

Moments in Time

by Frank C. Clifford

THE ATTACK ON NANCY KERRIGAN:
JANUARY 6, 1994; 2:35 P.M. EST; DETROIT, MICHIGAN



It was an extraordinary, soap opera-style plot that was hatched to clear the path to victory at the February 1994 Winter Olympics for gutsy, troubled ice skater Tonya Harding. But it was ill-conceived and poorly planned, and would earn a spot in the “tabloid hall of fame” as one of the most scandalous sporting events in history.

The knee-bashing attack on Nancy Kerrigan led to all five protagonists receiving jail time or criminal records. And amid a media firestorm, it put the sport of figure skating firmly on the map — resulting in a staggering 126 million viewers in the United States tuning in to an Olympic “Cold War” between Harding and Kerrigan that was as bitter and hard as the ice they were competing on.

Back in December 1993, Tonya Harding’s estranged husband, Jeff Gillooly, devised a plan with three other men to deliver a crippling blow to his ex-wife’s closest rival, Nancy Kerrigan, and dash her dreams of competing for Olympic gold. Kidnapping and murder were suggested and ruled out; instead, the goons decided to knee-club the athlete with a 53-centimetre collapsible baton (an “ASP” used by police).

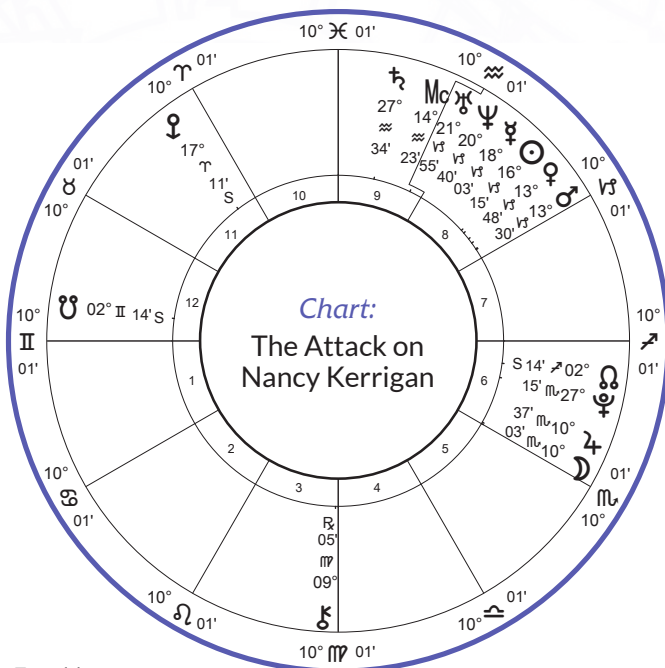
But the attempts of the attacker (Shane Stant) to fracture Kerrigan’s right leg failed. He fled, his planned exit route was locked, and the getaway driver was at a different location from the one that had been arranged. Several days later, Gillooly was overheard talking about the attack, and notes of the game plan in his (and allegedly Tonya’s) handwriting were found.

The attack put Kerrigan out of action for a short while, but she was deemed fit to compete at the Olympic event (held February 23–25), for which Harding also qualified. By that point, most details of the bungled plot and its hapless conspirators had been unearthed by the FBI, with Gillooly and Harding attempting to implicate one another.

So, what does the chart for the moment of the attack say about the key players and their motives?¹ (See **Chart**, below left.) The “light,” flighty Gemini Ascendant does little to temper the main, weighty essence of the horoscope: six planets in Capricorn in the 8th house, and a Moon–Jupiter conjunction in Scorpio. Both Capricorn and Scorpio have an energy that can be described as heavy, dark, serious, or controlled. Together in a chart, they reflect a focus and determination that can range from formal and businesslike to cutthroat and ruthlessly ambitious. These two zodiac signs can use extreme measures to attain their goals and may subscribe to a credo that “the end justifies the means.” (An exact Saturn–Pluto square underscores the importance of Capricorn and Scorpio in this chart.)

The Moon–Jupiter conjunction in the fixed water (ice) sign of Scorpio hints at rivalry and jealousy on ice (and in Tonya’s natal chart, asteroid *Tanya* is at 10° Scorpio). Also, Eris in competitive Aries in the attack chart’s 11th house makes six (!) squares to the Capricorn planets, suggesting that envy and bitterness abound.

Feeling snubbed is part of the mythology of Eris, where the apple of discord is thrown, in the midst of the gods, “to the fairest” (Kerrigan), and chaos ensues. Tonya Harding carried a chip on her shoulder: She was dubbed “trailer trash” by the snobby establishment, and her homemade outfits and choice of rock music for her routines shaped her reputation as a misfit and rebel. She had grown up poor, left behind a tempestuous relationship with her mother (LaVona Golden), and leading up to the attack (around a solar eclipse on her Sun in November 1993), she was in the process of ejecting another controlling figure — estranged husband Gillooly — from her life. Perhaps Nancy Kerrigan was another person she could



Equal houses,
True Node

focus her intense feelings on. (In the attack chart, asteroids *Nancy* and *Lavonne* are both at 7° Scorpio.)

