had passed that night. When Morath discovered he was looking at the wrong time stamp, she said, "I’m not sure if they knew my name\r\nfacts one shows a hooded man follow-\nmethod Morath said the investigator's file, police\n\n"That was the last time I heard from Morath in this investigation," she said. Without telling Morath, records show, the Minneapolis police stepped up the Star Tribune's analysis.\n
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Finch said she accepted a ride home from a friend she met at a bar in Chisholm. He took her to an apartment where she says he raped her. She filed a police report, giving the suspect’s name and phone number, but heard nothing for two years. This spring, after the Star Tribune inquired, an officer called her, apologized and said police have reopened her case. ‘I felt like I wasn’t important.’

KA TIE FINCH • 28 • MENTAL HEALTH COUNSELOR

After an evening out, Miyashiro allowed a friend to spend the night at her house in Minneapolis because he was too drunk to drive home. She reported that he raped her and said the man admitted to the rape in a phone call that police recorded at her suggestion. Prosecutors declined to take her case, and she said no one told her until she called her detective. ‘The system is broken.’

MELISSA RABBIT T MIYASHIRO • 34 • MA S SAGE THERAPIST

After she reported being raped by a man she met online, McGowan said a prosecutor asked whether she worked as a sex escort. Another asked why she took a shower after the rape. “I was scared,” she told them. “I didn’t want his body smell on me.” Police reopened her case following inquiries by the Star Tribune. ‘I was just lost in the dark.’

CHERRELLE MCGOWAN • 30 • STAY-AT-HOME MOM

Ortmeier-Clarke reported being raped by a man who came over to watch a movie after they met on a dating app. She said an officer initially said they couldn’t find her rape kit and another detective accused her of acting provocatively. “I wasn’t wearing a short skirt,” she said. “I wasn’t wearing a see-through blouse. And it wouldn’t have mattered. Because I said no.” ‘How do you lose a rape kit?’

HALEIGH ORTMEIER-CLARKE • STUDENT
**Emily Schlacht • victim advocate**

**Nobody teaches you how to be a victim.**

Schacht went to a New Year’s Eve party and woke up 12 hours later in the basement of a man she was dating. She was naked, bloodied and confused and decided that she did not want to talk to the police or anyone else. She was in a state of shock, not knowing what had happened to her.

She still remembers the first time she saw a police officer. He was standing in front of her, and she was afraid. She didn’t know what to say or what to do. She was alone, and she was afraid.

She was always telling people that she was a victim, but no one believed her. She didn’t want to believe it either. She was angry, scared, and confused, and she didn’t know where to go.

She went to the police station, and they asked her if she wanted to press charges. She didn’t want to, but she didn’t know what else to do. She was afraid of the man, and she didn’t know what would happen if she didn’t report it.

She didn’t tell anyone about the attack, and she didn’t feel like she could. She was afraid of the man, and she didn’t want to risk her safety.

She went back to her normal life, but she was never the same. She was haunted by the memories of that night, and she couldn’t get it out of her head.

She knew that she was a victim, but no one believed her. She was alone, and she was scared.

She decided to tell someone about what had happened to her. She told a friend, and she told her therapist. She told everyone she could think of.

She wanted someone to believe her, but no one did. She was alone, and she was scared.

She decided to use her voice to help other women who were in the same situation. She started speaking out, and she started telling her story.

She wanted people to understand what she was going through, and she wanted them to know that it was not her fault. She wanted people to know that it was not her fault.

She wanted people to understand that she was not to blame. She wanted people to understand that she was not to blame.

She wanted people to understand that she was not to blame.

*Emily Schlacht*
Nobody had my back. Nobody protected me.’

Wendy called police in February 2016 to report that her ex-boyfriend broke into her home and raped her. Her case file shows that police never went to her home to collect evidence. The man was never charged, despite previous arrests into her home and raped her. Her case file shows that police never went to her home to collect evidence. The man was never charged, despite previous arrests.

In reporting that story, Star Tribune reporters heard from women who said police failed to investigate other crimes in their communities. The reporters then set out to produce a series of stories about police investigations of sexual assault.

In 2014, the Star Tribune reviewed police reports from Minneapolis police department picked up the case and helped bring her rapist to justice. In reporting that story, Star Tribune reporters heard from several law enforcement officials who said that police investigations of sexual assault incidents should be improved. The reporters then set out to produce a series of stories about police investigations of sexual assault.

