

## = Murder of Robert Eric Wone =

Robert Eric Wone was murdered in Washington , D.C. in August 2006 in the home of a college friend , Joe Price . Wone , who was 32 years old at the time , was a lawyer living in suburban Oakton , Virginia , but had been working as general counsel at Radio Free Asia in downtown Washington , D.C. He had stayed the night at the home of friends located about one mile from his office . According to police affidavits , Wone was believed to have been " restrained , incapacitated , and sexually assaulted " before his death . The murder was not committed by an intruder unknown to residents of the home Price , Victor Zaborsky and Dylan Ward .

Within days of the murder , D.C. police alleged that the crime scene had been tampered with , but no charges were filed for over two years . In late 2008 , police charged Price , Zaborsky and Ward with obstruction of justice and conspiracy related to alleged tampering with the crime scene . The men were acquitted of the charges in June 2010 . No one has been charged with Wone 's killing . In November 2008 , Wone 's widow filed a wrongful death lawsuit against Price , Zaborsky and Ward ; the suit was settled on August 3 , 2011 for an undisclosed sum and agreement .

## = = Crime = =

Late on August 2 , 2006 , Robert Eric Wone was fatally stabbed while staying overnight at a Swann Street , NW townhouse in Washington , D.C. , owned by Joseph Price ( a / k / a Joseph Anderson ) and his domestic partner Victor Zaborsky , where they lived with Dylan Ward ( a / k / a Dylan Thomas ) in a polyamorous relationship as a family . Wone had gone to Price 's residence at approximately 10 : 30 PM after working late , as had been arranged days before . Neighbors reported hearing a scream , later identified as Zaborsky 's , during the 11 : 00 PM newscast ( i.e. before 11 : 35 PM ) . Zaborsky made a 9 @ - @ 1 @ - @ 1 call at 11 : 49 PM , and paramedics arrived five minutes later , followed by the police . Price phoned Wone 's wife , and Wone was pronounced dead at George Washington University Hospital at 12 : 24 AM on August 3 .

Price , Zaborsky and Ward all initially spoke with the police without attorneys , and video recordings of those interviews were shown at the subsequent conspiracy trial . They denied any involvement in the death and speculated that an intruder had killed Wone . The three also denied any sexual relationship with Wone , and Wone 's family have described him as both " straight and happily married " . All three men attended Wone 's funeral , where Price served as a pallbearer . Eric Holder , who worked at that time at Covington & Burling , called Wone " a kind and gentle man " who was " killed in the most horrible of ways " .

## = = Investigation = =

Paramedics responding to the emergency call " found the three residents ? calm behavior unusual ; none was screaming or even helping direct the paramedics . " According to Ward 's attorney , detectives who interrogated the three housemates on the night of the murder informed them that they were the main suspects in the case , and asked many sexually charged , accusatory questions . Three days after the murder , the Gay and Lesbian Liaison Unit of the D.C. police were called in , but unit head Sgt. Brett Parson declined to discuss the unit 's involvement . Within two weeks of the murder , police publicly alleged that the crime scene had been tampered with . Investigators spent more than three weeks examining the townhouse in detail , " removing flooring , pieces of walls , a chunk of staircase , the washing machine , even sink traps . " Allegations that the area around Wone 's body had been cleaned were revealed in an affidavit in support of a search warrant for homeowner Joseph Price 's offices at the D.C. law firm of Arent Fox .

## = = = Burglary = = =

Three months after Wone 's death , Price 's brother and an accomplice burgled the Swann Street residence ; they took more than \$ 7 @ , @ 000 of electronic equipment . Two individuals , including

Price 's brother , were charged with the burglary , but those charges were later dropped . In 2007 , D.C. police revealed that they had been preparing to make an arrest in the Wone murder case in 2006 , but that the burglary had derailed those plans . Police have not revealed the name of the arrest target , nor the charge ( s ) that would have been filed .

