

# 100 MOMENTS

## THE UNITED STATE OF AMERICA V. DUSTIN HONKEN

By Bill Basler (1977-2006)

July 1968, Dustin Honken was born in Britt, Iowa, where he was then raised before moving to Arizona in 1992. While in Arizona, Honken perfected a methamphetamine production method and by early 1993 he was shipping meth exclusively to Greg Nicholson and Terry DeGeus in north Iowa.

Also during early 1993, Honken became romantically involved with Angela Johnson, the ex-girlfriend of Terry DeGeus.

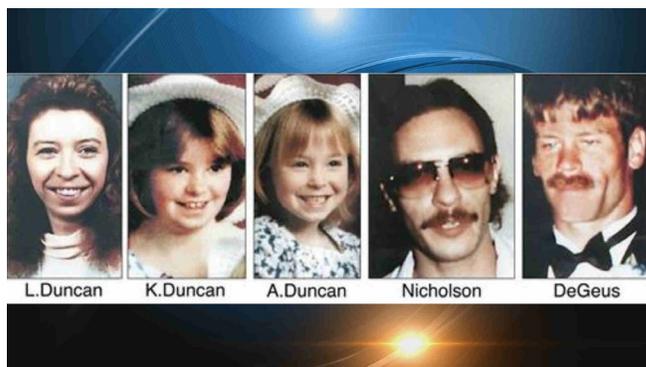
In March of 1993, a local drug task force executed a search warrant at Nicholson's Mason City residence, recovering several ounces of methamphetamine. Nicholson cooperated with the police and told them of his association with Honken, the quantities of drug involved, and that Honken was scheduled to come to Iowa soon to pick up money owed to him by Nicholson.

The local police included DEA in their investigation, and during late March, in a controlled meeting, Nicholson met with Honken and delivered cash to pay for the methamphetamine previously delivered. Honken was arrested after leaving the meeting, and charged in federal court.

Honken was released from custody pending trial and indicated to federal prosecutors that he intended to plead guilty on July 30, 1993.

Once released from jail, Honken and Angela Johnson began searching for Nicholson, who had moved out of his Mason City house. Johnson also purchased a 9mm handgun at a Waterloo pawn shop.

Late in July, Honken and Johnson discovered that Nicholson was living in Mason City with his new girlfriend, Lori Duncan, and Duncan's two little girls, Kandi (age 10) and Amber (age 6). Johnson was able to enter Duncan's house through a ruse, at which time Honken came in, bound and gagged all four, and drove them to a wooded area near Mason City, where Honken shot them all in the back of the head and buried all four bodies in a shallow grave.



Lori Duncan's parents reported to the Mason City police that Lori and the two girls were missing. The police suspected that Nicholson, Duncan, and the girls may have fled the area so that Nicholson wouldn't have to testify against Honken.

Early in November 1993, Angela Johnson called Terry DeGeus and lured him to a remote area near Mason City where Honken and Johnson killed DeGeus, burying his body in a farm field. The Hancock Co. Sheriff's Office received a missing person report on DeGeus and requested the assistance of the DCI.

In early 1995, all federal charges against Honken were dropped, due to their key witnesses being missing.

In the fall of 1995, Honken set up a methamphetamine lab in a Mason City residence. This was investigated by the Iowa Division of Narcotics Enforcement (DNE) and Honken was, once again, arrested. An associate of Honken agreed to cooperate and told investigators that Honken had made vague comments about the 1993 missing persons. As a result of the DNE investigation, Honken was convicted of the drug charges and sentenced to 27 years in prison.

By now, there were a number of local, state, and federal agencies with legitimate investigations involving Honken and Johnson. It was decided that the DCI would take the lead on the missing person's investigation, with the critical assistance of all the local, state, and federal agencies, including the US Attorney and the Iowa Attorney General's office.

During 1999 and 2000, agents interviewed numerous federal inmates around the country who at one time had been incarcerated with Honken. During the summer of 2000, a friend of Angela Johnson told agents that Johnson had admitted to being involved in the killing of all

five missing people and provided details about the murders but, not where the bodies were buried.

In July of 2000, Johnson was indicted by a federal grand jury and charged with conspiracy to commit murder. She was housed in the Benton County jail while awaiting trial. While there, Johnson was befriended by another inmate, Bobby McNeese. McNeese told Johnson that he had a friend serving a life sentence in Leavenworth prison and that this friend would admit to the killings if McNeese asked. McNeese further told Johnson that in order for this friend to be believed, he would need to be able to tell the police where the bodies were buried. Johnson drew maps to where the bodies were buried and gave these maps to McNeese. McNeese then gave these maps to the investigators, hoping to gain leniency on his own charges.

With this new information, the bodies of Terry DeGeus (32), Greg Nicholson (34), Lori Duncan (31), Kandi Duncan (10), and Amber Duncan (6) were recovered. As a result, Honken and Johnson were federally charged with all five murders.

During separate trials in 2004 and 2005, Dustin Honken and Angela Johnson were each convicted of the murders and both were given the death penalty.

Upon appeal, Angela Johnson's death sentence was reduced to life in prison.

During the summer of 2020, Dustin Honken was executed by lethal injection at the federal prison in Terre Haute, Indiana.