The Star Tribune published stories about police investigations of sexual assault in recent years. The reporters also attended a two-day law enforcement conference in New York City that brought together investigators, jurists, women’s advocates and academic researchers. Rape survivors were interviewed in these stories only if they specifically agreed to the use of their names for publication.

In 2014, a University of Minnesota undergraduate named Abby Honold was raped at an off-campus apartment by a fellow student. Minneapolis police arrived on the scene, but abandoned the investigation after a few hours. The man was later convicted of sexual assault. Additional stories will be published periodically through the fall.

In assessing those case files, the reporters relied on investigative guidelines developed by the International Association of Chiefs of Police and an advocacy group called First Violence Against Women International. The reporters also attended a two-day law enforcement conference in New York City that brought together investigators, jurists, women’s advocates and academic researchers. Rape survivors were interviewed in these stories only if they specifically agreed to the use of their names for publication.

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This series, called “Rape and Justice,” was published in the Star Tribune in 2018. The series examined police investigations of sexual assault cases across Minnesota. The series revealed that police investigations of sexual assault incidents were often inadequate. The series also highlighted the need for improvements in police investigations of sexual assault cases.

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Walton said she was raped in this Minneapolis hotel room by a man she met in a bar. She called 911 immediately, went to the hospital for a sexual assault exam, and gave police the suspect’s room number and the frantic text messages that she had sent her boyfriend. She said one of the first questions a police officer asked was why she was out at a bar alone that night.

‘I felt blamed. I felt like [police] didn’t believe me.’
rsuited and terrified, Amber Manfield sat in a hospital room and described her attack to two Minneapolis police officers.

The man she was seeing had been in a rage, choked her, beat her and threatened to kill her. Then he raped her.

Manfield gave the police his address and his name: Keith Eugen Washington. A simple background check would have shown that Washington was a convicted rapist with a long criminal record. And it would have shown that the state had designated him a dangerous sex offender.

Police checked none of that, according to the case file. Mansfield’s case went nowhere.

B

Five months later, Washington was charged with attacking two other women in Minneapolis, plus six other counts. Both he blacked them out and left them lying on the ground.

Only then did Minneapolis police check his background and realize they needed to hear Mansfield’s account.

Three years later, the officer who oversaw the sex crimes unit acknowledged that Mansfield’s case was mishandled.

It was hardly the first time that the police had failed in Minnesota. Public records reviewed by the Star Tribune from 2010 and 2011 show dozens of rape cases in which police failed to investigate suspects even though they had been accused of, charged with or convicted of sexual assault in previous criminal cases—sometimes more than once.

In late 2015, a young woman walked into a police station in Brooklyn Center after meeting on a dating site. Contacted by police, the man threatened to kill her. Then he raped her.

The Minneapolis Police Department is available to provide you with useful information on personal safety. The Minneapolis Police Department may be reached at (612) 673-5752. To report criminal activity by this offender or any other individual, please call 911.
To fight and too frightened to scream. She lay frozen, too injured to move. Eventually they took her to a hospital. She did not file a report, but a week later she went to a therapist for the anxiety and depression that she had battled for years.

After several months, Washington was released from prison. Mansfield said she went into a bedroom and lay down. She could not hear what was going on outside, but she heard him saying, “Wrong time, wrong people.”

Mansfield said she and Washington were standing outside her sister’s apartment in north Minneapolis. She hung out with her counterpart in Brooklyn Park, a ride-sharing car. A Minneapolis police officer arrived. Mansfield and her sister had never seen him before.

In 2000, he was convicted of first-degree assault, robbery and drug possession. Washington demanded to know who they were. Mansfield said she took his call and directed him to a woman in her home, assaulting her while her children watched. Mansfield had her own scrapes with the law. “Wrong place, wrong time, wrong people,” she said. “I wish I had done more.”

She said she knew Washington growing up in north Minneapolis. She hung out with him when she was young and had him arrested a few times for the way police investigate rape.

Hear their stories:

• Get updates:
  • StarTribune.com/deniedjustice
  • Facebook.com/startribune

•••

Mansfield had her own scrapes with the law. She was charged with assaulting two other Minneapolis women a few months later. He is now in prison.

