

Police 'confident' they found cold case killer - Kalamazoo Gazette (MI) - April 14, 2019 - page 018

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Almost a decade after Duane Finney was found shot to death behind the wheel of his car, about a mile from his home in Coldwater, police investigating the cold case say they are "highly confident" they have identified his killer.

Ballistic tests confirmed a handgun belonging to **David Kidney**, 62, matched evidence found at the scene of the May 2009 shooting, Michigan State Police Detective 1st Lt. Chuck Christensen said Wednesday.

The gun, a Beretta 9 mm, was seized after a confrontation between Kidney and police when they attempted to serve a search warrant at his rural Branch County farmhouse in January 2018. Kidney opened fire, wounding Michigan State Police Detective Sgt. Aaron Steensma and another trooper. Officers shot and killed Kidney.

Christensen said casings and bullets from the scene of the killing, a field near Skate Ranch on North Angola Road, "conclusively matched" those from tests conducted on Kidney's gun. The results of additional interviews and investigative subpoenas conducted by a cold case team, called when the case was reopened in 2017, further confirmed that conclusion, he said.

A trail goes cold

Finney, 62, was found shot to death in his car May 12, 2009.

The Branch County Sheriff's Office initially investigated the killing, but the trail went cold.

A cold case team, consisting of Michigan State Police and Branch County Sheriff's Office personell, was formed and began its work in April 2017, Christensen said. The team interviewed 292 people and looked back at all the details of the case, he said.

Kidney, a former neighbor of Finney's, initially was interviewed in 2014 by the sheriff's detective investigating the case. Cold case team detectives interviewed Kidney again Sept. 15, 2017, Christensen said, and the man told police he owned several guns in 2009, including a Beretta 9 mm Luger handgun. Kidney later told police he could not find the weapon, and subsequent attempts to contact the man were unsuccessful, Christensen said.

Police obtained a search warrant to search Kidney's home, which led to the exchange of gunfire when officers arrived there Jan. 24, 2018, he said. MSP Detective Sgt. Aaron Steensma and Trooper Daniel Thayer were struck by bullets fired by Kidney.

Steensma suffered a gunshot wound to his upper chest, in the area of his collarbone. Although

Thayer was struck in the center of his chest by one rifle shot, he was not seriously injured. The shot was deflected by the bulletproof vest he was wearing, police said.

Kidney died as a result of a single wound suffered in the exchange of gunfire with troopers. He was found in a field just south of his residence. Officers found the 9 mm Beretta in a shoulder holster Kidney was wearing at the time of the gunfight, Christensen said Wednesday.

"He kept the weapon for that many years after he did the murder with it, which is somewhat amazing," Christensen said. "It would have been a lot more difficult to prove the case against him without the weapon."

Although there were other persons of interest in Finney's killing, Christensen said all others were eliminated in the course of the cold case investigation.

He said the case will remain open, per Michigan State Police policy, but that investigators are confident Kidney was the person who shot and killed Finney in 2009. As a result, the cold case team will stop actively working the case, Christensen said. Anyone with additional information on the case still may contact Michigan State Police.

"The case is still going to remain open, and we will take any information and follow up on any additional leads that the public would provide," Christensen said.

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