

New Hampshire Cold Case Unit 2012 Annual Report

Introduction

2012 has been a year of diverse activity for the Cold Case Unit as its members continue to advance ongoing initiatives while beginning investigations into previously unexplored cases. The legal arguments advanced in the Hina homicide prosecution (State v. McLeod) demonstrate the complex nature of historic investigations and prosecutions. The CCU continues to learn and adapt to the unique challenges of its caseload.

Staffing

The staffing of the CCU has seen no significant changes in 2012. Two New Hampshire State Troopers, Sergeant Scott Gilbert and Trooper Michael Kokoski, continue to serve as the unit's full-time investigators. Sergeant Scott Gilbert supervises the unit. Detective Robert Freitas (retired Manchester PD) serves in a part-time capacity working for the Attorney General's office.

The prosecutorial duties of the unit are handled day-to-day by Senior Assistant Attorney General Jeffery Strelzin. The Attorney General's Office also provides the services of victim/witness advocate Joelle Donnelly, who serves as the main resource for the relatives and loved ones of NH's cold case homicide victims.

The clerical and paralegal work of the CCU continues to be supported by the efforts of volunteers, Milli Knudsen and Verne Greene. They are tasked not only with organization of case files, but are also called upon to assist in searching public records and researching historic media content.

The Arrest of Arthur Collins

The CCU, working closely with the Auburn Police Department, spent much of the first half of 2012 completing its re-investigation of the 2001 murder of George Jodoin. Mr. Jodoin was found shot to death in his home on December 27, 2001. Lead investigator Robert Freitas and Auburn police officer Bill Barry oversaw a thorough review of the case file, followed by extensive field work, including many interviews and re-interviews of various witnesses. This renewed effort also included analysis of forensic evidence, as well as assistance from the New Hampshire State Police polygraph unit.

On May 16, 2012, months of work culminated in the arrest of Arthur Collins in connection with the murder of George Jodoin. Collins, age 43, of Manchester, was charged with alternative counts of second degree murder. Collins was arrested by CCU detectives and the Manchester Police Department without incident.

While there is little detail to share at this stage, the CCU is proud to have brought this 11-year old mystery to a resolution. The investigative and prosecutorial arms of the unit remain committed to seeing this case through, and obtaining justice for George Jodoin.

Solving the John Pond Homicide

In addition to the Jodoin murder, 2012 also saw the resolution of another New Hampshire cold homicide case. The Salem Police Department, working with AG Strelzin, were able to determine that the 1990 murder of Salem resident John Pond was in fact carried out by long time suspect Mark Craig.

John Pond was stabbed to death in his home on September 19, 1990. Mark Craig emerged as a suspect early on in the investigation, however, there was little evidence identifying him as the killer. Craig had denied being at Pond's home on the night of the murder. Over the years, Salem PD conducted DNA testing of blood found at the scene of the homicide. This blood showed a contributor other than John Pond, however, no identification of that unknown individual was ever made. Mark Craig died of a drug overdose in 2004. In 2009, Salem PD renewed the investigation into the case and focused on the unknown DNA. They obtained a sample of blood from Mark Craig's autopsy, and testing determined that Craig was a contributor of blood within the crime scene. This breakthrough was bolstered by accompanying footwear impression evidence; specifically, impressions matching the type of footwear worn by Craig at the time of the murder.

In cold case work, success can take different forms. While Craig was not alive to be arrested for his crime, this case represents a successful resolution, and serves as testament to how forensic testing and advancements can illuminate the truth behind a decades-old murder.

Other Investigative Efforts

Below are several examples of investigative work the CCU undertakes day to day. The below list is just a small, general sampling of unit activities, and is intended to give a general view into the types of efforts put forth.

