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Murder

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He knocked on doors, collected new names, knocked on their doors and got more names from them. In 12 months he traveled 40,000 miles by car, criticizing the state to interview potential witnesses. He logged thousands of miles flying out of state to interview experts and witnesses.

In May 1984, Burton turned in his case report, neatly typed, 2,000 pages long.
What a difference a year makes. Within days a longtime suspect, Bradley Phillip Scott, 35, a lawn sprinkler system installer, was arrested in West Palm Beach and charged with murdering Linda Carr of Pikaritz.

Eleven days later, a Charlotte County grand jury took five minutes to indict Scott on the murder charge, based on the evidence in Burton's massive case report.

A two-page summary of that evidence convinced a judge to withdraw bail initially set at \$100,000 and hold Scott without bond until his trial, scheduled for July 1987.

Burton was on top of the world. What a difference a year makes. Today Burton monitors construction licenses for the county building department, interviewing people in a cluttered cubicle in the county administration building here. He also investigates building code violations. Miscellaneous.

"It's nice, though, working 8 to 5, just getting up and going home when the day's over," he says.

But, he adds, "It was the lowest day of my life," the day he handed in his affidavit. No. 286, turned to resign, he says, from the Charlotte County Sheriff's Department. The situation ended his habitual misuse, the admission from his voice.

"That's all I ever wanted to do," he says, "just work cases to the best of my ability, have them give me a case and let me work it."
"The worst part of it all," McDougall says, "was that Kenny was actually beaten down for doing something that was commendable."

Charlotte County Sheriff Gino Sapp says he didn't much approve of Burton's investigation, that it fell significantly short of commendable. "But I had no problem with him anyway."

McDougall was a captain in the

sheriff's office in adjacent Lee County when then-Sheriff Bob Graham picked him to fill in after he suspended Charlotte County Sheriff Sapp, who was indicted on charges of nepotism.

Sapp inspired fierce loyalty among his men and McDougall concedes he didn't really know for some time who in his department he could count on. He knew they had similar doubts about him. The Pikaritz case didn't help.

He had been in the sheriff's seat just "two or three days" when Linda Pikaritz's parents came calling. McDougall looked first to the detective who had most recently been assigned to the Pikaritz case, Mike Gandy.

"I told Gandy I would re-examine this other case, that he would work on this one full time. That he could have all the time, all the help, all the support he needed, Carter Blanche. He let my office scotch. After all, it was every investigator's dream," McDougall says.

That that Sunday on the following Sunday, Gandy came back in. He said he couldn't do it — that if he cracked this case (for me) — it would be disastrous to Sheriff Sapp," McDougall says.

Gandy considers loyalty played a part, but only so far as he preferred not to have Sapp's approach to McDougall. Sapp's approach entailed waiting for certain things to happen before proceeding, which also could have led to an arrest, Gandy says.

Bill Reilly, currently Sapp's chief deputy and McDougall's as well, says he was shocked when Gandy turned down the assignment. "At the time he said it looked like it was grandstanding by the incumbent sheriff. I didn't think that, but that's the way Gandy took it," he said.

McDougall turned to the local State Attorney's Office for a name. They told him about Burton.

It was a Sunday. McDougall telephoned Burton and told him he was relieving him of all his cases, to get down to the sheriff's office in Punta Gorda right away. Burton came in a quivering, he recalls.

"When I saw how nervous he was, I told him to be at peace and made him the same offer I made Gandy.
By then we both knew that when Sapp got back — and we all expected he'd be acquitted — this assignment could be the kiss of death, especially if he succeeded."

McDougall, who plans to run for sheriff of Lee County when his current boss, Frank Westlake, retires, said he figured that "if Gandy did get lucky, his success would be my success and people would ask why it wasn't done sooner."

But, Burton jumped at it. The original case report was no longer than 18 pages. McDougall said. Its key evidence included a hair found on Linda Pikaritz's tennis shoe that matched in all "class characteristics" Bradley Scott's, a hair found in a car Scott drove that looked like those on a broken necktie found at the crime scene.

But it was "not nearly enough" to seek an indictment, said Charlotte's chief prosecutor, Paul Abernethy.

The sheriff in office at the time of the murder, Alan Latta, maintained Burton has not really uncovered anything new. "It's just a lot of paper... It's one thing to get an indictment, it's another thing to get a conviction in a court of law... If I was a betting man, I'd bet (Scott) would."

Sapp agrees. "To my knowledge, no additional evidentiary material has been gathered," he says, conceding he has refused to look at Burton's report and declined his offers of a briefing, thereby distancing himself from the investigation ordered by his replacement and completed during his absence.

Abernethy diagnosed "Kenny Burton found one witness who interviewed witnesses the department knew existed but nobody talked to."

Burton tracked the necklace to the store where it was purchased, to its manufacturer in India, who verified that the source of all the shells was the same. He found reports to verify the broken strands of the necklace were a virtually perfect fit and, if reconnected, would leave a gap the single shell fits perfectly.

He said he worked fifteen days, seven-day weeks for a year, but loved it. "I got to use all the skills and training I have and it was a case that required a lot of detective reasoning."

He offers an example: "Typical, murderers and victims know each other. I asked myself, how does a 27-year-old man get to know a 12-year-old girl? They don't go to school together, don't work together, don't live near one another."

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