

The Reverend L.M. Whidden was interviewed on Monday July 21, 1998 in preparation for trial.

Whidden stated that he is an ordained minister. He was ordained on May 17, 1998. He stated that he had been trained at Liberty Bible Institute and he was one semester short of completing the institute when Ronnie Kimble told him he had killed his sister-in-law and he decided it was not safe to stay in Virginia, so he moved to a state several hundred miles away. He now has his own congregation and works there full time. He did not receive his certificate of theology because he was one semester short. He said he had a 3.8 GPA, and he wants to go back and finish his degree but right now he cannot afford leave his job or to move his family again.

Whidden stated he was attending Liberty University when Ronnie Kimble told him he had killed his sister-in-law and prior to that he had been a member of the U.S. Marine Corps and stationed at the USMC base located at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina. He was trained in the infantry. Rev. Whidden had a four year commitment with the Marines, but he requested an early discharge to go to Liberty Bible Institute and that was granted. He left the Marine Corps on August 19, 1996 after 3 ½ years. Rev. Whidden stated he completed his obligation with the USMC, and had a exemplary military record.

The last 6 months of his tour of duty he requested to be assigned to the chaplain's office, as a chaplain's assistant. He had requested that assignment. A chaplain's assistant is an administrative position, mostly I helped in scheduling services and setting things up for services. He stated he was at Court House Bay Chapel when he met Ronnie Kimble who was a deliveryman for the chaplain's office. Ronnie Kimble was responsible for the delivery of requested supplies to each chaplain's office. He stated: We just happened to be in the same unit, were doing the same type of work, had infantry training as some thing in common, and we hit it off. The assignment at Court House Bay Chapel was really laid back. He had access to a pool table there and Ronnie would come out here and eat lunch and we would shoot pool together, cause it was really a long way out there and he had time to hang around. He thinks he knew Ronnie for the about the entire 5 months he was there.

He stated: The first time I was aware of the murder was a month or two after I met Ronnie. He said he just wanted to talk, he had some things on his mind, he told me that his brother was being investigated because his sister in law had been brutally murdered. He said that his brother had not done it, despite the differences between Ted and his wife, the arguments that they had and all that. He told me one time that someone had said that his car had been seen at the time of the murder, but that was impossible because he had a receipt from a gas station from across town. I remember thinking at the time that that did not really impress me because anyone could get a receipt. Every time he would come out, he would tell me more details. He said that he was trying to figure it out in his own head and he was always going over it with me. One time he told me that some stuff had been moved in the house, a big toolbox or something like that, I got the impression it was one of these big stand up toolboxes. He always said that and that gave me the impression that more than one person was there. Now, I wonder if he had someone with him, and I am worried because that person might be out of jail.

He didn't really let on that they were investigating him also. Of course, I did not believe that he did it at that time. I went home and told my wife about the facts that Ronnie gave me and I told her that Ronnie was a nice guy and there is no way he could have been involved in something like that. So when I left the Marine corps. I still thought he did not do it.

He talked a lot about a good friend of his in the Marines, I cannot remember if he mentioned his name to me, he just said they were very close friends. He said that every time they had leave they would go to Greensboro together. They used to go back and forth together, whenever they would have leave.

He called me when I got out of the Marines, when I was at Liberty Bible Institute. He called me and expressed an interest in attending the institute, said he wanted to come up and check out the Liberty Bible Institute. I said, well come up and stay with us a couple of days and you could sit in the class, and see what's going on there. They came up, kind of unexpected, about January 24, 1997. They stayed with us at our home 31 County Plane Lane, Lynchburg, Virginia. Ronnie and his wife stayed at our house a couple of days and one evening he said that he wanted to speak with me about the possibility of him attending Liberty University.

Actually, the conversation started at dinner and when we got back to the house he said that he wanted to talk to me about something. At dinner we were discussing the ministry, because he said he felt like he had been called into the ministry. I was encouraging him to attend Liberty University, if that's what he wanted to do. I told him to do what he thought God wanted him to do. He expressed doubts about going into the ministry and he said he needed to talk to me about something when he got home. He said that his past was haunting him and I just thought that he had cheated on his wife. I remember my wife telling him that he had not done anything that most of us might have done and he said, I would not be so sure about that. I fully expected him to tell me that he had cheated on his wife, because that's the kind of thing that you hear. On the way home he told me he had some struggles with pornography and stuff like that, which did not surprise me, that is very typical of marines.

He and I went upstairs and he admitted to me that he had killed his sister-in-law. Basically I remember the whole scenario. He had talked to me about the case before hand so I knew what he was talking about. Ronnie said that Whidden was the only person he (Ronnie) had told about the murder and began crying. Whidden stated Ronnie Kimble told Whidden that he had in fact shot his sister-in-law and that Kimble did not know where the gun was at that time. I asked him why he did it and he said he had done it for greed, for money. I tried to talk him into turning himself in and he said he would die first. He said there was no way he was going to the electric chair and that he would die before he ever went to jail. He said he killed his sister-in-law. I was worried about him trying to commit suicide and tried to convince him not to do that. I remember I told him he would not go to hell if he killed himself and I suggested that he (Ronnie) not have such thoughts. He did not give me any more details about how he killed her. He did tell me that his brother had offered him money to commit the murder and that that he had not received the money yet. He wanted my advice about what he should do with the money. He asked if I could take the money for him and put it to God's work. I told him that I could not take the money, that idea was crazy. I told him that the money is blood money, no way I could be involved in that. I just told him to turn himself in, I strongly encouraged Ronnie to turn himself into the authorities. I remember Ronnie asking: Do you think any less of me now? And not knowing how to answer him.