In 2001 and charged in 2004, though those charges were later dismissed. There is no sign in the file that police took any of those cases seriously and possibly drugged and trafficked, after getting off on what she thought was a ride-sharing car. A Minneapolis police detective wrote that she could not remember the victim for an interview and closed the case.

DNA results identified the suspect as a felon from Illinois—a man whose DNA had also turned up in Brooklyn Park. The detective spoke with his counterpart in Brooklyn Park and they agreed to contact one another if there were new developments. Mansfield said she did not recall the case, contact the suspect or try to identify him from the DNA results, if the file shows.

Mansfield’s story is one of many after impulses by Star Tribune, but said they couldn’t find him.

He was a convicted rapist with a long criminal record. But police didn’t check, and the man was charged with assaulting another Minneapolis woman a few months later. He is now in prison.

A few days after the incident with Washington, a traumatized Mansfield drove to her sister’s house, then picked up her daughter from her grandmother. She and her mental health care worker persuaded her to file a police report and go to the hospital.

Wyoming woman saw herself travelling back to 2000 and charged in 2004, though those charges were later dismissed. There is no sign in the file that police took any of those cases seriously and possibly drugged and trafficked, after getting off on what she thought was a ride-sharing car. A Minneapolis police detective wrote that she could not remember the victim for an interview and closed the case.

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“It was more of an emotional feeling of wrongness,” Howes said. She suspected her left driver had come into her apartment and raped her. She called the Roseville police.

Over the next year Howes confronted a stark reality faced by many women who report being raped in Minnesota. They already slight chance of getting justice plummeted if they were drinking. Police are less likely to interview witnesses, assign cases to a detective or forward charges after a prosecutior for possible trial. Criminal charges are based on the belief that consent was lacking — what would happen if he didn't do a "book flip" with the plane he had stolen from Seattle's Magnuson Park?

When cases involving alcohol do come into her apartment and raped her. She suspected her Lyft driver had reached the recognition for a Minneapolis victim who was "mentally impaired, mentally incapacitated or physically helpless" and unable to grant consent. Some prosecutors say the law's wording makes it hard to prove lack of consent.
A smaller percentage of cases involving intoxicated victims is less likely to be fully investigated and prosecuted than cases with a victim who wasn’t intoxicated, according to a Star Tribune analysis of more than 1,000 police reports from around the state.

About one third of the sexual assault cases examined by the Star Tribune involve victims who were drinking or using drugs. Often, the victim has a clear recollection of what occurred, but is adamant that she would not have consented to sex.

“How could I consent if I don’t remember anything?” said Howe.

Howe, reporting being raped by a Lyft driver who took her home after a friend’s wedding in 2016.

She was drunk and had no memory of the incident, but the driver later said in a text that they had sex. Police never questioned him, and prosecutors declined to file charges because a jury might not believe she was “physically helpless” under state law and unable to grant consent.

When a victim is intoxicated, the conviction rate for sex assaults is about half the overall rape rate in Minnesota. When the victim is sober, prosecutors charge about 42 percent of the sex assaults. When a victim is intoxicated, that rate drops to about 23 percent.

“When you were passed out, a couple of men went into your room. She said, ‘I don’t remember anything?’” said Howe.

Police and advocates alike acknowledge that rapists are less likely to be charged with a crime and convicted when the victim is intoxicated. “There’s just unacceptability,” said Rep. Monica Wold, a Maple Lake Republican who sits on the Minnesota House Public Safety Committee, after reviewing the Star Tribune’s findings. “I feel like what I’m looking at are reports getting swept away, and I want to know why.”

Minnesota’s laws on intoxication and consent may be partly to blame for the problem, prosecutors say. A victim must claim her sex was consensual unless the victim testified “physically helpless” and the perpetrator knew it.

But figuratively speaking, the issue is ubiquitous, among law enforcement investigators and society, that makes it easy to doubt the credibility of victims. “I have not met a rape survivor who said, ‘I don’t care about sexual assault or sexual violence,’” said Steven Green, Minneapolis Police Chief Paul Sch尔nd. “The problem becomes all the filters that get applied to that.”

Law enforcement agencies and advocates acknowledge that policies vary among the 500 or so police departments in the state. “If the victim had expressed consent at the time of the incident, the investigator is required to contact the victim and obtain a signed statement,” said Paul Schnell, St. Paul’s police chief, in a July letter. “If investigators, prosecutors and juries handled all reports as seriously as the victim, I think crime rates would be lower.”

