

Karyn Kupcinet

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Karyn Kupcinet (March 6, 1941 – November 28, 1963) was an [American](#) stage, film, and television actress. She was the only daughter of Chicago columnist and television personality [Irv Kupcinet](#).

Kupcinet had a brief acting career during the early 1960s. Six days after the [assassination of John F. Kennedy](#), her body was found at her [West Hollywood, California](#), home. It has been theorized that Kupcinet's death, officially ruled a [homicide](#), was connected to the assassination or was the result of an accidental fall. In the 1960s, Irv Kupcinet publicly dismissed the theories linking his daughter to the President's death. In 1992, *The Today Show* referred briefly to her alleged connection to the assassination, which prompted Kupcinet to describe the television broadcast as "an atrocious outrage" and "calumny". Karyn Kupcinet's death remains officially unsolved.

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Karyn Kupcinet



Kupcinet in 1962

Born	Roberta Lynn Kupcinet <div>March 6, 1941</div> <div> Chicago, Illinois, U.S.</div>
Died	November 28, 1963 (aged 22) <div> West Hollywood, California, U.S.</div>
Cause of death	Homicide
Resting place	Memorial Park Cemetery and Crematorium
Nationality	American
Alma mater	Pine Manor College
Occupation	Actress
Years active	1959–1963
Parent(s)	Irv Kupcinet <div> Esther Solomon Kupcinet</div>

Early life [[edit](#)]

Kupcinet was born Roberta Lynn Kupcinet' in Chicago to Irv Kupcinet, a [sportswriter](#) for the *Chicago Daily Times*, and his wife, Esther "Essee" Solomon Kupcinet. She acquired the nickname "Cookie" during her childhood. She made her acting debut at age 13 in the Chicago production of *Anniversary Waltz*, and went on to attend [Pine Manor College](#) for a semester, eventually studying at the [Actors Studio](#) in New York City.^[1]

Career [[edit](#)]

Kupcinet was encouraged into acting by her mother,^[1] and was given access to producers through the reputation of her father and his *Kup's Column* in the *Sun-Times*.^[1] In 1961, [Jerry Lewis](#) offered Kupcinet a role in the film *The Ladies Man*, where she appeared in a bit part as one of dozens of young ladies in a Hollywood boardinghouse. In 1962, she appeared in the role of [Annie Sullivan](#) in a [Laguna Beach](#) summer theater production of *The Miracle Worker*.^[1] She appeared in guest roles on television, including *The Donna Reed Show*, *The Wide Country*, *G.E. True*, and *Going My Way*. In addition to guest spots, Kupcinet had a regular role in the primetime series *Mrs. G. Goes to College* (retitled *The Gertrude Berg Show* during its short run).^[2]



Kupcinet with Skip Ward in *Mrs. G. Goes to College*, 1961

Kupcinet's last onscreen appearance was on *Perry Mason* in the role of Penny Ames, entitled, "The Case of the Capering Camera". The episode aired on [CBS](#) on January 16, 1964, nearly two months after her death.^[2] Ironically, it was the final on-screen appearance of [Ray Collins](#) as Lt. Tragg.

Personal life [[edit](#)]

By 1961, Kupcinet was living in Hollywood and was getting positive reviews for her acting.^[3] In March 1962, a *Los Angeles Times* interviewer, assigned to help Kupcinet promote *The Gertrude Berg Show*, noted her talking exclusively about food and her weight.^[4]

In December 1962, Kupcinet filmed a guest-star appearance on *The Wide Country* and had her first meeting with one of the series' stars, [Andrew Prine](#),^[5] and began a relationship with him.^{[1][5]} However, the relationship was problematic, Kupcinet was abusing [diet pills](#) along with other prescription drugs,^[1] and she had been arrested for [shoplifting](#).^[6]

The problems in Kupcinet's relationship with Prine were mainly due to Prine's objections to making the relationship exclusive. After Kupcinet underwent an illegal [abortion](#) in July 1963, the relationship cooled and Prine began dating other women. In turn, Kupcinet began spying on Prine and his new girlfriend.^[1]

The [Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department](#) later determined Kupcinet had sent threatening and profane messages, consisting of words and letters she had cut out of magazines, to Prine and herself.^[1] When Prine told her by telephone about the messages that had been left on his doorstep, she said she had received them, too.^[1] They met to show the messages to each other. She seemed puzzled.^[1] Soon after her death, investigators for the sheriff's department found her fingerprints on the papers and the [Scotch tape](#).^[1]

The weight problems had started in high school when Kupcinet began taking diet pills. Her weight remained an issue while at Pine Manor College. The pressure to stay thin intensified after Kupcinet arrived in Hollywood, and she soon began abusing diet pills along with other [prescription drugs](#).^[1]

Death [[edit](#)]

