

HAMILTON COUNTY COLD CASE UNIT
DISTRICT ATTORNEY GENERAL'S OFFICE
117 EAST 7TH STREET
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CHATTANOOGA, TN 37402



COLD CASE UNIT SOLVES 1997 MURDERS OF GOETCHEUS BROTHERS

On Monday, October 24, 2016, the Hamilton County Grand Jury indicted 52-year old Christopher Jeffrey Johnson on two counts of First Degree Murder in the January 1997 deaths of Sean and Donny Goetcheus.

Background:

25-year old Sean Goetcheus and his 19-year old brother, Donny, were last seen alive the evening of Wednesday, January 8, 1997.

The following evening, on January 9, 1997, police were called to 3207 Rosemont Drive, the house where the brothers lived. Inside were the bodies of both men, who had each been shot multiple times. Sean Goetcheus had been shot twice in the head and once in the neck. Donny had been shot once in the head and once in the face. *(Note: Media has often referred to the killings as being "execution-style", however these shootings do not fit the definition of that term. Neither victim was under the complete physical control of the assailant or shot in the head at close range.)*

Originally, Chattanooga police investigators had very few leads and none of those developed. Leads have trickled in throughout the last two decades, mainly due to the continued media attention given to this case. All of those potential leads, except the defendant, were eliminated.

Recent Developments:

In August 2014 (shortly before officially taking office) District Attorney General Neal Pinkston asked the media to once again revisit the Goetcheus brothers' case. Later that year, he requested Governor Bill Haslam offer a \$10,000 reward to help generate tips. Governor Haslam approved the request in February 2015. Later in 2015, the Cold Case Unit distributed reward posters throughout the area and repeatedly asked for the public's help solving the case.

Meanwhile, the Cold Case Unit was also closing the 2004 cold case of Missy Ward. In January 2016, the Hamilton County Grand Jury indicted Christopher Jeffrey Johnson for Ward's murder.

Johnson, currently serving a 50-year prison sentence for the kidnapping and rapes of two girls, is a career offender who for years has bragged to other inmates about killing the brothers. He had not been taken seriously until Cold Case Unit detectives interviewed him for the Ward case. Upon talking with Johnson, both investigators became convinced Johnson is responsible for the Goetcheus' murders. In a series of conversations with CCU Supervisor Mike Mathis throughout the last year, Johnson has repeatedly confessed to the murders. Forensic experts confirm Johnson's version of events is consistent with the crime scene. He has provided details that would only be known to the killer.

As for motive, we are still working to determine the specifics but we believe Sean had a videotape of illegal activity involving Rick Davis of Rick Davis' Gold & Diamonds. On the night of the murders, Chris Johnson took money to Sean to buy the video. During their encounter, Johnson became angry and shot Sean. Upon hearing the gunfire Donny called out to ask what was going on, until that point Johnson had no idea Donny was in the house.

Goetcheus Family & Friends:

Donny's fiancé Holly Walker, his best friends Chris Scoggins, Sidney & Thurman Sewell, and Sean's best friend Marcus Standefer, along David and Julenne Goetcheus (the brothers' father and step-mother) are attending today's press conference.

Diane and Larry Clonts (the brothers' mother and step-father) live in Texas. They have asked that media not contact them. They did provide the following statement:

"We would like to thank everyone involved who worked on the case for their dedication and persistence in seeing that justice prevails. Beginning years ago with Tim Carroll and Mike Mathis for their diligence and kindness, up to the present time with Neal Pinkston and his staff keeping us abreast of their efforts as the case progressed. The irreparable damage has been done and the sadness in the loss of Sean and Donny cannot be measured but it is comforting to know justice will prevail. Our prayers go out to everyone who has been affected by these senseless acts of pure evil. As always, God will be the final judge.

*Sincerely,
Diane and Larry Clonts"*

DA's Cold Case Unit

District Attorney General Neal Pinkston created the Cold Case Unit upon taking office in September 2014 to review the 200 unsolved homicides and missing persons cases in Hamilton County. The Unit is led by retired CPD Captain Mike Mathis. Chattanooga Police Chief Fred Fletcher and Hamilton County Sheriff Jim Hammond each provide an investigator to the unit. If you have information about any cold case, please contact us using the Cold Case Hotline at **423-209-7470** or by email at coldcases@hctnda.org.



CHRISTOPHER JEFFRE JOHNSON
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