- The CCU has added the homicide of Eric Fitting to its case list. Mr. Fitting's body was found in the woods of Sharon, NH on September 19, 2009. The initial investigation into his death involved extensive work with Massachusetts authorities in Fall River, MA where Mr. Fitting resided. The CCU, along with detectives from the State Police Major Crime Unit, have generated new information from witness accounts. A December evidence search opened new avenues for further exploration in 2013.
- In July 2012, CCU detectives began a proactive re-investigation into the Theresa Reed homicide. Ms. Reed was found stabbed to death in her Plymouth apartment on September 6, 1991. While it would be premature to offer many details, members of the CCU have been working closely with the Massachusetts State Police.
- Efforts continued to advance the investigation into the homicide of Mary Harrison. Mary was found dead in the woods of Hinsdale on October 30, 1981. She had disappeared from her home in Winchester while her husband was out-of-state for work. The CCU's recent efforts focused on new testing of forensic evidence from the crime scene, as well as research into the background and history of one particular individual. The CCU worked closely with Bode Technology to exhaust available forensic tests, and case developments led Sgt. Gilbert and Trooper Kokoski to field work in the State of New Jersey. Work continues on this case.

- The CCU also used its relationship with Bode Technology to review and assess a heinous double homicide from 1995. Loretta Allen and Doris Bean were killed in their Hudson home on November 11, 1995. While Charles Dorval Jr. has been tried and convicted of Allen's murder, it is believed a different individual killed Bean. The CCU is exploring the potential of forensic evidence from this crime scene.
- The case of four unidentified female homicide victims in Allenstown also saw renewed effort. Two members of the State Police Major Crime Unit were able to travel to Alexandria, VA for a case consultation with the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children. This rare opportunity allowed for a "think tank" of experts to discuss and evaluate the case, and then offer suggestions and strategies for targeted follow-up. The Cold Case Unit fields the majority of incoming tips for this case, and sincerely hopes that one day the right piece of information will identify these victims
- The CCU researched and completed some preliminary investigation into the murder of Joseph Furando. Mr. Furando was found shot to death on Brewer Road in Kensington on May 17, 1979. Mr. Furando's family made inquiries as to the status of the case, and the CCU team began the process of locating and accounting for the case materials. As with many cases from the era, several investigative files were found in the possession of various agencies who had worked on the murder at its outset. The CCU now has a firm understanding of the case materials available, and has completed some field work in the matter.

State v. McLeod

The CCU remains committed to the successful prosecution of David McLeod for the arson murder of the Hina family, who perished in a January 1989 fire at their apartment building in Keene. The Attorney General's Office devoted significant time briefing and preparing for the upcoming oral arguments before the State Supreme Court. The Court will determine the admissibility of testimony from several of the State's arson experts, and the evidence upon which they base their conclusions. The Supreme Court appeal follows a Superior Court ruling in 2011, excluding the testimony of said experts.

Training

The community of cold case investigators and prosecutors is relatively small within the larger group of law enforcement professionals. As such, it is critical to network with and learn from other agencies in the country that are tackling their own unsolved homicides. In August of 2012, Sergeant Scott Gilbert, Trooper Michael Kokoski, and Detective Robert Freitas all traveled to Murfreesboro, TN to attend the 2nd Annual Cold Case Homicide Conference hosted by the Rutherford County Sheriff's Office. This week long gathering provided a line-up of exceptional speakers on topics such as behavioral analysis, forensic evidence, and cold case investigative techniques. The attendees, consisting of detectives from all around the country, were also afforded the opportunity to present some of their cases to the group in order to solicit suggestions and feedback in a workshop setting.

Tip Collection

Members of the CCU continue to take tips and leads via phone and email. All tips are documented in the "E-Solve" software program, and are prioritized and worked based on current unit initiatives and availability. In 2012, the CCU logged approximately 74 tips in E-Solve.

Conclusion

Thus far, 2012 has proven to be the most active and fruitful year of the unit's existence. This year saw successful resolution of two unit cases including an 11-year old homicide with an offender who continued to reside on the streets of the Granite State. In addition to these solved cases, the CCU has made exciting advancements in several open investigations. It is the hope that this progress will engender similar case resolutions for the future. It is the sincere desire of all CCU unit members that a measure of justice can be delivered for each victim, and that each grieving family will receive the answers they deserve.