

She was charged with murder 15 years after her sister-in-law vanished. Police credit a 'crime fighting' Facebook page.



Kimberly Hancock, left, was arrested late Thursday and charged with the murder of her former roommate Deborah Elaine Deans. (Nash County Sheriff's Office; City of Rocky Mount, N.C.)

By

Antonia Noori Farzan

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For 15 years, police waited for a break in the disappearance of Deborah Elaine Deans, a 29-year-old North Carolina waitress who left behind four young children and baffled her family when she vanished in 2004.

But when someone with unusually detailed information finally came forward last week to point authorities toward what they think is the missing woman's remains, the tip didn't go to law enforcement officials. Instead, it went to a local Facebook page that has more than 63,000 followers and frequently posts about crimes ranging from air conditioner thefts to unsolved homicides in eastern North Carolina.

The page, [Fighting Crime News and Who's Wanted](#), posted a flier on Oct. 20 about Deans's [disappearance](#), urging readers to share any information and promising that they

could remain anonymous. On Thursday, just four days later, Kimberly Hancock, 49, Deans's [sister-in-law](#) and [former roommate](#), was arrested and charged with murder. The Nash County Sheriff's Office had found human remains buried in a [shallow grave](#) behind Hancock's trailer in Spring Hope, N.C., and they credited a ["very detailed"](#) email sent to the Facebook page's administrator that told them where to look.

"I found out a lot of people don't like talking to law enforcement, so for a lot of people they're just scared," the page's administrator, described as an "unassuming Nash County wife," told [WTVD](#) on Friday. She wanted to remain anonymous, she added, because she has no interest in becoming a public figure.

ON SCENE-[#Breaking](#)-Authorities believe they have a break in a 14-year-old cold case in Nash County. They found remains in Spring Hope. They believe it could belong to Deborah Deans, reported missing in 2004. [#abc11](#)







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4:51 PM - Oct 24, 2019

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The young mother's disappearance from the tiny, pine-forested community of Spring Hope had long been considered a cold case. Deans's mother reported her missing in April 2004, and she later told the [Rocky Mount Telegram](#) that the last time she saw her daughter was in January of that year, after Deans was released from a women's prison where she served time for [writing bad checks](#).

When initially questioned by investigators, Hancock [reportedly](#) said that she hadn't seen the missing woman since that January, either. The two had argued, she said, and Deans called someone to pick her up, leaving behind her infant and 5-year-old, who later ended up in foster care.

Hancock was unable to describe the car or the driver who came to take her roommate away, the [Telegram](#) reported. She also told police that Deans called her two months after the argument, asking for her children back. Hancock claimed that she refused, telling Deans to take up the matter with the state's department of social services.

Deans's two other children were with their grandmother when she vanished. Relatives maintained that she wouldn't have abandoned her family, and remained puzzled by her disappearance.

"We would talk often, sometimes up to three times a week," her mother, Elaine Blevins, told [the Telegram](#) in November 2004. "She has four children, and she would not have left those children. Two of those children are living with me now, and two are in foster care. They wonder where their mother is. This is not like Debbie, for no one, not even her friends, to have seen and talked to her."

According to [WNCN](#), Hancock was convicted the following year for cashing child support checks that were mailed to Deans. Still, she wouldn't emerge as a suspect for more than a decade.

[#Breaking](#)-Authorities believe they have a break in a 14-year-old cold case in Nash County. They found remains in Spring Hope. They believe they could belong to Deborah Deans, reported missing in 2004. This is a picture of Deans from the city of Rocky Mount's website. [#abc11](#)

The Facebook page that ultimately handed police a breakthrough has more in common with the [citizen journalists](#) who have stepped up to fill the void left by local newspapers than with the [amateur online sleuths](#) who try to solve long-dormant cold cases.

Dedicated to four counties in eastern North Carolina, Fighting Crime News and Who's Wanted publishes dispatches about the weather, reminders to vote in local elections and traffic updates. But the main focus is disseminating information about crimes of all kinds, and splashy graphics about unsolved homicides are a constant.

The woman behind the page, whose name has appeared in some local outlets against her wishes, [told WNCN on Friday](#) that her goal is to be a conduit between law enforcement and people who may have crucial information to share. Constantly inundated with hundreds of tips, she has helped solve some other, lower-profile cases by passing along the information to authorities. Before last week, she had posted about Deans's disappearance many times, starting not long after she created the page in 2013.

After her latest post about the case, she told [WNCN](#), she received an email telling her where the missing woman was buried. The message went into highly specific detail, describing exactly how Deans's body had been wrapped up. The Facebook page administrator immediately forwarded it to police, who started digging.

That tip "proved to be very accurate and very reliable," Nash County Sheriff Keith Stone [told reporters](#) on Thursday evening. The human remains found behind Hancock's home had been wrapped and buried in a way that matched the description in the email, he explained, although DNA testing was needed to say with certainty that the remains are Deans's.

Later that night, Hancock was [arrested and charged](#) after an in-depth interview with police. She is being held without bond and it wasn't immediately clear whether she had an attorney.

Suspect:

Kimberly Hancock 49 YO Female

Based on an in-depth interview with a person of interest, the Nash County Sheriffs Office has charged her with one count of first degree murder for the homicide of Deborah Elaine Deans.

No further information at this time.



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The 49-year-old has faced legal trouble before. In 1989, when she was 18 and still known as Kimberly Kay Privette, she [fatally shot](#) her father in the face with a .25-caliber handgun while he was [sleeping on a couch](#). The following year, she pleaded guilty to a reduced charges of felony manslaughter and received a six-year suspended sentence because of unspecified “extenuating circumstances,” a local newspaper [reported](#). The Nash County Sheriff’s Office told [WTVD](#) last week that the charges were lowered because her father had been abusive.

Police haven’t disclosed a motive for Deans’s alleged murder, and it’s unclear what prompted the tipster to come forward after 15 years. It’s also unclear how they knew so much about the 29-year-old’s death.

“I am really not sure, and I hate to speculate,” the Facebook page’s administrator told [WRAL](#). “I am not positive how they knew, but they knew enough to raise the eyebrows of detectives over at the sheriff’s office.”

source: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2019/10/28/deborah-deans-cold-case-facebook-arrest-kimberly-hancock/>