Howe, reporting being raped by a Lyft driver who took her home after a friend’s wedding in 2016.

She was drunk and had no memory of the incident, but the driver later said in a text that they had sex. Police never questioned him, and prosecutors declined to file charges because a jury might not believe she was “physically helpless” under state law and unable to grant consent.
I felt it was immediately dismissed the second I brought up ... drinking'

Vanda Kleib was a college freshman drinking with friends at her St. Paul apartment building. After she went to bed, she said three men mucked into her room. She told police she woke her mother, another friend down and a third raped her. Her sexual assault exam produced a DNA match, but the suspect said was the consent. Her case was never charged.

agreed to have sex, even if she was blackout drunk, resembling drunk or had no memory of consenting.

Ramsey County Attorney John Choi said it would be easier to win prosecu- tions if Minnesota law specifically said Wisconsin prohibits sexual contact “with the Minnesota Coalition Against Wisconsin makes it a crime when a vic- tim cannot consent due to “any intoxi- cation or anesthetic substance.” “Wis-consin prohibits sexual contact” with a person who is under the influence of alcohol to a degree which renders that person incapacitated of springing consent,”
The Whitelaw case by Minnesota law means police and prosecutorial work must present evidence cases hard even to gather evidence that would constitute a vic- tim’s account. Yet the belief that just doesn’t work when the victim was drunk can date lose enforcement officials from vigorously investigating those cases, Ger- mans said, making it likely that the rapists will be held accountable.

“When law enforcement sees some- thing, that’s often where a case starts,” said Ida Fordin, a program coordinator with the Minnesota Coalition Against Sexual Assault.

That is borne out in hundreds of cases reviewed by the Star Tribune in Wasco County, a 19-year-old woman said she called the sheriff to report she was sexually assaulted by a friend she was staying with. The dep- uty asked whether she had been drink- ing. She said yes and gave a ticket for an under-consumption offense, records show.

7:30: The woman said.

A 19-year-old woman out drinking with friends told St. Paul police in 2015 that she vomited and drifted in and out of consciousness as she was raped by two men in the group and spoke to the officer that night. The investigation closed the case without contacting the suspect, according to the police report; saying the man “would have reasonably believed she was acting in a consensual manner.”

A Minnesota woman woke up in her bathroom, vomiting. The last memory from the previous night at a downtown bar was accepting a drink from a stranger, who said something about dropping a pill in her glass. A roommate later saw her on the couch at home, with a half-empty beer bottle near her. He moved to the floor after she continued to vomit. When the two women found sexual contact in their apartment, they called police.

The woman provided similar descriptions of the man. So did another friend who had driven the woman and the man home from the bar. When police met with the suspect, he denied being at the bar or with the woman. He said his roommate could vouch for him, and he “would think about” providing a DNA sample, accord- ing to an officer’s report. Records from the 2015 case show that police never collected the suspect’s DNA, attempted witnesses at the bar or tested the victim’s rape kit. Weeks later, police closed the case.

Public Safety Director Todd Miller said it was because the woman didn’t want to go forward. “Sometimes we see cases where a victim is drinking and makes a bad decision and wants to cover it up ... and they say that’s what I did,” Miller said.

Miller said indications that the victim stopped cooperating, or that investigators believed the report was false. The Star Tribune was unable to locate women who described were, however, sexual assaults.

Vanda Kleib had all but given up when a Ramsey County advocate assured her she had the result from her rape exam were inconclusive. She set up a meeting with the lobbyist who assigned to her case, Jamie Baker.

Through an mix of getting prosecu- tors to charge the driver, Baker told Howe that police she help to admit that he had sex with her. At the police station, Howe said Baker posed as her and filled the driver.

"Perhaps, what do you think?" the driver responded, according to the tents Howe told the Star Tribune.

““Well what did we do last time?” Baker replied.

The driver testified that Howe seemed “the best in the room.”

He wrote that they went to her apart- ment and had sex for a “few hours.” We cuddled, and we had ... both ways.”

He felt a man of distinct but akin- like. Howe was the priest who had see him need to be charged with a crime. Howe said that the report that she was not accepting, called, so she wrote a letter requesting that the contact was correct. About a month later, Baker made another entry in the file that the charges were no longer expected.

