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Unsolved Cases: Michele Reidenbach

Seneca Valley High School senior disappeared in 1981 after leaving work to buy cold medicine.

By [Zandy Dudiak](#) [Email the author](#) 5:55 am

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Michele Reidenbach smiled for the camera as posed for her senior pictures on Sept. 22, 1981.

A senior at [Seneca Valley High School](#) in Jackson Township, Butler County, she had saved up \$100, tucked in a drawer at home, to pay for her class ring. The 16 year old from Evans City, like other seniors, had the exciting, final year of high school ahead.

After school that day, she went to her part-time job at Mel-Den TV and Appliance, a store at 240 South Main St. in [Zelienople](#), where she addressed envelopes and wrote advertisements for the owners. At 4 p.m., she left her job to walk to a Rite-Aid pharmacy located a half block away to buy some cold medicine. A clerk at the store confirmed that she purchased the medicine and left the store.

The last confirmed sighting of Michele was at the Super Duper supermarket parking lot on South Main Street in Zelienople that afternoon. Her boss, Fred Landy, said he saw her talking with someone in a red car, [according to an account in the Post-Gazette](#).

It would seem that she had intended to return to work. Police found her school books and purse were still at Mel Den. She was a chain smoker, according to reports, and was never without her cigarettes.

She wasn't having troubles at home and was very attached to her family, according to the Pennsylvania Missing Persons website. [She was devoted to an older sister who was paralyzed and in the hospital](#). Police found Reidenbach's purse and school books at Mel Den.

The fact that she had her senior pictures taken that day, had left the ring money at home, and her purse and books at Mel Den convinced authorities that she had been abducted.

Police described Michele as a white female; 5 feet, 2 inches tall; 110 pounds; with brown hair and blue eyes. She was last seen wearing blue jeans, and a wine-colored, V-neck sweater. She wore a gold necklace with a "knot" pendant.

Both Michele's disappearance and that of [Toni McNatt-Chiappetta of Clairton](#) on Nov. 6, 1981 have some similarities with the case of [Christine Guenther of Peters Township](#), if only the fact that they all happened within two months of each other.

Christine disappeared from the bus stop at Donaldson's Crossroads on Oct. 26, 1981, after she was given an early dismissal from [Peters Township High School](#). Her body was discovered on Oct. 31, 1981, by a hunter scouting the area around Cecil Sturgeon Road in South Fayette. She had been bludgeoned to death in the head.

Zelienople police wanted to question David Neal, then 29, of Seven Fields in 1989 in connection with Michele's disappearance after he was found guilty of murdering a transvestite in Pittsburgh. [However, Michele's mother, Gloria Reichenbach, told the Post-Gazette at the time that there was no evidence linking him to her disappearance.](#)

In 1993, a newly formed Butler County police task force had announced that [state troopers had conducted second interviews](#) with persons who were questioned immediately after Michele went missing. Butler County District [Attorney Sheryle Long said they had a few leads](#) and expressed optimism about solving the case.

But the case remains unsolved. Michele would be 47 today.

Anyone with information about Michele's whereabouts is asked to contact the Pennsylvania State Police in Butler at [724-284-8100](tel:724-284-8100) or the Zelienople Police Department at [724-452-3003](tel:724-452-3003). All information may be submitted on an anonymous basis.

For more information about this and other missing person cases, visit [Pennsylvania Missing Persons](#), [NamUs](#) or the [Doe Network](#).

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