On the last day of her life, Kupcinet had dinner with future *Lost in Space* cast member [Mark Goddard](#) and his wife, Marcia Rogers Goddard, at their house on Coldwater Canyon Drive in [Beverly Hills](#) (near [Mulholland Drive](#)).^[7] She was due there at 6:30 pm, but arrived an hour late by taxicab. The couple said Kupcinet only toyed with her food during the meal. Marcia Goddard told two officers from the L.A. County Sheriff's Office that during dinner with Kupcinet "... her lips seemed numb. Her voice was funny. She moved her head at odd angles."^[8] The Goddards also noticed that her pupils were [constricted](#). Mark Goddard told authorities that he confronted Kupcinet about her altered state during the meal, and she began to cry, putting her arm around him.^[9] At one point during the meal, Kupcinet told her friends an unsubstantiated story about a baby that had been abandoned on her doorstep earlier that day.^[8] At 8:30 pm, a taxicab arrived to take her home, and she promised to telephone the Goddards soon.^[10]

Kupcinet apparently went straight home after dining with her friends. She was visited by freelance writer Edward Stephen Rubin shortly afterward. The two were then joined by actor Robert Hathaway around 9:30 pm. They told detectives they watched TV, including *The Danny Kaye Show*, with Kupcinet. They all drank coffee until she fell asleep, sitting next to them on the couch. She awoke and went to her room. The men either turned the TV set off or simply lowered the volume (three days later it was still playing with a low volume), and made sure the door was locked behind them before departing at about 11:15 pm. Hathaway said Rubin and he returned to his place and were later joined by Kupcinet's boyfriend, Andrew Prine, who was also Hathaway's neighbor. The three young men watched television and talked until around 3:00 am.^[11]

The Goddards went to Kupcinet's apartment on November 30, after she failed to telephone the couple as promised. Mark Goddard stated that he had a "funny feeling" that something was wrong.^[4] Upon arriving at Kupcinet's apartment, the couple found her nude body lying on the couch. Mark Goddard initially assumed that she had died from a drug overdose.^[1]

Upon searching Kupcinet's apartment, police found prescriptions for [Desoxyn](#), [Miltown](#), Amvicel, and other medications.^[5] Authorities also found a note written by Kupcinet that reflected in some detail her emotions regarding issues in her life (i.e., parents, self-image, problems with boyfriend) and people she admired.^[12]

Coroner Harold Kade concluded that due to a broken [hyoid](#) bone in her throat, Kupcinet had been strangled. Her death was officially ruled a homicide.^[13]

Investigators from the L. A. County Sheriff's Office determined that Kupcinet had told Andrew Prine by telephone the same story about the abandoned baby that she had told the Goddards, and it was false.^[8] Neither the sheriff's office nor the Los Angeles Police Department had received a report of a baby found abandoned anywhere in her apartment building on her last day alive or the previous day.^[8]



Theories [[edit](#)]

Lover's quarrel [[edit](#)]

During the course of their investigation, the [Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department](#) named Andrew Prine as one of their chief suspects. When questioned by law enforcement, Prine said he had talked with Kupcinet twice by phone on Wednesday, the day before her murder, claiming he was trying to patch up a lover's quarrel between them. Detectives considered it possible that after Prine learned the anonymous threat letters both he and Kupcinet had received had been created by Kupcinet herself, that and their unresolved argument gave him a motive for murder. In addition, both Edward Rubin and Robert Hathaway, the two men who had possibly been the last to see her alive, were friends of Prine. They were also eventually named as suspects.^{[14][15][1]}

In 1988, Kupcinet's father Irv published a memoir in which he revealed that he and his wife Essee (Karyn's mother) believed that Andrew Prine had had nothing to do with Karyn's murder.^[16] He was suspicious of a person, still alive when he wrote his memoir, who had no connection to Prine.^[17]

Alleged connection to JFK [[edit](#)]

Kupcinet's death was first mentioned in connection with the [John F. Kennedy assassination](#) in 1967 by researcher [Penn Jones, Jr.](#) in the self-published book *Forgive My Grief II*.^[18] Jones cited an [Associated Press](#) wire service story about an unidentified woman who placed a phone call on November 22, 1963, from the vicinity of [Oxnard, California](#), about 50 miles northwest of Los Angeles, and Jones claimed this woman was Kupcinet.

