

In Re: The Murder of Richard and Shirley Robison and Each of Their Children

(May 2009)

This is a statement of professional judgment in the matter of the murder of the Robison family on June 25, 1968, at Good Hart, Michigan. It is not intended as the ultimate compendium of the evidence, nor is it a revelation of evidence that was heretofore undisclosed. Rather, it is an assessment of the probative quality of the known evidence based on principles of logic and law and set against many years of experience as an assistant prosecuting attorney in a major metropolitan prosecutor's office. It is written after reading fiction broadly based on the case that has lead some to treat the matter as "unsolved" and others to accuse unjustly.

In December 1972 and then again in early 1973, I reviewed the investigative reports of the Michigan State Police. Those reports convinced me and my then boss, L. Brooks Patterson, that the perpetrator of this horror was clearly identified by the evidence developed by the State Police and the Emmet County Sheriff. To that end we had invited Michigan State Police detectives Stearns and Flis to meet with us with a view to issuance of a murder warrant only to learn that some days before the scheduled meeting, the perpetrator of these crimes had committed suicide. As a result, no warrant was or could have been authorized and no trial was ever held. It is not however justified to reason from the absence of prosecution that the matter was or is unsolved. In point of fact, the evidence developed in the investigation virtually shouts the name of the killer....

CSI 1968 – 1969

Crime scene investigation in this case, as in so many others, included a number of compelling findings.

Michigan State Police Crime Laboratory personnel variously collected .22 and .25 caliber bullets and shell casings at the murder scene, at two subsequent autopsy procedures and at a private gun range in Oakland County. The laboratory also obtained possession of a .22 caliber Armalite AR-7 semi-automatic rifle, being one of two such weapons purchased by the perpetrator in 1966. From the perpetrator, the laboratory additionally received a .25 caliber Beretta automatic pistol, being one of two such weapons purchased by the perpetrator in February 1968 and permitted in his name in April 1968.

The laboratory conducted a series of forensic test firings on these weapons and made microscopic comparisons with evidence that had been collected at the crime scene and elsewhere. The findings were as follows:

1. Four (4) shell casings found at the crime scene were fired by the very same weapon that fired five (5) shell casings found by Stearns and Flis at the private gun range in Oakland County.

This is not a finding of similarity, it is a finding of absolute identity, i.e. the forensic tests identify one of the murder weapons as being the precise weapon fired at the private gun range. There is no ambiguity about this finding; none whatsoever. Eye witness statements established that the perpetrator had previously fired an Armalite AR-7 rifle that he owned at that private gun range well prior to the homicides. The witnesses to this event were the perpetrator's father-in-law and brother-in-law. The father-in-law owned the gun range and stated that only family members were allowed to use it and that there were no other firings of an AR-7 at that location. Further, the perpetrator admits that he fired his AR-7 at the range as the witnesses stated.

2. The balance of the .22 caliber shell casings found at the gun range disclosed no significant differences from the shell casings found at the crime scene but fell short of sufficient characteristics for positive identification. One shell casing found at the range was eliminated.

These forensic findings and the statement of witnesses unequivocally establish that one of the two murder weapons was purchased, possessed, and used by the perpetrator over a period of many months preceding the killings.

3. The Armalite AR-7 is not commonly owned. The crime laboratory reports encountering the weapon on only 3 or 4 occasions in 14 years. The gun dealer who sold two such weapons to the perpetrator stated that the weapon is “relatively rare and unusual” and that “few of them” are in circulation.

4. The specific type of AR-7 purchased by the perpetrator left firing pin toolmarks on shell casings that further distinguish this model from earlier versions of the AR-7; making its rarity even more pronounced.