= = = Lack of progress = = =

In August 2007 The Washington Post reported Katherine Wone 's frustration with the FBI crime lab , " It has been trying at times as we continue to wait for the FBI to complete their analysis of all the samples that were taken . " Over one year the case had been transferred to three separate prosecutors , earning it " vagabond status " in the U.S. Attorneys ' office . On the one @-@ year anniversary of Wone 's death , Katherine Wone held a press conference to appeal for public assistance in finding the killer , her first public comment on the case . During the press conference , Holder publicly pleaded with the three residents to provide additional information , saying " You need to ask yourself , ' Have I provided police with all the information I know ? ' " Interested parties , such as the OCA , used the first anniversary of Wone 's death to criticize what they deemed police inaction in the investigation . In contrast to the first anniversary of Wone 's murder , there was no press conference on the second anniversary , and neither the Wone family nor police made any statements to the press .

= = = Arrests and charges = = =

An obstruction of justice charge was filed in October 2008 against housemate Dylan Ward , who had since moved to Miami @-@ Dade County , Florida and was living in a home owned by Price . In November 2008 , Price and Zaborsky were arrested and also charged with obstruction of justice . All three men were later released pending trial , but subject to electronic monitoring and curfews . On December 19 , 2008 , additional charges of conspiracy were filed against all three men . During the same hearing , the electronic monitoring and curfew restrictions for the three defendants were ended and prosecutors announced the possibility that charges related to tampering with evidence could be filed in the future .

The affidavit filed by authorities supporting the arrest warrant for Ward showed that investigators had concluded the men were not telling the truth about what happened . The report states " The evidence demonstrates that Robert Wone was restrained , incapacitated , sexually assaulted , and murdered inside 1509 Swann Street , " and there exists " overwhelming evidence , far in excess of probable cause " that Price , Zaborsky , and Ward " obstructed justice by altering and orchestrating the crime scene , planting evidence , delaying the reporting of the murder to the authorities , and lying to the police about the true circumstances of the murder . " Lawyers for the three accused men have called the affidavit " speculation , innuendo , assumptions , and irrelevant inflammatory comments " and maintain their clients ' innocence . Price and Zaborsky were domestic partners , and the affidavit alleges that Price had previously had a sexual relationship with Ward . Washington attorney Dale Sanders opined that the release of the extensively detailed affidavit was intended to turn one of the housemates , presumably Ward , against the others , and hypothesized that it indicated prosecutors lacked sufficient evidence to charge any of the housemates with additional crimes without the cooperation of a witness .

Officials believe that a knife from the kitchen had been smeared with blood and placed near the body , while a duplicate of the knife which was missing from a set found in Ward 's bedroom would have been more consistent with the wounds to Wone 's body . The autopsy revealed evidence of some degree of suffocation , perhaps by a pillow , and puncture marks on his neck , chest , foot and hand . Though no toxins were found in his blood , a lack of evidence of struggle led investigators to suspect Wone had been injected with a paralytic agent . Cadaver dogs found a blood residue in a dryer lint trap and the patio drain , which detectives believe may be evidence that someone washed themselves in the back patio area , and dried wet clothes in the dryer . City Paper Columnist Jason Cherkis reported unattributed criticism of the medical examiner 's failure to test for exotic drugs and

to keep a sample of Wone 's blood for later testing , as well as detectives ' failure to follow up on a lint trap that had attracted a cadaver dog 's attention . Price 's lawyer has challenged the timing of the indictments , has said that the civil suit " looked unseemly " , and questioned whether the prosecutors and Wone family attorneys were acting in concert .

In April , 2009 , prosecutors disclosed that two emails had been drafted on Wone 's BlackBerry " at a time when prosecutors believed Wone dead " . An independent criminal law attorney noted that " The defense will argue that this is consistent with their claim that the murder happened quickly by an intruder and it was not a long , drawn @-@ out effort to sexually assault Wone before he was killed , as the government is alleging . " Previously a court filing indicated the government intended to release a personal profile that Price allegedly used on ALT.com , " a sexually oriented web site specializing in S & M practices " .

Formal defense in the conspiracy case began on June 17 , 2010 , and concluded without any of the defendants testifying .