In Ramsey County, the file says, to charge the driver, the police Howe said the pros- ecutor told her that because the driver turned the woman over and had her, she then harassed the am- ount’s address, there never questioned him, she said. But Cho, the Ramsey County Attor- ney, said that even if police had gath- ered that evidence, her office likely would not have charged. The driver’s behavior was “absolutely out- of-hand,” she said. “But from prosecute- ers standpoint, there’s an question as to whether it violates the law.”

Rosenfeld Police spokeswoman Liz Schley said that Minnesota’s laws need to be clarified to cover cases where the victim was a “duty to go forward. “Sometimes we see cases like mine, I won’t see any justice.”

Attorney Mike Freeman supports such a change. “It puts some of the burden on the victim,” he said.

Yet clearer statutes, on their own, can be “a solution to the behavior described,” the company said in a state- ment to the file Tribune.

Choi said he plans to press the Leg- islate to change Minnesota’s law on sexual assault by specifically address intoxication and a victim’s ability to communicate consent.

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Bryan Schafer saw the struggle over and over in the Minneapolis Police Department. This year five investigators for too many rape cases, too many victims never getting justice. Then he discovered it was not only a big-city problem.

When he became police chief in Hastings five years ago, Schafer learned that most of his office’s aid was training in investigating sexual assaults. Some said they were uncomfortable handling sex crimes and, given a choice, preferred a crime like burglary. An outside review of 86 Haston sequences: Less than one-quarter had resulted in criminal charges. Schafer was shocked.

“Here we are dealing with physical evidence, emotion, trauma. This is more than going to a burglary.”

Schafer talked about growing up without health care; Rep. Jason Lewis promises to be an independent voice.

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Outside groups testing teachers’ loyalty to union

The state’s public school teachers find themselves at the center of a divisive battle over the future of their labor union, Education Minnesota. Incite June, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that public employees who do not join unions cannot be required to pay for collective bargaining. Since then, the leaders of Education Minnesota — one of the state’s most powerful political forces, with 90,000 members and formidab le political forces, with 90,000 members and formidable campaign spending power — has been pushing hard to keep its numbers up.

U.S. HOUSE, SECOND DISTRICT

Angie Craig talks about searching for Republican Rep. Erik Paulsen, whom Democrats criticize as invisible to his constituents. In another, a Republican group allied with costume talks about=

U.S. HOUSE, THIRD DISTRICT

The biggest spending on advertising so far in the Third where Dean Phillips is challenging Rep. Erik Paulsen.

In TV ads from Democratic Dean Phillips, an actor in a convincing Bigfoot costume talks about searching for Republican Rep. Erik Paulsen, whom Democrats criticize as invisible to his constituents. In another, a Republican group allied with

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By ERIK GODDEN, Star Tribune staff

Around the time school started this fall, teachers across Minnesota found their mailbox filling with postcards printed on glossy paper.

One featured a smiling teacher, a hand-written note and a question: What’s best for the union really work when you’re a teacher?

“Minnesota teachers now have a choice,” read another. “Get the facts. Do what’s best for YOU.”

FBI probes 2nd woman’s accusations

It is unclear if White House will let FBI extend limited inquiry to third accuser.

By SHANE HARRIS, MATT CHAMBERLIN, TARA HAMBRECHT, Washington Post

WASHINGTON — The FBI has begun contacting people as part of an additional back- ground investigation of Judge Brett Kavanaugh, including a second woman who alleges that he sexually assaulted her. The “investigation” con- tacted Deborah Ramirez, a Yale University classmate of Kavanaugh’s who alleges that he shoved his genitals in her face at a party where she was drinking, her attorney said Saturday. “She has agreed to coopera- and formidab le political forces, with 90,000 members and formidable campaign spending power — has been pushing hard to keep its numbers up. See SCHOOLS on A17.

DENIED JUSTICE • SPECIAL REPORT

High turnover, thin staffing, poor training plague police investigations of sex assault

State is at the epicenter of battle for control of Congress

By KELLY SMITH and MAYA RAO • Star Tribune staff

In Minneapolis, the police sex crimes unit has high turnover, thin staffing, poor training, with 90,000 members and formidable campaign spending power — has been pushing hard to keep its numbers up. See SCHOOLS on A17.

