

## **The Murder of Victor Conner**

by Sam Taulker

On September 21, 2005, skeletal remains were found by a hunter in the woods outside of the small town of Lansing, North Carolina. Approximately six months before on April 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2004, Jenny Conner had reported her husband, Victor missing. When she had come home from work that night, she expected to see her husband but found what looked like blood spatters and a strange white substance on the kitchen floor. Jenny called the police and Officers Matt Miller and Bob Blevins arrived to investigate. They called crime scene investigators to gather the evidence, which was sent to the SBI (State Bureau of Investigation) crime lab for analysis. The evidence included: fingerprints, blood samples, hair and fiber samples, white powder, soil samples and a threatening note. While this evidence was being analyzed, the officers began to interview witnesses and people who knew Victor Conner. However, they could not find Victor Conner anywhere.

After talking to Victor Connor's next-door neighbor, John Walker, investigators determined that a white male was a person of interest. The neighbor saw a white man get into a blue truck that night and drive off. He said that was unusual, as he didn't recognize the truck as one that had been there before. In addition, Connor usually walked his visitors out and waved them off. "It was kinda his little tradition that he did every time he had a visitor. He was always polite like that," said Walker. The only other thing Walker remembered was that the truck had hay bales and dogs in the back. With this information, the police continued their investigation.

Connor's friends all said about the same things: that Conner had no enemies and was a great guy. Only Gil Smith had an additional observation. He remembered Connor having an altercation at the stable where he delivered feed the day before his murder. Connor had worked for Southern States Feed Company and frequently delivered orders to some of the better customers. "Yeah, Conner was purdy ticked off when he come over that night. He said that the people there at Oak Tree Stables weren't appreciating his services to them."

After obtaining a warrant to search Oak Tree Stables, the investigators found that Oak Tree Stables owned a blue truck. During the investigation, Officers Matt Miller and Bob Blevins obtained the names of three men who had been working in the stables that day. These men were George Taylor, Allen Walter Young, and Mitchell Ray Duncan. All of these men were questioned and asked to give a blood sample for blood typing and DNA analysis. George Taylor was released after his alibi checked out. Taylor had been out of the county driving some horses to another farm the night of the murder. The remaining two were more rigorously questioned and the lies in their tales were revealed.

Allen Walter Young, a fair skinned man with blonde hair, was the first to be interrogated and subsequently lied when he stated that he didn't have access to a blue truck, when in fact every Oak Tree employee had access to the company truck, which was blue. Young did state that he did not like the victim, as well, because of his "attitude when he came over to deliver feed and other supplies". This was perplexing to investigators, but they moved on to investigate Duncan.

Mitchell Ray Duncan, a dark haired farm hand, also had lied to police when interrogated. He stated that he had not argued with anyone on April 2<sup>nd</sup>, and also said that he didn't even know Connor. Upon further investigation, however, the manager of the stables, Mark Redding, stated that Duncan had in fact been the one arguing with Connor over the brand of feed delivered on that day. "I had a feeling it was over more than that, though" stated Redding. When asked to elaborate, Redding stated that Duncan and Connor had dated the same girl in high school. Redding had gone to school with them and said that Jenny left Duncan for Connor. Duncan never did get over losing Jenny to Conner back in high school. After Conner and Jenny were married, Duncan continued to be jealous of Conner over Jenny. Plus, when Duncan came to work, he was often hyped up on drugs. "I never had the heart to fire him", said Redding, "I knew I should have, but his mamma was a good woman, and he needed the money to help support her." With this background knowledge, the police waited for the forensic evidence to be analyzed. A couple of days later, Redding had found a bloody knife hidden behind the stables, which was turned over to the police for analysis. The officers searched Duncan's locker at the stables and found an unidentified white powder, which was later analyzed at the crime lab. However, until Victor Connor's body can be and forensic evidence analyzed, Mitchell Ray Duncan cannot be charged.

### **Teacher Key to the story of Victor Connor's murder**

Forensic analysis revealed:

1. The victim, Victor Conner had blood type A, Rh<sup>+</sup>. The blood type found on the knife.
2. The Pelvis and Skull were male.
3. Dark hair, dog hair, fingerprints, cocaine, and soil (from the feed store) evidence collected from Mitchell Ray Duncan and his house matched with the evidence found at Victor Connor's house.

With this evidence, the police went to arrest Mitchell Ray Duncan on the charge of murder, as his blood type matched the other blood type found at the crime scene.

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Evidence Points of interest for the trial from The Murder of Victor Conner by Sam Taulker

1. Fingerprints found on the knife matched suspect #1 Mitchell Ray Duncan
2. Fibers and hair could have been transferred the day before.
3. Young had access to the truck and disliked Conner also.
4. Soil could have come from either suspect, Young or Duncan.