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# Dixie's Deranged Killer Declared: "I LOVE TO WATCH PEOPLE DIE



E.Z. and Sarah Willis were found brutally bludgeoned to death in the rural Gaston County home where they spent 45 years of wedded bliss.

by JOHN GRIGGS

**M**OST local folks riding by the two-story brick house with the huge lawn on Flint Hill Road in the Cherryville community of Gaston County, North Carolina, knew it to be the Willis Place. E.Z. and Sarah Dellinger Willis had been living there since E.Z. returned from his stint in the military during World War II, and it

was there that they raised their daughter and spent 45 years of marriage. The yard, nestled between fields of corn, had a swing set for their grandchildren, a bird-bath, and well-manicured bushes. The Willises were part of the foundation of their rural community, the kind of God-fearing folks who are always there to help their neighbors any way they can. Southerners call such folks "good people."

A friend or relative approaching the Willis house that morning of Monday,

September 9, 1991, would have initially found everything as it should be. One of E.Z.'s hunting dogs was wandering around outside, and Sarah's car and E.Z.'s pickup truck were in the driveway. The TV was blaring through the open windows of the house, as usual. But that morning, as the Willises' daughter walked toward the back-door entrance about seven o'clock, she realized that something was wrong. She didn't hear the familiar sound of her parents talking over the noise of the TV.

The daughter found the back door unlocked, which wasn't an unusual state of affairs in her parents' peaceful neck of the woods. When she opened the door, however, her eyes were assailed by the worst sight she'd ever seen. Her 71-year-old father, still in his pajamas, was lying face down in a puddle of blood on the kitchen floor in front of the oven. The wooden cane he had fashioned himself lay beside him. Reeling from shock, the daughter made her way out of the bloody kitchen and went through the rest of the old house where she had grown up. In the bathroom, she found her 67-year-old mother, also in her pajamas, lying face up in a bathroom. The elderly woman, too, was covered with, and surrounded by, blood.

The Willises' daughter started screaming. Later, all she would remember was the blood. Somehow, she stumbled out of the house and into her car, and sped the short distance to her own house. Once there, she dialed 911. Then, after getting a neighbor to accompany her, she drove

back to her partner's emergency team with the Willises. She was unable to enter the family home. Men in black came from within.

Minutes later, officers with the Department of Justice arrived at the Willis place. The lights shattering in the idyllic country neighborhood were from agency vehicles. The farmers, who were bleary-eyed, squinted and dropped out of sight.

Upon arriving, the Willises were brought to a cool temperature. The dead father had been dead for several hours.

Officers began moving cautiously. Nothing appeared disturbed. From a room that had not taken a shot, a gun had been left behind. The power house had not been touched. The room, though, had a window screen that the killer entered through. Several other windows were open. The air-conditioned room was soon, however, went to work. The

which suggests

*Inside Detective*  
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