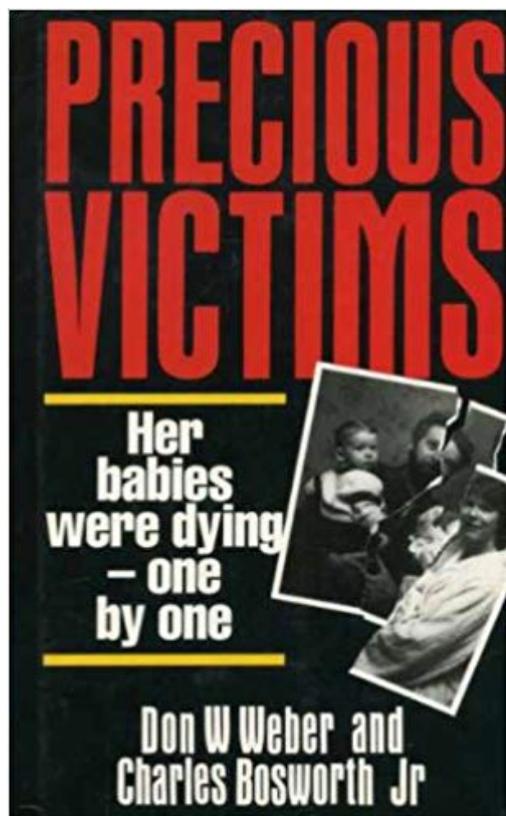


## Precious Victims *by* Don W. Weber



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## Reviews of the *Precious Victims* *by* Don W. Weber

### Marelyne

This is a good, absorbing account of the ultimately inexplicable murder of two children. It has more than a little suspense along the way, as for example when the author points out the possible “chilling” irony involved in the searchers’ pause in front of the family refrigerator.

The book is co-authored by the man who became the chief prosecutor in the case. So there is necessarily a bit of awkwardness in the juggling of pronouns and referents, especially in the later chapters, when the case is taken to court. Don Weber narrates events from his point of view, but refers to himself in the third person. He alternately becomes “the prosecutor,” “Don,” and “Weber.” I don’t know if simply saying “I” would have been an easier, more direct approach. But perhaps then the chronicle would have lacked the authoritative tone that its objective, reportorial style in fact

gives to it.

Since this account is written by a lawyer, it is naturally heavier on court room maneuvering than it is on psychological insights. But probably the latter would have been hard to come by, even in the hands of a psychologist. Paula Sims seems to have remained enigmatic and inarticulate about her motives. So instead of a look inside a killer's mind, readers are given more of a legal procedural, at least once the suspect(s) are taken into custody.

This approach has a fascination of its own. It's like auditing a good class in criminal prosecution. You'll learn phrases such as "writ of mandamus" and the legal meaning of "per se." If you don't get inside Paula Sims' head so much, you do get inside the head of a good prosecutor as he prepares his case. Mostly, Don Weber provides a solid role model in this regard. However, there are a few instances in which his judgment about how to present a point to a jury ends in slightly humorous, off-kilter results.

For example, he tells how in preparing a summary, he wanted to make sneering reference to Sims' protestations that her babies were taken by one or more masked intruders. Weber initially thought that in order to underscore the patently fictive nature of any such invader, he'd call him "the bogeyman." But then Weber had second thoughts. He felt that the term "bogeyman" might have a negative, personal connotation for any African-American jurors on the panel. So Weber instead used the character of "Rumpelstiltskin."

I'm not sure that reference was apt. That odd name from Grimm's Fairy Tales has surely stuck in many people's minds. But it's unlikely that most people recall who Rumpelstiltskin was - whether he was hero or villain. If they do recall the story more exactly, they would know that Rumpelstiltskin did NOT steal children. He was NOT an improbable kidnapper. His bargaining with the miller's daughter much more complicated than that.