5. The caliber of the second murder weapon was .25. Laboratory comparison of bullets and casings found at the crime scene and upon autopsy disclose that those items of evidence bore “class characteristics” of the .25 caliber Beretta turned over by the perpetrator. A second Beretta purchased by the perpetrator is “missing.” The characteristics of the surrendered gun were more similar to the case at hand than to any of the over 100 .25 caliber automatic pistol test shots in the laboratory files. A positive microscopic identification was not made. However, the laboratory noted the likelihood that the missing weapon bore similar characteristics. The laboratory report states that “it is reasonable to argue that there is the highest degree of probability that the missing .25 caliber Beretta automatic pistol and SAKO ammunition...were used in the perpetration of the homicides in question.”

6. SAKO .25 caliber ammunition was exceptionally rare.

The crime laboratory describes great difficulty in acquiring the ammunition for testing purposes. The ammunition was manufactured in Finland and not readily available. Eventually, the laboratory acquired a “couple of cartridges” from the FBI laboratory in Washington who would not provide more due to its own small supply.

Significantly, on February 4, 1968, Herbert Johnson, gun dealer and the perpetrator’s brother-in-law, sold two Beretta .25 caliber automatic pistols to him along with four boxes (100 rounds) of SAKO ammunition. The weapons and ammunition had been purchased, in turn, from the Williams Gunsight Company whose agent confirmed the sale to the perpetrator and underscored the rarity of the SAKO brand in the United States.

It is my judgment that had a trial occurred, the firearms identification personnel of the state police crime laboratory would have been readily qualified as experts in their field and that, under oath, they would have testified that the bullets and casings found upon autopsy and at the crime scene were fired from weapons purchased and possessed by the perpetrator.

To Explain is To Lie

Each of those weapons and the SAKO ammunition was “missing” when investigators sought them out. The perpetrator offered various explanations for their whereabouts.

With respect to the missing Beretta pistol and SAKO ammunition, the perpetrator stated that he gave that weapon and the 100 rounds of SAKO ammunition to the deceased, Richard Robison, on February 5, 1968, the day after these items were purchased. Nonetheless, in April 1968 the perpetrator obtained permits to purchase the weapons in his own name. Further, he stated that after the homicides were discovered, he searched the Robison home for the weapon and discovered the shipping box for it. He stated that Marvin Fulton found the box in a dresser drawer. He also stated that he mailed the box to the Emmet County Sheriff, Richard Zink.

Marvin Fulton stated that he and the perpetrator did search for the weapon but found neither a gun nor a shipping box. Emmet County Sheriff Richard Zink stated that he did not receive such a shipping box from the perpetrator or anyone else.

Friends and family of the deceased Richard Robison state, inter alia, that he was anti-gun and that the prospect of him accepting a pistol and ammunition as alleged by the perpetrator is inconsistent with his stated beliefs.

Investigators also received information on the pistols from the perpetrator's wife. The information would become admissible evidence only in the event that a divorce preceded court testimony and only to the extent that the witness would be reporting observations and not confidential communications. Nevertheless, the wife's statements underwrite the conclusions of the investigators and the statements of the lay witnesses on the question of whether the perpetrator continued in possession of both Beretta pistols after their purchase by him.

She stated that she was with the perpetrator when he purchased the pistols and that both guns were brought to their home in Birmingham. One gun was placed in her dresser, the other, with the ammunition, in the perpetrator's dresser. Both guns remained in those locations until the middle of June 1968, when one was taken to work by the perpetrator and, he alleged, given to the deceased Richard Robison.

The wife stated she thereafter checked for the ammunition and found it was no longer there. She stated that she did not understand why her husband was lying to investigators about not having both pistols after February 1968.

With respect to the missing AR-7 rifle, gun dealer Herbert Johnson established by both recollection and business records that in 1966 he sold two Armalite AR-7 rifles to the perpetrator. Johnson's recollection and business records directly refuted the perpetrator's claim to investigators that he returned one of the two rifles to Johnson in 1967. That weapon remained missing throughout the investigation.

