

# MURDER, SHE WROTE?

## Police Charge a Romance Novelist with Killing Her Husband

By CHRISTINE PELISEK and STEVE HELLING

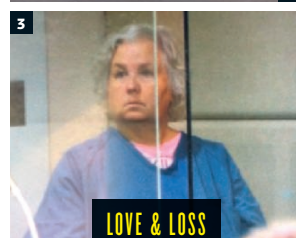
**FATAL FORESHADOWING?**  
A self-published novelist, Nancy Crampton-Brophy (with husband Daniel in 1999) wrote of killing, betrayal and “families that don’t always work,” according to an online bio.

**T**o their friends, romance writer Nancy Crampton-Brophy and her husband of more than 27 years, chef Daniel Brophy, seemed to live an idyllic life. While she wrote about sex, murder and betrayal in self-published books with titles like *The Wrong Husband*, *The Wrong Cop* and *The Wrong Lover*, Daniel taught at the Oregon Culinary Institute. Together they raised chickens and tended to a large vegetable garden at their suburban Portland, Ore., home, and Nancy wrote on her website that she knew her husband was “Mr. Right” when he served her hors d’oeuvres in the bathtub. “They were in love,” says the couple’s longtime friend Tania Medlin. “He loved his wife, and she loved him.”

But Nancy, 68, also acknowledged that everything wasn’t always perfect. “Like all marriages, we’ve had our ups and downs,” she wrote on her website. And in a 2011 essay entitled “How to Murder Your Husband,” she explored the various motives and methods for killing a spouse. “The thing I know about murder,” she wrote, “is that every one of us has it in him/her when pushed far enough.”

Police say that moment happened for Nancy on June 2, 2018, the day 63-year-old Daniel was found shot to death with a 9-mm handgun in one of the kitchens at the culinary institute. Three months later police arrested Nancy and charged her with murder and unlawful use of a weapon. (She has pleaded not guilty and remains held without bail at the Multnomah County jail.) “Detectives believe Nancy L. Crampton-Brophy is the suspect in Daniel C. Brophy’s murder,” the Portland Police Department said in a brief statement following the arrest.

So far authorities have not revealed a motive or evidence in the case, and prosecutors and police declined *People’s* requests for interviews. There were no surveillance cameras at the building where Daniel was shot, and it is unclear what evidence authorities have recovered from the Brophy family home. But Nancy’s own words have come under renewed scrutiny. “Murder, mayhem and gore seem to come naturally to me,” she said in a 2012 interview with the blog *Romancing the Genres*, “which means that my husband has



**LOVE & LOSS**  
1. The Brophys (in 2003) “loved each other,” says Brophy’s student Travis Richartz.  
2. Daniel Brophy was killed inside the Oregon Culinary Institute on June 2, 2018.  
3. Nancy Brophy at her Sept. 6 arraignment.

learned to sleep with one eye open.”

Even so, friends insist such comments were only jokes, and while Nancy had long prided herself on her understanding of the criminal justice system—using that knowledge to write stories that included meticulous details about the perfect crime—it was all fiction. “She wrote about murder mysteries, and [people] are spinning it way out of control,” says Medlin. “I don’t believe she is capable of this. They were in love.”

If Daniel Brophy was concerned about his wife’s tongue-in-cheek essay, he didn’t show it publicly. A well-known, respected culinary instructor, master gardener and mushroom expert, he was known for his cutting wit and his deep love for his wife, whom he jokingly referred to as “the management.” “They were like an old married couple,” says his student Madison Amburgy. “I thought, ‘Oh, that’s nice. They’re sweet. They’ve been together for a long time, and they know each other really well. He jokes about her, and it’s good.’”

Friends and family said the couple seemed happy and without outward strife. “For 30 years, as long as they were together, Nancy said, ‘He makes me laugh,’” says Medlin. “She’d say, ‘The true recipe to a marriage is if we can make each other laugh. And after all this time, he still does.’”

Since the murder Nancy has given no public interviews, saying only on Facebook June 3, “My husband and best friend was killed yesterday morning. I’m struggling to make sense of everything right now.” Before her arrest, friends say, she was planning to move out of the home she had shared with her husband. “She said that his side of the bedroom was haunting her,” says neighbor Heidi Hutchinson. “The memory of him was upsetting her, and she wanted to get out of the house.”

On Sept. 6 Nancy appeared in court for her arraignment—attended by Daniel’s parents, Karen and Jack Brophy, and his adult son from a previous marriage, Nathaniel Stillwater, who declined to comment for this story. While awaiting the upcoming trial, friends say they are concerned for Nancy—“She looks tired and scared,” says Medlin—and still reeling from Daniel’s death. “We worked side by side for eight hours before he was killed,” Medlin adds. “He was a beautiful person. It is sad and heartbreaking.” ●

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: COURTESY BROPHY FAN; KQED; KQMN-TV; KATU-TV