

Barbara Turnbull, victim of high-profile shooting, dead at 50



Barbara Turnbull was shot in the neck during a robbery at a Clarkson convenience store in 1983. She died Sunday of complications related to pneumonia. Photo by Toronto Network

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Barbara Turnbull lived her life with grace and dignity - and died the same way on Sunday afternoon, age 50.

Turnbull faced near-death, and was left a quadriplegic after being shot in a high-profile crime that gripped this city 30 plus years ago.

She died from complications related to pneumonia, according to the *Toronto Star*.

Turnbull had been a journalist with the paper since 1990.

"If there ever was an example of someone who didn't

let life's challenges get in the way of living that life as fully

as possible, it was Barb," features editor Janet Hurley wrote in an email to employees. "And many others - from organ recipients to those with disabilities - have had better lives due to her sheer determination."

When you ask longtime Mississauga residents if they've heard of Barbara Turnbull, one of two things happens. Their faces turn stone-cold and their mouths pop open, as if you've just uttered a forbidden word. Or you're met with a half-hearted smile and a raised eyebrow that suggests the question is insulting their intelligence. Either way, they know who she is. They know what happened to her. And above all, they understand and remember the shockwaves

her ordeal sent through this city and the entire country.

She was a typical teenager, could have been anyone's sister, daughter, neighbour. In seconds, she went from living an ordinary life to being confined to a wheelchair forever.

On Sept. 23, 1983, 18-year-old Turnbull was working the night shift at a Clarkson

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convenience store when robbers shot her in the neck.

She became paralyzed from the shoulders down.

The Clarkson Secondary School student was just 15 minutes from closing shop at the Becker's store.

While stacking cigarettes, two black ski masks and a Colt .357 magnum barrelled down on Turnbull and forever changed her life with one "pop," as she described it.

She did nothing to provoke the gunfire. She was a part-timer trying to make some pocket money while in school. It was her first time closing the store.

A customer came to Turnbull's aid 15 minutes later, and phoned 9-1-1.

Turnbull has since been a quadriplegic.

"What that bullet did was take me at a time when I was becoming more and more independent, more independent than ever, and in a split second, it made me completely dependent in a lot of ways," Turnbull told an audience at the Mississauga Convention Centre back in 2004. "I do need help with a lot of things, pretty much anything you can think of"

This particular robbery brought unique

meaning to the term "victim." Before, those who got shot in the city either knew the gunman, had a bad history with them, or did something to prompt retaliation. This one was different. It was characterized by a chilling randomness.

Four suspects - Hugh Logan, his brother Sutcliffe Logan, Warren Johnson and Clive Brown - were convicted of the crime, jailed and deported. All were Mississauga residents. Brown was in Turnbull's geography class.

Despite the horrific incident, Turnbull graduated with honours from Arizona State University's journalism school as class valedictorian in 1990.

She was subsequently hired by the *Star*, where she became a champion of disability rights and organ donation during her career with the newspaper.

Peel police Chief Jennifer Evans reflected on the infamous shooting and Turnbull's subsequent legacy.

"Barbara was a truly inspirational woman. She did not let obstacles stand in her way or allow them to interfere with her determination to help others. Hearing of her death is truly sad news."

~ with files from *Torstar*