Similar to the chart of the attack, Harding's horoscope has a Saturn/Capricorn and Mars/Scorpio feel to it, with Saturn conjunct the Taurus Moon and opposite three planets in Scorpio.² A Mars-Uranus conjunction in Libra says as much about her choice of partner as it does her defiant, daring disposition on and off the ice.

Harding had broken the mould of the saccharine sweetheart on ice. Powerfully built, she had already proven herself a worthy contender when she became the first U.S. woman to achieve the triple axel in competition (on February 16, 1991, as transiting Pluto conjoined her Scorpio Sun, and both the Moon and Venus aligned with her 8:22 p.m. chart's Mid-heaven in Pisces).

Nancy Kerrigan was in stark contrast to Harding, and this is reflected in the partile (exact degree) Venus-Mars conjunction in steely Capricorn in the attack chart. (Venus-Mars is suggestive of grace and grit as well as charisma and competition on the ice.) Although from a working-class background, too, willowy Kerrigan fit the Venusian image of the all-American, poised, pristine ice princess, while sturdy Harding was the gritty, athletic, blue-collar tomboy (Mars). The media's depiction of a pure Snow White up against an Evil Ice Queen starkly confirmed and influenced the public perception of their differences.

The sequence of planets in any conjunction or stellium gives insight into the timeline of a story.³ With six planets in Capricorn (the sign associated with the knees), we have an upcoming, high-stakes competition (Mars), envy towards a beautiful competitor (Venus), an ambitious husband with a plan (Sun), and a man with a law enforcement bar in his hand (Mercury). Up next after Mercury (Ascendant ruler: the attacker Shane Stant), we *and he* meet Neptune (the victimised skater and the bungled, inept getaway) and then the shocking and quick discovery (Uranus) of who was involved.

The Olympics in Lillehammer, Norway saw both competitors' dreams unfulfilled: Kerrigan won silver, while Harding buckled under the pressure of infamy and finished in eighth place. Later, on March 16, 1994, with Mercury at 28° Aquarius — conjunct the attack chart's all-important Saturn — Tonya would plead guilty to "conspiracy to hinder prosecution" (not reporting details of the attack once she had knowledge of them). She was given probation and community service and was banned from skating professionally for life.

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Given Harding's natal Mercury-Neptune conjunction in Sagittarius, her recollection of events to journalists over the years has been inconsistent. Fox Network News aired a face-to-face interview with Harding and Kerrigan on February 5, 1998 (with transiting Saturn at 15° Aries square the attack chart's Sun — and Venus at 18° Capricorn conjunct the attack chart's Mercury). Harding apologised only for being "in the wrong place at the wrong time." Perhaps part of the public's unwillingness to forgive her has been based on her self-pitying persona and the fact that she never offered them a much-demanded full-on, tearful confession.

With secretive Scorpio, clandestine Capricorn, and a heavily-tenanted 8th house dominating the attack chart, the extent of Harding's involvement in the crime may never be fully known, admitted to, or proven. Whatever the real facts are — and her statements have sometimes blurred the line between truth and fiction — the price for Tonya has been high.

A biopic, *I, Tonya*, was filmed in January-February 2017 and went on general release in December 2017 (both periods had transiting Pluto crossing over the story-telling Sun-Mercury conjunction of the attack chart). With Jupiter's recent return to Scorpio (the sign it occupies in both the attack chart and Harding's horoscope), the infamous skater has been brought back into the spotlight and had a chance to redeem herself.

Australian actress Margot Robbie (born July 2, 1990) produced the film and stars as Harding. Robbie has three planets in Cancer opposite Saturn, Uranus, and Neptune in Capricorn — aligning with the Capricorn stellium in the attack chart. Allison Janney won awards (including an Oscar) for her portrayal of Harding's abusive mother, and Janney's natal Moon is at 13° Cancer, opposite the stellium. The movie's filming and release coincided with the attack chart's Neptune Solar Arc-directing to the Aquarius MC. It proved a fascinating but fictionalised version of *part* of the truth.

All birth data can be found at <http://www.astrodatabank.com>

References and Notes

1. The exact time of the attack is listed online here: <https://justcriminals.info/2017/02/14/tonya-harding-nancy-kerrigan-1994/> (accessed in May 2018).
2. The birth time for Harding is in question; there is an unverified account of a birth certificate having been printed in a local newspaper. According to that certificate, Tonya Harding was born November 12, 1970 at 8:22 p.m., in Portland, Oregon, but Harding's mother (who had five children) gave "between 8:00 and 10:00 a.m." to Eileen Galer. I'm more inclined to use the 8:22 p.m. time, placing 17° Cancer on the Ascendant.
3. For more details, see my book, *Getting to the Heart of Your Chart* (Flare, 2017 edition), or my article, "Sequential Conjunctions" in *The Mountain Astrologer*, Aug./Sept. 2010, p. 20.

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Frank Clifford is the author of *The Solar Arc Handbook (2018)* as well as *Getting to the Heart of Your Chart*; *Horoscope Snapshots: Essays in Modern Astrology*; and *Palmistry 4 Today*. Recently, Frank published *The Book of Music Horoscopes*, a collection of charts and essays created to raise funds for the astrology community. Frank's website can be found at <http://www.frankclifford.co.uk> — with books, free articles, and an online consultation booking feature — and his courses are at <http://www.londonastrology.co.uk>