

Police close 2009 cold case - Coldwater Daily Reporter (MI) - April 10, 2019

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"At this point, investigators are highly confident **David Kidney** murdered Duane Finney." That was the statement Wednesday from Fifth District Det/Lt. Chuck Christensen at a news conference in Marshall.

Michigan State Police and the Branch County sheriff have ended the cold case investigation into the May 12, 2009, murder. The case was reopened two years ago.

The conclusion came after Kidney, then 61, died in a shoot out with troopers at his Francisco Road home on Jan. 24, 2017. As troopers moved to enter the house, Kidney came out firing. Two troopers were shot and rushed to the hospital.

There was a stand-off until it was determined Kidney was dead behind a row of trees away from the house. A Beretta 9mm Luger handgun was taken from a holster on Kidney's body, authorities said. The MSP laboratory matched the bullets and casings found at Finney's murder scene to that gun. Kidney was only one person of interest, Christensen said, "but the others had been eliminated."

During a September 2017 interview, Kidney was cordial and cooperative with lead investigators Det/Sgt. Heather Lass and Det/Sgt. Aaron Steensma. He said in May 2009, he owned assorted guns, including a Beretta 9mm handgun.

Two days after this meeting, Kidney contacted Steensma and told him he was unable to locate two of his weapons, a .22-caliber long gun and 9mm handgun. Kidney then refused to answer calls from troopers.

That prompted investigators in January to request a search warrant for the gun and his DNA. Kidney had one criminal conviction. A Branch County Circuit Court jury found him guilty in 1994 of receiving stolen property.

The conviction came before Michigan began collecting DNA of convicted felons, so he had none on record. Christensen said there was animosity between the former neighbors. Kidney had lived with his wife, Pamela, at 860 E. Garfield Ave. Lot 16, next door to the Finneys.

Finney's widow, Crystal, said in 2017, Kidney blamed them after the landlord cut down a tree limb between trailers. Crystal Finney said Kidney was upset because they had called police on Kidney's grandkids for kicking a soccer ball into the trailer.

Christensen said he believed Kidney waited in Finney's car for him to go to work that morning in 2009. The body of 62-year old Finney was found in the driver's seat of his car in a field south of

Skate Ranch on South Angola Road.

There was a bullet hole visible in the window.

It appeared the shot had come from inside the car from the back seat. Finney had left for work around 4:30 a.m.

Around 7:30 a.m., his body was discovered after a resident near Skate Ranch called 911 to report the suspicious white car in the field. Christensen said cold cases are important.

"You have a murderer out there. If they did it once, they could do it again," he said. "You don't want them out there."

The case also was important to Christensen because of the two troopers shot. He had assigned Steensma to the case.

"A lot of bad things happened to good people in this case," Christensen said. "But in the end, we know Kidney was the individual who killed Mr. Finney. That provides closure for everybody here."

Steensma is retiring after 21 years because of his permanent injuries from the shooting. The other officer shot, trooper Dan Thayer, has returned to duty.

"The investigation will remain open due to MSP protocol, but the cold case investigators will no longer actively work this incident," Christensen said.

Asked about a possible second person in the car, Christensen said "there is some evidence in that vehicle in the form of some voiding that we have checked into. And conducted interviews. At this point we have no information to suggest another person was involved."

But, he added, "if anyone has any information, the case will remain open."

Det.Sgt. Carey Casperson, of the MSP Fifth District Headquarters, and Detective Dan Nichols, from the Branch County Sheriff Office, also headed the cold case team with Lass and Steensma.

Christensen said, "At certain times during this investigation we utilized 15 different detectives from our entire 5th District Special Investigation Section."

Through the course of the investigation, officers interviewed 292 individuals and used investigative subpoenas in conjunction with the Branch County prosecutor's office to force testimony under oath.