Judge Lynn Leibovitz found each of the three men not guilty of charges of conspiracy , obstruction of justice and tampering with evidence on June 29 , 2010 . Leibovitz , in explaining her ruling for almost an hour from the bench , stated that she personally believed that the men knew who killed Wone , but was not convinced beyond a reasonable doubt that they committed the offenses with which they were charged .

= = = Civil lawsuit = = =

On November 25 , 2008 , Wone 's widow Katherine filed a wrongful death lawsuit against the three men , largely based on the police affidavit . The lawsuit alleged " defendants ' negligent failure to rescue Robert Wone after he was injured , defendants ' destruction of evidence of Robert Wone 's murder , and defendants ' conspiracy to destroy evidence and obstruct the police investigation into Robert Wone 's murder . " The suit was settled August 3 , 2011 for an undisclosed sum and agreement . Prior to his nomination as United States Attorney General , Eric Holder advised Wone 's widow on a pro bono basis .

= = Aftermath = =

Wone 's death has proven to be one of Washington , D.C. 's most mysterious homicide cases . The Washington Examiner listed the Wone case , in light of the arrests , as one of eight top crime stories in D.C. for 2008 . The Washington Blade stated that the case " has captured the interest of the gay community because it occurred inside the home of a prominent gay male couple . " In March 2009 , a MyFoxDC.com story on the crime highlighted a website ( Whomurderedrobertwone.com ) cataloging the investigative efforts of " four amateur sleuths who live in the neighborhood " .

Since Wone 's death , multiple organizations have established scholarships and other memorials in his name , including the Virginia Department of Social Services " Robert E. Wone Award for Exemplary Service " ; the annual " Robert E. Wone Judicial Clerkship & Internship Conference , " which rotates among the D.C. area law schools , including Georgetown University Law Center , American University Washington College of Law , and Howard University School of Law ; a workroom at OCA headquarters ; the " Robert E. Wone Fellowship " of the Asian Pacific American Bar Association Educational Fund ; the " Robert E. Wone Scholarship " of OCA 's New Jersey Chapter ; the " Robert E. Wone Memorial Trust , " administered by the Community Foundation of the National Capital Region ; and the " Robert E. Wone Clinical Fellowship " at the University of Pennsylvania Law School , including a room in the law school 's Civil Practice Clinic . On October 22 , 2011 , family and friends gathered at Barksdale Field at the College of William and Mary to dedicate two benches and two Chinese pistache trees in Robert 's memory . The plaques on the benches read " Rest awhile and enjoy the wonderful world around you , " a reference to one of Wone 's favorite songs by Louis Armstrong , It 's a Wonderful World .

= = Victim = =

Robert Eric Wone ( June 1 , 1974 ? August 3 , 2006 ) was a fourth generation Chinese American , born in Manhattan and raised in Brooklyn , New York . After graduating from Xaverian High School as salutatorian of his class , he attended The College of William and Mary as a James Monroe Scholar . There , Wone met Joseph Price , then a senior , in the 1992 ? 93 academic year . Wone and Price shared several activities , including an honor society and student government leadership positions , before Price graduated in 1993 . During 1993 , the Richmond Times Dispatch published an opinion piece co @-@ written by Wone , criticizing a prior Times Dispatch article on William and Mary faculty . Graduating in 1996 , Wone then received his law degree with honors from the University of Pennsylvania Law School in 1999 . He subsequently served as law clerk to Judge Raymond A. Jackson of the Federal District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia . Wone later worked in commercial real estate law for six years as an associate with the Washington , D.C. , firm of Covington & Burling . As part of his public service responsibilities with the law firm , Wone served as general counsel for the Organization of Chinese Americans ( OCA ) . On June 7 , 2003 , Wone married Katherine Ellen Yu , and the couple lived in Fairfax County . On June 30 , 2006 , about two months before he was killed , Wone left Covington & Burling and was hired as general counsel for Radio Free Asia . Wone was very active within the Asian American community , supporting organizations such as OCA and the Museum of Chinese in the Americas . At the time of his death , he was president @-@ elect of the Asian Pacific American Bar Association .