It is telling that the perpetrator did not advise investigators about his ownership of the AR-7 rifles until he was arrested in September 1969. Unaware of the reason for the arrest, he volunteered an elaborate explanation of his purchase of the weapons and described giving one to a friend and returning the other to the gun dealer. The perpetrator has inserted himself into the earliest stages of the investigation. It is most improbable that he did not know that investigators were seeking a .22 caliber rifle used in the homicides. Yet he made no disclosure about the AR-7s until arrested for what he perceived to be charges related to the murders. (The second AR-7 was given by the perpetrator to one Harold Smurthwaite in 1966. That weapon was provided by Smurthwaite to the crime laboratory for test firing and was found not to be the murder weapon.)

Investigators determined from witnesses Olbrich and Boehnke that each of them observed the AR-7 rifle that Olbrich temporarily obtained from the perpetrator in March or April 1968. Indeed, witness Olbrich stated that he saw the weapon once again after that March or April occasion but could not fix the date.

The .22 caliber Armalite AR-7 rifle and the .25 caliber Beretta automatic pistol are to this case the proverbial smoking guns. Each is directly tied to the perpetrator and each is directly tied to the murders. Each is also the object of a deceitful cover-up by the perpetrator that is eventually and unconditionally impeached by credible witnesses.

Among the findings of the crime scene investigators were numerous footwear prints in blood within the Robison cottage. It was their determination that all of the prints were made by the same footwear and that only one person had walked about in the fresh blood. The perimeter measurement of the prints were approximately those of the perpetrator's known footwear. The footwear that made the prints was not, however, found.

To Alibi is To Lie

The perpetrator gave investigators a detailed account of his activities on the day of the murders, June 25, 1968.

He stated that at the direction of Richard Robison he left the company office shortly after 10:30 am to attend the Plumber's Convention at Cobo Hall. This was his only visit to the convention. He stated that he walked from the Pontchatrain Hotel in the afternoon to Cobo Hall with Robert Laidlaw of Delta Faucet Company. He stated that he left the convention at approximately 5:00 pm and returned to his office at 6:00 pm. There he unplugged downspouts that had become clogged due to heavy rain. He stated that he then went to the Robison's residence where there was "considerable flooding" and that he had to bail out and mop up the basement for about three hours.

Robert Laidlaw was interviewed. He recalled meeting the perpetrator at the hotel in the afternoon and walking with him to Cobo Hall. He stated that it was not raining but was a sunny, bright day.

The Plumber's Convention took place at Cobo Hall on June 23, 24 and 25, 1968. Weather records for Detroit show that June 23 and June 24 were dry and partly or mostly sunny. On June 25, there were 2.17 inches of rain and zero percent of possible sunshine.

Robert Blair, a distributor of Delta plumbing products, had a booth at the convention. He stated to investigators that he was confident that he did not see the perpetrator at the convention on June 25 but did see him on June 24. He was attending his booth when he saw the perpetrator making rounds of the booths. On June 25, Blair indicated that he and others began dismantling their booths in the early afternoon. It was raining heavily and "no one was around."

John Seabrook, a Delta sales representative, told investigators that he saw the perpetrator at the convention on either June 23 or 24. He said he definitely did not see him on June 25.

Norman Abbott, another Delta agent, stated to investigators that he saw the perpetrator at the convention and that it was on June 24. Abbott was not at either the hotel or the convention hall on June 25.

The witnesses Laidlaw, Blaire, Seabrook and Abbott individually and collectively scuttle the perpetrator's fictitious account of his whereabouts during the afternoon of the killings.

The perpetrator's account of the evening of June 25 suffered the same fate upon investigation. He advised the detectives that he returned to his office, unplugged the downspout and proceeded to the Robison home to "check for flooding." He described significant flooding there and claimed to have spent three hours bailing and mopping up in the basement. He further stated that during the evening at the Robison residence he had called a Robison family friend to report the flooding.