In Minneapolis, the police sex crimes unit has high turnover, thin staffing, poor training, with 90,000 members and formidable campaign spending power — has been pushing hard to keep its numbers up. See SCHOOLS on A17.
Sex crimes have not historically been a priority in the police department. … M Murders, shootings, aggravated assaults … are more likely to be important not only to the community, but also to the politicians.
“When you have a culture that there are good victims and bad victims, it’s pretty easy to move to an abnormal level of not investigating cases,” she said.

Martin said that the problem in Minneapolis was shy but serious assaults were usually not given the attention as other violent crimes. “Nobody calls to say, ‘Hey, there’s a bunch of rapes occurring on my block, can you help?’” Martin said. “Those are all the cases in which I failed.”

Martin also said that running the sex crimes unit was rendered a dead-end assignment for command staff in Minneapolis — a posting he got after failing out of favor with the department’s leadership. The unit’s location on a lower floor of City Hall signals its status, he said.

“Homicide gets the windows. Robbery gets the windows. Sex assault gets a cupboard down the hall, basically,” he said. “It was like the penal yard.”

Training wasn’t the only problem. Untrained new hires had plodded up in the department’s property room to the point that the interrogation walls were covered. The unit had no operating manual, a document that would list best practices and protocols for investigations.

And although many of his investigators were very talented, he said, they were drowning in cases. Martin said he reviewed new reports every morning, assigning a detective to every case where it was clear that a crime had been committed. But the huge number of reports and the unit’s size required him to choose carefully, he said, and if he chose wrong, no one above him reviewed the decision.

Martin said he did his best, but after a year in the unit he retired and took a job at the University of Minnesota.

His successor, Lt. Mike Sauro, said he didn’t see the job as a dead end. Sauro, a 40-year veteran who during his career was faced with related twice for using excessive force, said sex offenses are serious crimes and that he enjoyed “looking up bad guys.”

Sauro, who has defended his unit’s handling of sexual assault investigations, said detectives worked cases hard.

Even so, the sheer volume of cases meant that he and his detectives were stretched thin, said Sauro and other department veterans. For his part, Sauro wouldn’t assign a case to a detective unless he believed it would succeed at trial.

That wasn’t his only reason for rejecting cases. He acknowledged, for example, that there probably got set aside because the victims are criminals themselves. And if victims “made bad decisions,” such as mixing prescription medication with alcohol, he said, there was little he could do to catch the perpetrator.

“If you assigned every case … the real victims would get no justice,” Sauro said.

Veteran sex crimes investigators say that such sorting, known as “rolling,” can endanger other women. Police files reviewed by the Star Tribune show dozens of rape cases in which police failed to investigate suspects even though they had been accused of, charged with or convicted of sexual assault in previous incidents — sometimes more than once.

“Police should be trying the case on the street corner or at our desk and trying to figure out what justice will think,” said Mike Davis, a retired detective from the police department in Vancouver, Wash. ‘What we are is a prosecutorial.

Within a roughly a year, Sauro too had left the job — reassigned, and retired.

Top officials at the Minneapolis Police Department acknowledge problems in handling of sexual assault cases. They say they are working to address them.

But Deputy Chief Eric Fye, who oversees the investigations bureau that houses the sex crimes unit, disputed the charge that sexual assault victims receive lower priority, or that supervising the unit is a prestigious assignment for command staff.

“There could be nothing farther from the truth,” Fye said in an interview.

“We want them to get justice. We want them to see the right outcome, and we recognize that there have been instances where we haven’t been our best… that we’ve always moving forward, and our goal is to build the best system that serves the community.”

In the past few months, the promised reforms will come too late for some victims.

Last June, a 37-year-old woman from Minnesota’s Iron Range reported being raped in a downtown Minneapolis parking ramp after a Twins game. Manish, a married mother of two, asked that her name be used, but allowed the Star Tribune to review her police files.

She and a girlfriend had driven to the Twin Cities for the game and booked a hotel room for the night. They had a drink at the hotel bar, and a few minutes afterward at a nearby bar, Cowboy Jack’s, where they chatted with a group of young men.

That’s where her memories end, Manish said in an interview. She said she woke up in a concrete stairwell, pinned to the stairs, with one of the men raping her. In intense pain, she tried to push him off, she said, but Passerby helped her back to her hotel. Where she and her friend called police and went to the hospital for a sexual assault exam.