The woman, who dialed her local operator roughly 20 minutes before the shooting of the president in Dallas, stated that he was going to be shot. Jones alleged that "Karyn Kupcinet" was attempting to warn someone of the impending assassination. Jones claimed that she was told of the imminent assassination by her father, who allegedly had been given advance notice by Oswald's killer [Jack Ruby](#), whom Irv Kupcinet had met in Chicago in the 1940s.^[12]

Jones speculated Karyn Kupcinet had been murdered by representatives of the [Italian-American Mafia](#) who silenced her and sent a message to her father to remain silent about why JFK and Oswald had been shot and who was actually responsible.^[19]

Irv Kupcinet denied that he or his daughter had prior knowledge of the shootings of the president or Oswald. This was supported by Karyn Kupcinet's friends, actor [Earl Holliman](#), Holliman's then-girlfriend, and Karyn's boyfriend Andrew Prine, all of whom traveled to [Palm Springs](#) with Karyn on November 22. Karyn Kupcinet reportedly seemed upset and shocked about television and radio coverage of the shootings that she saw and heard in Palm Springs.^[12] She did not reveal any foreknowledge of the events.^[12]

In 2013, the [Ventura County Star](#) commemorated the 50th anniversary of the JFK assassination with a long article about the unknown woman who had used a phone in the vicinity of Oxnard, 50 miles away from Karyn Kupcinet's home, immediately before the shooting of JFK.^[20] Citing FBI documents that were declassified decades after the events of November 1963, the *Ventura County Star* article claims that two telephone operators with [General Telephone Company](#) who listened to the unknown woman talking for approximately 15 minutes gave the FBI a description of her voice.^[20] FBI agents questioned the two operators a very short time after JFK's death.^[20] Their description did not match Kupcinet's voice in the slightest, especially regarding her age bracket.^[20] The 2013 *Ventura County Star* article adds that the two operators believed the woman on the phone was "mentally disturbed."^[20]

Regarding Irv Kupcinet's connection to Jack Ruby, one year his senior, the [Warren Commission](#) determined that many men in their age bracket had interacted with Ruby in Chicago before 1947, when he moved from Chicago to Dallas.^[21] The Commission questioned many Chicagoans who had interacted with Ruby.^[21] None of them had prior knowledge that he was going to shoot Oswald.^[21]

Media attention [\[edit \]](#)

During the production and subsequent release of [Oliver Stone's](#) film *JFK*, Irv Kupcinet attacked the movie and the [conspiracy theories](#) surrounding it.^[12] When the film's box-office success led to a wave of media attention about the JFK conspiracy, [NBC's *Today Show*](#) broadcast a list of mysterious deaths, including that of Karyn Kupcinet. Irv Kupcinet responded to the *Today* broadcast in his column in the *Chicago Sun-Times* of February 9, 1992:

The *NBC Today Show* on Friday [February 7] carried a list of people who died violently in 1963 shortly after the death of President John F. Kennedy and may have had some link to the assassination. The first name on the list was Karyn Kupcinet, my daughter. That is an atrocious outrage. She did die violently in a Hollywood murder case still unsolved. That same list was published in a book years ago with no justification or verification. The book left the impression that some on the list may have been killed to silence them because of knowledge of the assassination. Nothing could be further from the truth in my daughter's case. The list apparently has developed a life of its own and for *Today* to repeat the calumny is reprehensible. Karyn no longer can suffer pain by such an inexcusable mention, but her parents and her brother Jerry can.^[12]

On September 30, 1999, an episode of *E! True Hollywood Story*, entitled "Death of a Dream: Karyn Kupcinet", detailed Kupcinet's life and theories regarding her death.^[22]^[not in citation given]

Legacy [\[edit \]](#)

Irv and Essee Kupcinet established a playhouse at [Shimer College](#) in her honor.^[23]

In 1971, Irv Kupcinet and his wife also founded the Karyn Kupcinet International School for Science, a summer research internships program at the [Weizmann Institute of Science](#).^[24]

In 2007, Kupcinet's niece, actress Kari Kupcinet-Kriser, and [Washburn University](#) professor Paul Fecteau, began work on a book about Kupcinet's unsolved murder.^[25]

Filmography [\[edit \]](#)

Year	Title	Role	Notes
1960 to 1961	<i>Hawaiian Eye</i>	Maila Terry Crane	2 episodes
1960	The Andy Griffith Show	Hanna Carter	Episode "A Feud is a Feud" S1/E9
1961	<i>The Donna Reed Show</i>	Jeannie	Episode: "Mary's Little Lambs"
1961	<i>The Ladies Man</i>	Working Girl	

1961 to 1962	<i>The Gertrude Berg Show</i>	Carol	3 episodes
1962	<i>The Red Skelton Show</i>	Janet - Secretary	Episode: "How to Fail..."
1962	<i>G.E. True</i>	Marybelle	Episode: "The Handmade Private"
1963	<i>The Wide Country</i>	Barbara Rice	Episode: "A Cry from the Mountain"
1963	<i>Going My Way</i>	Amy	Episode: "Has Anyone Seen Eddie?"
1964	<i>Perry Mason</i>	Penny Ames	Episode: "The Case of the Capering Camera"

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External links [edit]

- Karyn Kupcinet^[] on IMDb
- Karyn Kupcinet^[] at Find a Grave



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