



Genesee County Prosecutor's Office

David Leyton, Prosecutor



Two convicted in 1996 slaying after cigarette butt ties them to crime

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Genesee County Sheriff's Department Lt. Kevin Shanlian knew that two Flint men were responsible for the 1996 slaying of a man whose body was found in the river in Richfield Township.

He gathered information and twice presented the case to Genesee County Prosecutor David Leyton, asking him to issue murder charges against Danny L. Thompson and Randy W. Snyder.

Twice Leyton refused, saying there was not enough evidence to convict.

But after examining a cigarette butt discarded at the murder scene, officials found DNA linking the suspects to the slaying.

That, coupled with a prison snitch, and decade-old recollections of a barmaid, gave Leyton the ammunition he believed necessary to convict the two in the Oct. 7, 1996 slaying of Michael W. Beauchamp.

On Friday and Tuesday, separate juries convicted Thompson of first-degree murder and Snyder of second-degree murder.

"I give a lot of credit to Shanlian, who championed this case for years," Leyton said after Thompson's jury returned on Friday.

Both men are being held without bond in the Genesee County Jail awaiting Feb. 25 sentencings from Genesee Circuit Judge Judith A. Fullerton.

The verdicts were welcomed by the victim's relatives.

"Justice has been served," said James M. Beauchamp, 71, of Standish, the victim's uncle.

Immediately after Friday's verdict in one case, he called his brother, John W. Beauchamp, 68, the victim's father, who is in Florida.

"It doesn't bring Michael back, but it will help with closure," James Beauchamp said.

Assistant Genesee County Prosecutor Jennifer McKellar, who handled both cases, said the "senseless slaying" resulted from an alleged theft from the grandmother of one of Thompson's or Snyder's associates.

Neither Thompson, 52, now of Bon Aqua, Tenn., nor Snyder, 47, who was lodged in the Lapeer Thumb Correctional Facility, testified in the case, but both gave statements to police.

The body of Beauchamp, 33, of Flint was found floating in the Flint River at a Genesee County park fishing site off N. Irish Road in Richfield Township, a day after he was last seen with two men at the Viking Lounge.

Police said a pathologist said Beauchamp died from drowning, but was beaten before being tossed in the water.

The cigarette butt had Thompson's DNA on it. And a prison snitch forwarded information to police that led to charges against Snyder.

Police said Thompson initially denied being at the Richfield Road fishing site, but years later admitted fighting with Beauchamp, claiming self-defense.

Snyder, who was in prison on a child molestation conviction, said he met Thompson years earlier when both were in prison, and admitted helping him drag Beauchamp into the water, where he was drowned by Thompson.

Both have records that show multiple convictions on crimes ranging from receiving and concealing stolen property and prison escape for Snyder and robbery for Thompson.

Thompson also was convicted in 1985 of burning a residence, conspiracy and extortion and was sentenced to serve 13 1/2 years in prison.

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