

# 20 & 21. John Romberg and Jennifer Hitchcock

50 years old

22 years old

Baraboo

Sauk County

Middleton

Dane County

Jennifer Hitchcock and John Romberg were shot by Maurice Mason, 37, and Bennie Firer, 24, in murders that were part of a nine-day kidnapping crime spree. Maurice was the ex-boyfriend of Jennifer and Bennie was Maurice's nephew.

Jennifer met Maurice in Lincoln, Nebraska during the summer of 2003. They lived together for about one year. In the summer of 2004, Jennifer attempted to end their then long distance relationship. Soon after, Maurice convinced Jennifer to meet him and brought her to Wisconsin to meet his family. Jennifer's family members claim he held her against her will. They called the police, who found them in a hotel on October 21. Jennifer asked her family to come to Wisconsin to bring her home. As Jennifer and her family returned to Lincoln so did Maurice. The next day she met with him and he beat her with a brick, broke a glass beer bottle over her head, forced her face into a pan of motor oil waste and strangled her. He put her into the trunk of her car overnight. The following morning, Maurice picked up Bennie and they took Jennifer to a hotel in Lincoln, where they cleaned her up. They then drove her to Wisconsin, against her will.

In Wisconsin, they kidnapped a man they knew had money. They took him to a rural, remote area, robbed him, tied him up and left him in a farm shed. They then forced Jennifer out of the trunk and made her view the man. (The man was located eight days later, near death. Due to being bound in the shed, both of his arms were amputated.) Maurice and Bennie then forced Jennifer to accompany them to Madison, where Bennie purchased a 12 gauge shotgun at Walmart.

Maurice and Bennie kept Jennifer under their control for the next week, keeping her in a hotel and friend's homes. An acquaintance of Maurice's saw Jennifer during this time and commented that she thought Jennifer was wearing a Halloween mask.

On November 2, Maurice got Jennifer's car stuck in the sand in Sauk County. He, Bennie and Jennifer walked to a nearby bar and called for a cab ride into Baraboo. Once the cab brought them into Baraboo, Maurice shot and killed the cab driver, John Romberg, in Bennie and Jennifer's presence.

The following day, Maurice, Bennie and Jennifer received a ride to Middleton. Maurice and Bennie took Jennifer to a remote area. Maurice and Bennie both sexually assaulted Jennifer, then Bennie shot Jennifer in the back of the head from close range with the 12 gauge shotgun, killing her instantly. Maurice and Bennie then walked to a nearby hotel, ate a meal of steak and lobster and then turned themselves in. When Jennifer's body was found, she had a broken nose, bruises on her jaw and the sides of her neck, and cuts on her face

While Maurice and Jennifer dated, he often forbid her from leaving her own home without him. According to family members, prior to her kidnapping, Maurice told Jennifer, "I'm coming back for you, and if I don't get you, I'm going to get your mom and dad, and I'm going to get your grandparents too?". After he was arrested, Maurice stated one reason he killed her was that he couldn't face life in prison thinking of her with another man.

Maurice was a habitual criminal and spent a number of years in jail before he met Jennifer. In 1994, Maurice burglarized his sister's home and took a 17 year old girl out of state. He was caught and convicted of Burglary and sentenced to nine years in prison. He was released in 2000 after serving six years, sent back in 2001 for violating the terms of his release and then re-released in 2002. He was not on supervised release.

Maurice Mason pled no contest to First Degree Intentional Homicide, Kidnapping, Possession of a Weapon and Felon in Possession of a Firearm. Charges of Second Degree Sexual Assault were dropped as part of his plea bargain. He was sentenced to life in prison. Bennie Frier pled no contest to First Degree Reckless Homicide and Second Degree Sexual Assault and was sentenced to 60 years in prison for his role in the crimes against Jennifer. Maurice was charged with First Degree Intentional Homicide for John Romberg's murder and was sentenced to life in prison.

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