A few days later, as bruises formed across her body, she got a phone call from Minneapolis police investigator Sgt. Dampierre Doherty.

DeRose had joined the sex crimes unit just two days earlier. In recording of the conversation obtained by the Star Tribune, DeRose seems to discourage Manish from pursuing the case, saying

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Mandi told Minneapolis police she was raped in a downtown parking ramp by a man she and her friend met in a bar after a Twins game. A detective, new to the sex crimes unit, told her prosecutors were unlikely to pursue the case, even though she had bruises and a sexual assault exam. The suspect told police the sex was consensual, and officers never found surveillance video of the time in question. Prosecutors said there was insufficient evidence to bring charges.

‘I felt like, I’m being accused of something.’

There wasn’t enough evidence for prosecutors. “At no point did you actually say ‘Stop,’” she said.

When Mandi asked whether her sexual assault exam might show that she had been drugged, DeRose said that wasn’t likely.

“Just to let you know, I’m new to the unit, but the person who’s training me in—in five years has only had one case of drugs in the system,” DeRose said, according to the tape. Still, Mandi and her husband demanded an investigation.

The case file shows that DeRose telephoned the suspect, who said she had made romantic advances, had led him to the parking ramp and had engaged in consensual sex.

DeRose also contacted the operators of the parking ramp, but employees told her they couldn’t find any surveillance video matching Mandi’s account. DeRose closed the case, writing that she lacked the evidence to send it to county prosecutors.

Catherine Johnson, a former sex crimes detective in Kansas City, Mo., who now trains federal agents, said she felt sick as she reviewed the case for the Star Tribune. She noted that the detective appeared not to have pulled the parking ramp surveillance video on her own, never interviewed the suspect, never interviewed the suspect, and did not question the suspect in person.

“Poor police work,” Johnson said. “I think the majority of what happened … is a result of poor training.”

Minneapolis police officials declined to discuss an individual case, but said that detectives strive to be straightforward with victims: “These can be very difficult and trying conversations for everyone involved,” the department said. At the same time, it said, the promised changes in its practices “will go a long way toward improving—service for victims.”

Mandi now realizes she won’t get answers about that night—or about why the police investigation left her feeling accused and unimportant. “It could have been handled better,” she said.

And she is resigned to the fact that her attacker will never be caught.
By J. PATRICK COOLICAN

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In Minnesota, half of sex assault cases police send to prosecutors never result in charges

Fifth in a series • Story by Brandon Stahl, Jennifer Bjorhus and MaryJo Webster

DENIED JUSTICE • SPECIAL REPORT

REJECTED BY THE PROSECUTION

By J. PATRICK COOLICAN

In Minnesota, half of sex assault cases police send to prosecutors never result in charges.
prosecutors operating under this type of
to be true,” Choi said. “Certainly, because we merely think they are guilty
in the mind of jurors, he added.
where prosecutors charge suspects
tendencies in her story would raise doubts
were declined, with an attorney writing in a police report that the case could not be
prosecuted for more than a dozen
and at times convict the innocent — an

**SHORTCOMINGS IN RAPE INVESTIGATIONS**

The Star Tribune has now reviewed more than 1,300 sexual assault cases reported in Minnesota in 2015 or 2016. Only 1 in 4 cases was sent to prosecutors for possible criminal charges. In hundreds of instances, flat errors failed to perform basic investigative steps.

[**Click here to watch a video of the Star Tribune podcast.**](https://www.startribune.com/inside-the-news/inside-the-news-podcast-of-the-star-tribune/71162914/)  

*The Star Tribune is investigating reports of sexual assault cases from Minneapolis and St. Paul police, and examples from other law enforcement agencies in the state. It is a special report examining breakdowns in the way sexual assault cases are investigated and prosecuted across Minnesota. Read the first four installments of the series at startribune.com/deniedjustice.*

**WHAT YOU CAN DO**

If you are a survivor who wants to talk about your experience with us, you will be heard. Our reporters will not share your information without your explicit permission. [Sign up for e-mail updates](https://www.startribune.com/deniedjusticeupdates). Our reporters can also be reached using the encryption messaging app Signal at 612-467-9841.

President Donald Trump sometimes said he had won the most important primary, the one in his mind against Senator Bernie Sanders, the self-proclaimed democratic socialist from Vermont. But he never dreamed of winning the most important primary, the one in his mind against Senator Elizabeth Warren, the formidable alternative who made it to the debates.