Investigators' observations at the Robison home were inconsistent with the perpetrator's statements. They found no indication of flooding or water seepage. Upon advising the perpetrator of their findings, he revised his account of the evening scenario to involve only minor water seepage that he was able to clean up with a mop.

It is noted that the perpetrator would have investigators believe that this "minor" seepage nonetheless required his attention for some three hours. (Investigators learned from the perpetrator's wife that he arrived home during the 11 o'clock news or shortly thereafter and had not called her that evening to explain his whereabouts.)

Investigators interviewed a number of witnesses to seek corroboration of the perpetrator's claims of his activities on the evening of June 25.

Margaret Smith directly refuted the suggestion that she had been called that evening by the perpetrator to report flooding at the Robison home. She did report a conversation with him the following morning in which he claimed that he was at the home on June 25 bailing and mopping flood waters, the claim he later recanted to investigators.

Mr. and Mrs. Frank Cowell reported that as "across the street" neighbors they were concerned about flooding at the Robison residence the evening of June 25 because they were experiencing it at their home. They knew the perpetrator's automobile and saw it at the Robison's residence on many occasions...but on the evening of June 25 there was no car at the Robison home.

Mr. and Mrs. Albert Little, "next door" neighbors of the Robisons, recalled the evening of June 25 and saw no one at the Robison home nor any car in the driveway.

Thus the alibi disintegrated. In spite of repeated attempts to mislead investigators, it was established without ambiguity that the perpetrator had given an entirely false explanation of his actions and whereabouts from late morning to late evening on the day of the murders.

In the context of the firearms evidence, this persistent mendacity is more than the lie itself, it is highly probative of a consciousness of guilt and of a determined effort to prevent its detection.

Re: Lucre

The circumstances that motivated this killing are not explicit. However, it is known that in the weeks prior and in the absence of Richard Robison the perpetrator gave himself a disproportionate and financially unjustified raise in pay. His salary increased from \$850 to \$4000 per month and he took expense checks in that period that were significantly larger than had been the case.

The accounting firm that managed the Robison business accounts advised that such additional costs were unwarranted by the firm's balance sheets, that Richard Robison habitually reviewed potential employee raises with these accountants before granting them and that he did not do so in this instance.

The accountants also advised that raises of 10 to 25% were granted to other employees in this period without discussion between the accountants and Robison to determine their viability. The affected employees received word of their raises from the perpetrator not from Robison.

On the morning of the homicides, Richard Robison inquired of his banker by phone whether a \$200,000 deposit had been made to the company account. When advised it had not, he ordered payment stopped on all company checks. Within the next hour, Robison called the bank and withdrew the stop payment instruction.

Robison's secretary recalls his being very angry and loud in a first phone conversation with her that day. She stated that the perpetrator inquired of her about that conversation. When advised that Robison had directed her to put a stop payment order on the company checks the perpetrator told her he would take care of the matter. She then recalls a second call from Robison saying he called the bank and resolved the matter and was then transferred to the perpetrator.

The perpetrator's statements to investigators make no mention of a \$200,000 deposit but indicated that Robison's concern that morning was about signed blank checks that were in the mail to the office but perhaps not received there. The perpetrator states that he discovered the checks at the office and called Robison who said he would call and lift the stop payment order.

There is imperfect knowledge of the precise role of the perpetrator in the genesis and implementation of a grandiose business scheme that was to be underwritten by wealthy investors who remained deep in the background of the plan. Robison appeared to believe that one of these "investors" was his birthfather... "Mr. Roeberts." Robison knew Roeberts only through written messages and phone calls in which the speaker's voice had an unusual robotic quality. Nonetheless, he reported to family members that Roeberts would be traveling with the family to Kentucky and Florida on the trip set to begin June 26, 1968.

Investigators were unable to establish the existence of Mr. Roeberts.

