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2 WOMEN FOUND SLAIN ON PARKWAY

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A College of William and Mary student and a Norfolk stockbroker who was among the first women graduates of the U.S. Naval Academy were found slain with their throats cut in a car alongside the Colonial Parkway, the FBI said yesterday.

The bodies of William and Mary student Rebecca Ann Dowski, 21, of Poughkeepsie, N.Y., and **Cathleen Marian Thomas**, 27, a native of Lowell, Mass., were found Sunday evening in Ms. **Thomas'** 1980 Honda hatchback, said Jack Wagner, special agent in charge of the Norfolk office of the FBI.

"Their throats were slit from ear to ear," Wagner said. The bodies were clothed. There were no signs of robbery, he said, but he said he could not say until after an autopsy whether the women had been sexually assaulted.

Wagner said the women, who acquaintances said were friends, were last seen on Thursday night at William and Mary about 6 1/2 miles from where the car was found. W&M is on fall break, which began Friday.

"We do not know now how or when the friendship developed," Wagner said. "That kind of information could be helpful. We're working on it.

"We've got a lot of leads and we're still running them down."

He noted, however, that the FBI is seeking information about the women's whereabouts between Thursday and Sunday nights.

The FBI is heading the investigation because the bodies were found on federal property.

Buddy West, president of Broker Securities, Inc., a Norfolk discount brokerage house where Ms. **Thomas** had worked since June, said yesterday that Ms. Dowski occasionally called Ms. **Thomas** at work.

"Cathy had a couple of friends at William and Mary," said West, who described Ms. **Thomas** as an exceptional worker who was making about \$4,000 a month in commissions. "She didn't come in Friday and when she didn't come in (Monday) we really began to worry because she never missed a day before."

Wagner said the FBI doesn't know of any drug connection and does not believe the fact that Ms. Dowski was a W&M student has any connection with the deaths.

There was a rape at W&M last week and Richard Cumbee, director of the W&M Campus Police said, "after talking with the FBI, they do not feel there is any connection between the rape and the murder."

Ms. **Thomas** graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis in 1981 in the top half of her class, the second at the school to include women. A brother and her father, F. Joseph **Thomas**, now a dean at the University of Lowell, also graduated from the academy.

"She always lived up to the highest expectations," said Richard **Thomas**, who described his younger sister as very cautious and excited about her career in the brokerage business.

"I'm totally mystified by this thing," he said. **Thomas** said his sister had been among the first women commissioned as a surface warfare officer but found a career in business more challenging.

She concluded her five-year active tour of duty by serving in Norfolk as a protocol officer at Headquarters, CINCLANT (Commander-in-Chief Atlantic Fleet).

A spokesman at Old Dominion University in Norfolk said last night that Ms. **Thomas** had taken courses at the school since 1984, gaining nine hours of credits toward a master's degree in business. But she did not enroll this semester, he said.

Ms. Dowski had transferred to W&M in January, after studying at Dickinson College in Carlisle, Pa. She was a senior majoring in business management and lived on campus at Chandler Hall. Ms. Dowski's father was notified of her death while in London on a business trip.

One of her professors this semester, Dr. George Cole, professor of business administration, asked his students to write a brief description of themselves, closing with what they ultimately would like to accomplish with their life. Ms. Dowski wrote, in part, "Rebecca Dowski, although young at age 21, has had many experiences which have opened her mind, heightened business skills and developed strong personality traits." The most "influential experience" of her life came when her family moved to Paris (1981-1983), she wrote. She graduated from the American School of Paris.

She also worked for three years at the YWCA in Poughkeepsie, N.Y., and wrote that because of her efforts, "praise was received for being dependable, reliable, conscientious and organized."

She wrote that because of her experiences, she wanted to work in "the international business arena." Her goal was to become "a prominent, respected member of both work place and community."

W. Samuel Sadler, dean of student affairs at W&M, said Ms. Dowski's death "will be a cause of concern among students," especially because of a rape and assault on campus last week. The timing of the events, he added, "couldn't be more unfortunate. We're saddened by both incidents and shocked by these senseless acts of violence." The car was discovered by a man jogging along the parkway between 5:30 and 6 p.m. Sunday. The car had either been pushed or driven off the parkway and had gone over an 8- or 10-foot embankment, Wagner said.

"Heavy briars . . . kept it from going into the York River," he said.

The site was about 200 feet east of the overlook at Cheatham Annex of the U.S. Naval Supply Center, about seven miles from Yorktown and 6.5 miles from Williamsburg along the parkway, a 23-mile National Park Service road linking Yorktown, Williamsburg and Jamestown.

Wagner asked that anyone with information about the case call the FBI at (804) 623-3111.