Weber also chooses to accept as a key element of his case the rather dubious testimony of one doctor regarding the effect of a head injury on a person's memory. As Weber himself later admits, his doctor's conclusions would tend to be contradicted by the experience of many prizefighters.

Another slight problem with this book is a problem that it has in common with most true crime accounts. There are so many detectives, superintendents, sheriffs, lawyers, and others, involved in the investigation, that in places, these pages become like a telephone directory. In real life, crime investigation hardly ever seems to have the coherence of a Columbo story, with one brilliant mind pursuing the investigation through all its phases. So most true crimes books such as these could use an initial rundown of names, with thumbnail reminders of their roles attached - or at least an inclusive index. This book (or at least this paperback edition) has neither.

Despite these few drawbacks, this book is a good insider's account of a strange crime and its resultant punishment. It's worth a place on any true crime buff's shelves.

## **Forey**

So much of this genre is badly written that even plain reporting seems good. This book is in the good category for its prose. Often the recounting of media interests gets in the way but is at least easily skipped over. Unlike many true crime books this one does not beat the reader to death with extended biographies of cops and detectives either. My only criticism is that the author shifts between first and last name s way too often. The story is on its face simple. A women claims that twice in three years a masked man ran off with her babies, which it seems obvious, she killed. What

makes the story worth recounting is the old problem of bringing a circumstance a trial case to trial. That is what this book is about and on that front it well done and worth reading.

### **Vivara**

I read this book long ago in paperback, and when I saw it was a Kindle deal I had to grab it. Next to Ann Rule's *Small Sacrifices*, this was one of the true crime books that really reached out and grabbed me. It deals with a couple who has not one, but two, infant daughters kidnapped from their house and found dead - and how that plays out. It was written by the principal prosecutor and a reporter who was active in the trial, and it's an excellent read. It doesn't get too bogged down, and the people are really portrayed as memorable people. Weber (the prosecutor) definitely seems to be a "love him or hate him" sort of guy, but he's definitely a white hat guy.

The crimes happened in 1983 (?) and 1986, so it has been awhile. There is a brief "2015 update" in the Kindle version, but this appears to be one of those cases where not much happened after the book ended. Still, I found the update (and the end of the story) to be interesting, especially considering how the book went.

One thing that is a bit of a problem is that there were numerous OCR-scan type formatting errors. None of them are horrible, and most of them are easy to figure out, but they do distract a bit from reading. Still, worth having in e-format, especially since my paper copy is a bit worn!

### **Steel balls**

I appreciate the research put into the details of the tragedies and the trial - both are quite interesting, however sad. It's apparent the author did his homework and you will not be disappointed.

I'm giving this read 4 stars because of the very obvious typos such as "sheis" instead of "she is", "Lew is and Clark Bridge" instead of "Lewis and Clark Bridge" (there several like this and some of them were repetitive).

I would still highly recommend this book - informative and interesting!

### **Berkohi**

Illinois couple claimed that two separate newborn daughters were kidnapped by masked men in two separate incidents!

A young mother called police to claim that a masked man entered her home and took her newborn daughter. She and her husband had no money, and no ransom was demanded. The police suspected the whole story and the couple's emotional response and demeanor, but had no proof to file charges. The remains were found in the woods nearby.

The couple then had a son, who was 3 when another newborn girl was reported kidnapped from their home by another masked man! Again, the emotional responses and circumstances were off. The remains were found in a trashcan at a rest stop. The parents seemed to only want a son.

### **Fordrelis**

I don't read a lot of true crime books and some that I have read are not especially well written. That said, *Precious Victims* was very well done. It is a chilling story of a very strange couple and their

attempts to cover up the murders of their two infant daughters. It would have been interesting to hear what psychologists finally diagnosed Paula with - I'd be willing to bet that she did not suffer from postpartum depression or psychosis. Anyway, the book was riveting and the efforts of law enforcement and prosecutors to speak for and find justice for the 'precious victims' was most admirable and very touching.

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