It was also determined that the Robison agency had engaged in a pattern of improper business practices in the years immediately prior to the homicides. One such practice was the placement of advertisements from national businesses in Impresario that were not actually ordered or placed by the business; all in an effort to deceptively suggest the success of the magazine to other potential advertisers. More egregiously, the agency was over time in receipt of large sums in payment for advertising they claimed to have placed but never did. This conversion was found to approach \$100,000. Fingerprint evidence established that the perpetrator handled substantial checks from the defrauded client well after the death of Richard Robison.

To Deny is To Lie

The Michigan State Police employ and train a number of polygraph operators whose responsibility it is to assist the course of criminal investigation through the administration of polygraph examinations. Those examinations produce results that are not admissible as evidence as such but that are, nonetheless, very influential in shaping the judgment of investigators and prosecuting officials. Indeed, should a person suspected of crime take and pass one or more polygraph examinations, that person is often exonerated of wrongdoing on that basis and pending criminal cases can be and are often dismissed by reason of such test results. The polygraph examination is, therefore, a significant law enforcement

methodology that cannot only lead to dismissal but that correspondingly serves as a barometer of guilt, whether admissible in court or not.

The perpetrator submitted to three such tests that directly asked whether he murdered one or more of the Robison family. The first test results were inconclusive. A second test was given several weeks later. Inter alia, the perpetrator denied killing or being present at the time of the killings. The examiner determined that the perpetrator was “not being truthful” in making those denials.

Of interest, in the post-test interview, the perpetrator was advised that he had failed the test. In response, he neither admitted nor denied killing any of the Robison family.

A third test was given more than a year and a half later. In that test, there was focus on the missing Armalite AR-7 rifle, its use in the killings and its whereabouts. The perpetrator repeated his assertion that he had given the weapon back to the dealer from whom he purchased it. He also denied knowing who used the weapon to kill the Robisons. This third examiner determined that the perpetrator was lying in responding to each of the questions put to him.

The second and third polygraph results unequivocally established deception in denying the homicides. In so doing, these deceptions should lead the most conservative judgment to conclude that the affirmative is true: the perpetrator’s lies backlight the silhouette of a killer.

There is yet another deception that is noteworthy.

The witness Margaret Smith was, with her husband, an intimate friend of the Robisons. She reported that on July 18, a week before the bodies were discovered, she spoke to the perpetrator at her home. She inquired about the Robisons because she had no contact from them for some time. She reported that the perpetrator claimed that he had received a phone call from Richard Robison and “they are in Kentucky and everything is ok.” She then reported that after the homicides were known, she challenged the perpetrator about his statement and he stated that what he meant was that he talked to Richard Robison on June 25 and that they were going to Kentucky. Mrs. Smith insisted to investigators that the perpetrator’s revision of his statement was untrue. There is no shadow over her credibility.

Other Names

The Robison homicides have over the years been the subject of various theories of responsibility. In their best professional manner, the investigators undertook to either substantiate or disprove each of them.

Thus, at the urging of consecutive letters from the Emmet County Prosecutor and a Petoskey newspaper reporter, the investigators refocused on Monnie Bliss as a suspect. Bliss had made the initial discovery of the bodies.

Essentially, the tandem letters suggested that there was bad blood between Richard Robison and Bliss, that Bliss was inappropriately “cold” in reacting to his son’s death just two days prior to June 25, that he was seemingly acknowledging guilt when he asked police “how much time” he would get for the homicides, that he may be schizophrenic and thus able to pass a lie detector test that he otherwise would fail and that the Robisons were killed because one or more of them had knowledge that Bliss had murdered his own son on June 23. The suggestion was that Bliss had strung a wire across a road expecting it to bring about the fatal motorcycle crash that killed the son.

Having shared in this grievous accusation, the reporter asked that he have immunity from libel laws and that his charges be confidential for the exclusive use of law enforcement. Not surprisingly, then, the reporter acknowledged that in spite of a professional commitment to “truth” and “facts” in his daily work, in this instance he had very few facts and relied rather on his knowledge of human nature, finally asserting that the “truth” of this case was not known to him. The letters also reported an unsubstantiated rumor that Bliss was missing a hammer (one had been found at the scene).

