

KILLER OF 2 PROSTITUTES ON TRIAL IN 3D MURDER

Detroit Free Press (MI) - Thursday, February 27, 1986

Author: PATRICIA CHARGOT Free Press Staff Writer

A former Southfield man who was convicted **of** killing two **prostitutes in** Wayne County went **on trial** this week **in** Oakland Circuit Court **on** a first-degree **murder** charge that could keep him **in** prison for the rest **of** his life.

The case **in** Oakland County against Victor Malone, 39, will involve the first use **in** Michigan **of** laser-detected fingerprints that police said linked Malone to the **murder** .

Malone, an inmate at the State Prison **of** Southern Michigan at Jackson, is accused **in** the strangulation death **of** Deborah Debus, 21, whose sodomized body, bound with electrical wire, was found **in** a garbage bag outside the Tel-Twelve Shopping Mall **in** January 1985.

At a preliminary examination, Debus' live- **in** boyfriend, Robert Alexander, **of** Highland Park, testified she was a **prostitute** who worked the Six Mile-Woodward area.

Last September, Malone, who has a master's degree **in** social work from the University **of** Michigan, was convicted **of** the December 1984 fatal shooting **of** Leshia Brooks **in** a Detroit motel and the July 1984 strangulation **of** Anita Willis. Originally charged with first-degree **murder in** both killings, Malone was convicted **of** second-degree **murder in** back-to-back **trials** . He received sentences **of** life **in** prison and 65 to 100 years.

"SINCE HE'S still eligible for parole, if we are able to convict him **of** first-degree **murder** (**in** Oakland County), the only way he'll get out **of** prison is by a commutation order **of** the governor," Allen Wolf, the assistant prosecutor **in** the Debus case, said before the **trial** began.

Only those convicted **of** first-degree **murder** are sentenced to mandatory life **in** prison without parole.

Wolf said Malone was convicted **of** second-degree **murder in** the Detroit cases because " **of** the limited amount **of** evidence **of** premeditation available **in** each separate act.

"But," he said, "when all the acts are viewed **in** their totality, it becomes obvious that the defendant (Malone) had a plan or scheme to rid society **of** **prostitutes** ."

Authorities have said Malone is a suspect **in** 10 other killings **in** the last 12 years **in** the Detroit area.

Wolf said a fingerprint **on** the outside **of** the garbage bag **in** which Debus' body was found is "key evidence against Mr. Malone because it ties him to the case."

SOUTHFIELD POLICE used Canadian laser equipment to find the print, then used special filters and film to photograph it. Regular dusting techniques had not revealed any prints.

On a hunch, Southfield police Sgt. Melvin Paunovich, an identification specialist, compared the photograph **of** the laser- lifted print with the ink impressions **of** a print taken by Detroit police **of** Malone, who already had been charged **in** the two other killings. The two prints -- both **of** the baby finger **of** a left hand -- matched, and the Oakland County Prosecutor's Office issued a warrant charging Malone with Debus' death.

In January, Circuit Judge Gene Schnelz ruled that the print could be used as evidence after Canadian and U.S. laser experts testified that the print-lifting technique is widely accepted by the scientific community and has been used **in** other court cases. Wolf said it is the first time a laser-lifted print is being used as evidence **in** Michigan.

Troy attorney Donald McGinnis, who has been assigned to defend Malone, said the print "is not crucial to me at all. It's only six points **of** one finger that match. That's right **on** the borderline **of** what they would consider positive identification."

A spokesman for the Michigan State Police crime lab **in** Lansing said positive identification "is **in** the eyes **of** the beholder or examiner.

"We like eight points, which is not to say we wouldn't testify with less, depending **on** the characteristics," said the spokesman, who asked not to be named.

McGINNIS SAID Malone's defense is "basic."

"He didn't do it and he wasn't there," the lawyer said. "There is no testimony that Victor Malone had ever seen this woman before."

McGinnis said Malone was with his common-law wife and children most **of** the time between dawn and noon **on** Jan. 29, 1985, when the Oakland County medical examiner said the **murder** occurred. He said Malone was with a Detroit attorney when the body was found at 3 p.m.

At Malone's sentencing **in** the Brooks and Willis cases, Malone maintained his innocence and told Detroit Recorder's Court Judge Edward Thomas he had been convicted by negative publicity that he engaged **in** public sexual acts with **prostitutes** and nude dancers **in** topless lounges and after-hours clubs.

"You would think I was being prosecuted for gross indecency," the social worker said. "The domino theory is now **in** effect, and it will tell **in** Oakland County."

CUTLINE:

Malone

Caption: Photo

Memo: AKLAND SOUTH; ALSO RAN **IN** OAKLAND CENTRAL ZONE

CORRECTION RAN March 6, 1986

getting it straight

Victor Malone, whose **trial** began this week **in** Oakland County Circuit Court, is charged with open **murder** . The prosecution is seeking a first-degree **murder** verdict that would mean life **in** prison. Malone's **trial** will be the second **in** Michigan **in** which fingerprints lifted with the aid of laser equipment will be used as evidence. The first also was **in** Oakland County, last month.

Edition: METRO FINAL

Section: NWS

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Index Terms: MURDER; TRIAL; POLICE ; TECHNOLOGY ; VICTOR MALONE ; FIRST ; MICHIGAN

Record Number: 8601100514

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