The next morning I was completely sick over it. The night before when he asked me if I thought any less of him, I did not know what to tell him. I felt that I did not want him my house after that and I told him that he should leave. We talked about him leaving and he was concerned about how they could leave that night without making his wife and my wife suspicious. I did not want to upset Ronnie further so I agreed that they could stay that night as long as he left first thing in the morning. I lay awake all night listening to every breath he made, I was ready to call the police or do whatever necessary to protect myself and my family. So the next morning, after he left, I was sick over it, it made me literally sick. My wife could tell something was really wrong. She came up to me and asked: Did he kill his sister in law? I said yes he did and we have to turn him in.

Whidden stated: I talked to someone I trusted, who told me to talk to a lawyer so I talked to Jerry Falwell's son, it was January 25, 1997 I think, and I told him about it and I asked him what I should do. I told him that I wanted to turn this individual in, because I felt like it was the right thing to do. Rev. Whidden stated, he met with attorneys Falwell and Yeatts to determine what Whidden's legal responsibility was regarding what had been told

o him by Ronnie Kimble. Whidden stated he was told by that they would investigate the matter and contact Whidden at a later time.

Widden said: That night we left home and went to a motel, I felt that anybody who could murder a woman that way could come back and kill me and my family also. After that we went to North Carolina and then went to the (city's name omitted) Virginia and stayed with my family. We were never back at our house after that, except for a night or two when we were getting ready to leave Virginia. I remember on those nights neither one of us could sleep because this murder knows where we live now and we were afraid he would come back. You have to remember I had two of my children with us then and we were concerned for their safety. That was my main concern. I was in the Marines and I knew how to defend myself. I did not have any problem with my personal safety, like when I went to talk to Ronnie, my problem was I have to leave the house to go to school, he would know my school schedule and he would know when I was not at home and he could come and threaten or harm my family. I felt he was capable of that. It was a very stressful time.

He stated: Before I contacted the Guilford County Sheriff's Department my wife and I picked up and went to North Carolina to stay with a some friends, for a couple of days so that I could try and convince him to turn himself in one more time. I was concerned about Kimble's thoughts of committing suicide, so January 28, 1997, I went down there and met him on the base at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina. On this occasion, Whidden stated he again suggested Ronnie should not think of taking his own life and he suggested that Ronnie turn himself into authorities. During this same conversation, Whidden stated, he did tell Ronnie that Whidden had talked with an attorney regarding any legal problems that Whidden may now be facing based on Ronnie's confessing to Whidden on January 24, 1997, at Lynchburg, Virginia.

Vidden stated: He (Ronnie) was very surprised to see me, I think it scared him pretty much, so I tried to convince him to turn himself in again. I believe that it was when I talked to him and he said did believe what he had done was wrong, that God had forgiven him, that he believes nobody dies before its their time to go, so it had to be her time to go. I assumed that this was the way he was justifying it to himself and living with himself. He said: Well, maybe all of this was a bad dream, maybe all of it really didn't happen. He was trying to back out of what he told me, basically. We talked some more and I tried to convince him to turn himself in and he said he wouldn't turn himself in.

When we got back to Virginia I went to the attorneys office. I discussed it with the lawyers and I told them I wanted the ball in my court. I wanted to be able to choose whether I testified or not. And I wanted protection for my family in the event that that I needed. The attorneys sent an agreement to the District Attorney's Office which said that the State would try to keep me a confidential source, but that if I need protection for my family I could get it.

The detectives from the Guilford County Sheriff's Department came up and we sat down, them and my lawyer and I told him everything that Ronnie had told me.

Much later I met with Detective Church and my lawyers and Church mentioned a reward and I told them I would not feel right in taking something like that. This whole thing has cost me a lot, leaving school and moving, keeping my stuff in storage until I got a new home. There was 6 months when I did not have a real job. I had to go back to Virginia to meet with the lawyers. But that's ok. I do not hold any grudges, I understand I have to do what I have to do.

Then the detectives expressed interest in staying in Virginia and going to Camp LeJune and talking to Ronnie again. They wanted me to wear a wire. I said no way. I cannot openly deceive someone, that's deceitful. I can turn him in but I would never deceive him. So we put our stuff in storage and we moved out as soon as we could.

Rev. Whidden stated the primary-reason he came forward with this information was because he felt it was the moral thing to do. In addition, Whidden stated, he felt the murder Ronnie told him about was premeditated and as a result of the murder, Ronnie was to receive an amount of money from his brother. Whidden stated: that had the murder victim been his wife or sister, he would hope someone would come forward and provide authorities with this type of information. Whidden further stated he would be willing to testify in court if necessary.