The prosecutor of Emmet County’s request for further investigation of Bliss was complied with in spite of its superficiality.

The file on Monnie Bliss eventually disclosed that he had taken and passed a state police polygraph in respect to the murders. The investigators were well aware that polygraph operators are trained to screen for symptoms of mental illness, intoxication or substance abuse that might invalidate the test. The investigators concluded further that Bliss was an unusual personality but was not thought by them or others who knew him to be mentally ill.

Bliss submitted his rifle for test firing and the weapon was cleared.

No one gave credence to the notion of substantial animosity between Bliss and Robison.

The statement about doing “time” for homicides was made four months after the crimes to two state police troopers who dismissed the remark as Bliss’ awkward attempt at humor.

The police investigation of the motorcycle crash that killed Norman Bliss concluded that it was accidental in that he was significantly intoxicated, missed a turn in the road and drove into a tree, fracturing his skull.

The investigators determined further that Bliss owned neither of the murder weapons, a .25 caliber Beretta pistol nor an Armalite AR-7 rifle.

Moreover in 2008, Rick Wiles spoke to a member of the now deceased reporter’s family and learned that the reporter had reviewed the investigative reports compiled as a result of his letter and thereafter abandoned his belief that Monnie Bliss was involved in the murders.

Another theory had John Norman Collins as the killer. His connection with the Robison homicides begins and ends with the fact that he came to know Richard Craig Robison in 1967 when they were both students at Eastern Michigan University. State police investigators found no other nexus between Collins and the homicide of the Robison family. Collins was notorious as the convicted killer of a young female college student at EMU. He is also believed to have killed a number of other young women in the period between July 1967 and July 1969. The state police spearheaded both investigations and found no commonality.

Then there is the information from a career criminal housed at Leavenworth, Kansas who spoke to investigators hoping for a reduction in his 25 year prison sentence. He contended that his oft-time partner in crime was the killer and that he did it for money to be provided by a “Scolata or Scolaro or something like that.” The prisoner also described the destruction of a leather briefcase like that owned by Richard Robison and further stated that the briefcase contained cancelled checks with a Robison Company name on them. He further described abandoning a locked, heavy suitcase (that he assumed enclosed guns) in a railcar in Alabama that was scheduled for incineration. The prisoner stated that his

partner in crime claimed to have killed the Robisons with an accomplice, one Robert Matthews. The murder weapons were thought by the prisoner to have been purchased in Toledo, Ohio just prior to going north.

Ultimately, the purported “killer for hire” refused a polygraph examination on the matter, his reported accomplice, Robert Matthews, took and passed a polygraph examination in which he denied any knowledge of or participation in the homicides, and Alexander Bloxom, the prisoner informant, took and failed a polygraph examination based on his elaborate allegations. (Even if believed, this theory of the case is premised on the murderous intentions of the perpetrator.)

In 1973, the discovery of a luggage tag in an abandoned car served up another anomaly to investigators. The car had originally been sold new in Toledo, Ohio where Bloxom reported Brock and Matthews had gone to purchase guns in June 1968. After sifting through the ownership history of the car and interviewing prior owners, the investigators were unable to make anything substantive of this intersection of circumstances.

The Michigan State Police and the Emmet County Sheriff’s Department have chased down numerous blind alleys in this case in pursuit of their sworn responsibilities. Thus did investigators follow either marginal evidence or intuition to assess a number of possible culprits that ranged from escapees from mental institutions to members of organized crime. These efforts were earnest but unproductive. Out of an abundance of caution, the state police forensic laboratory ran ballistic testing anew on the shell casings with the same results as originally found. Late discovered pubic hair found on the body of Mrs. Robison was examined but found only to compare to that of the victim.