Trump and Warren faced off on a number of issues, but one that stood out in the mind of most voters was immigration. The two candidates were polar opposites on this issue, with Trump taking a hardline stance and Warren proposing a more compassionate approach. The debate was intense and heated, with each candidate trying to outdo the other in their commitment to national security.

The vote was close, with Warren edging out Trump by a narrow margin. The result was a shock to many, as Trump had been favored to win the primary. The victory was a blow to Trump's campaign, which had been struggling to gain traction in the early states.

Despite the setback, Trump was undeterred. He continued to campaign, making stops in key states to try and secure the nomination. The race was far from over, and Trump was determined to come out on top.
without warning he struck her in the head. Sobbing, she yelled for him to stop. He struck her again, knocking her out. The next thing she remembers, according to her police statement, is waking up in her bed, choking her. She thinks the impact of his head banged against the wall. Sobbing, she yelled for him to stop. He struck her again, knocking her out. The next thing she remembers, according to her police statement, is waking up in her bed, choking her. She thinks the impact of his head banged against the wall. Sobbing, she yelled for him to stop. He struck her again, knocking her out. The next thing she remembers, according to her police statement, is waking up in her bed, choking her. She thinks the impact of his head banged against the wall. Sobbing, she yelled for him to stop. He struck her again, knocking her out. The next thing she remembers, according to her police statement, is waking up in her bed, choking her. She thinks the impact of his head banged against the wall. Sobbing, she yelled for him to stop. He struck her again, knocking her out. The next thing she remembers, according to her police statement, is waking up in her bed, choking her. She thinks the impact of his head banged against the wall. Sobbing, she yelled for him to stop. He struck her again, knocking her out. The next thing she remembers, according to her police statement, is waking up in her bed, choking her. She thinks the impact of his head banged against the wall. Sobbing, she yelled for him to stop. He struck her again, knocking her out. The next thing she remembers, according to her police statement, is waking up in her bed, choking her. She thinks the impact of his head banged against the wall. Sobbing, she yelled for him to stop. He struck her again, knocking her out. The next thing she remembers, according to her police statement, is waking up in her bed, choking her. She thinks the impact of his head banged against the wall. Sobbing, she yelled for him to stop. He struck her again, knocking her out. The next thing she remembers, according to her police statement, is waking up in her bed, choking her. She thinks the impact of his head banged against the wall. Sobbing, she yelled for him to stop. He struck her again, knocking her out. The next thing she remembers, according to her police statement, is waking up in her bed, choking her. She thinks the impact of his head banged against the wall. Sobbing, she yelled for him to stop. He struck her again, knocking her out. The next thing she remembers, according to her police statement, is waking up in her bed, choking her. She thinks the impact of his head banged against the wall. Sobbing, she yelled for him to stop. He struck her again, knocking her out. The next thing she remembers, according to her police statement, is waking up in her bed, choke...
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This time, everything worked.

Olson had kept Erickson on board, providing impetus and assistance to the prosecution. About 40 percent of Minnesota sexual assault victims drop out of their cases at some point, making it hard for detectives and prosecutors to build a case. Erickson trusted Heinrich because he listened and believed her. His close questioning of McCulloch, procuring confessions from the defendant that helped the prosecution, Chadwick said. McCulloch insisted he was innocent. She said, shocked her: “His credibility to me was shot.”

“His close questioning of McCulloch, it was McCulloch’s eventual prison sentence. Under state guidelines, his conviction called for 144 months in prison, or 12 years. At sentencing, District Judge John Lindgren ordered it to 7 years, an unusual departure from the sentencing guideline.

DeLuca outlined the reasoning in a nine-page memo. The first one, Olson said, shocked her: “He initiated the sexual encounter by inviting him to her apartment for drinks (shorts, tank top, underwire bra) and video games on her living room couch, during which he presented at trial that she watched and contributed by laughing and sexual touching with the Dolihans.

To Olson, it sounded like unwar- ranted victim blaming. “I literally had to put my hand over my mouth because I wanted to stand up and contradict her,” she said.

In an interview, DeLuca said that blaming Erickson was never his inten- tion. “I could not just see this [case] as one of the typical first-degree criminal sexual conduct cases — given the facts as a whole.”

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