The Donut and The Hole

It is noteworthy that in 1970 the then prosecuting attorney of Emmet County wrote to the sheriff that he was of the opinion that there was “not sufficient evidence” to establish a prima facie case for criminal action. He referred to a meeting with the attorney general’s staff and stated that the head of their criminal division shared his opinion in the matter. He went on to say “that further effort should be made to locate a murder weapon or weapons or to place a suspect at the scene of the crime.”

It is my submission that the firearms identification evidence does both. An AR-7 rifle purchased, possessed and used by the perpetrator was thereafter used to murder members of the Robison family at Good Hart. A .25 caliber Beretta pistol and its SAKO ammunition purchased and possessed by the perpetrator was also used in these murders. In the important sense of identifying specific murder weapons, they have been found. In the equally important sense of connecting them to a suspect, they have been found. The probative impact of the forensic testing stands independent of physical custody of the weapons.

The findings regarding the firearms, the shell casings and the ammunition are clear...and in their totality they apply to but one person...and these test results in turn interlock with pervasive deceit and underlying motivation to identify the killer.

No amount of cynicism or musing can or will change the forensic evidence. Some with other agenda may choose to ignore it. But it is there, nonetheless.

It is accurate to say that this case is “open” on the books of the Emmet County Sheriff and the Michigan State Police. It is also accurate to say that the killer is “uncharged” and “unconvicted.” It is not,

however, accurate to say the matter is “unsolved.” Investigators Stearns and Flis solved this case many years ago. That no legal proceedings occurred should be of no consequence to an appreciation of the correctness of their conclusions. Yet the absence of formal accusation and trial is the regrettable vacuum into which many have moved with competing theories of the case that nourish the idea that the case is not solved.

I worked in the field of prosecution for most of 37 years. I was a trial lawyer and prosecuted a number of murder cases. I was appointed Chief Trial Lawyer in the large suburban prosecutor’s office where I was hired. In time I became Deputy Prosecutor for Litigation in that office with supervisory responsibility over more than 70 assistant prosecutors. Over many years and on innumerable occasions my responsibility required in-depth evaluation of cases in order to determine their net worth in the courtroom. That work and my own trial experience also taught me the persuasive power of crime laboratory personnel in jury trial.

It is against that background that I revisited the file on the Robison case. The conclusion that I reached in 1973, shared by Brooks Patterson, is only reinforced when viewed through the prism of the ensuing 30 years of experience. Patterson’s approach to prosecution was framed by his often used injunction to the staff “to see the donut and not just the hole.”

The truth of this case is there to be seen. The forensic evidence and the attendant circumstances of the case are substantial...they can withstand dissection and analysis because they mark out the truth...and the truth is patient...and very stubborn.

Absent the prosecution that should have ensued, the matter will be decided in the court of public opinion in which the perpetrator, Joseph R. Scolaro III, stands charged with six counts of first degree murder. The verdict that is compelled by the evidence is but one: guilty as charged on all counts.

Epilogue

Two books are recommended as factual accounts of the course of this investigation.

“Silent Evidence” was written about this case and others by the respected criminal forensic expert Charles Meyers and features the firearms identification findings of the Robison case.

“When Evil Came to Good Hart” by distinguished Michigan author, Mardi Link, is a comprehensive and well written account of the many permutations of the investigation. It is particularly notable for its fidelity to the established facts of the case.

There has been the suggestion that the legal premise of prosecution of the case in a county other than Emmet was based on a theory of conspiracy between the perpetrator and unnamed others that was developed in that other county. Rather, the premise for prosecution in another county lay in a provision of the Code of Criminal Procedure that allows prosecution of a felony in any county where an act or acts occur that culminate in the commission of the felony. At minimum, the perpetrator armed himself with the killing weapons and the fatal ammunition in the county of his residence.

Finally, I pay tribute to Rick Wiles whose great energy and persistence have caused new light to enter upon the darkness of speculation and conjecture that had unfairly entombed the reputation of an innocent man.