

ARREST MADE IN 18-YEAR-OLD KILLING POLICE NOW SAY MAN STAGED WIFE'S SLAYING

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He told police he took his wife out for a Chinese dinner and met a mugger with a gun. He heard two pops, then saw darkness. She was shot dead.

Since that day **in** 1982, when Thomas Randolph Jr. said he was accosted by a stranger with an accent, the former social worker and teacher from Detroit has collected \$248,000 **in** insurance money for Sharron Randolph's death and raised their two children alone.

He sued the Southfield strip mall owner for poor security. And then, **in** 1990, he graduated from Wayne State University law school and hung his own shingle **in** search of justice.

And on Thursday, he was charged with the **killing** .

"He was clearly surprised," Oakland County Sheriff Michael Bouchard said. "This was a person who thought 18 years had gone by and he was free and clear."

Southfield Police Chief Joe Thomas said a team of officers who regularly review unsolved cases turned their attention last year to the **killing** of the laid-off Detroit police officer.

The case was put **in** the hands of Oak Force, a task force of various Oakland County law enforcement agencies and the FBI. They reinterviewed a man who had been at the Harvard Row Shopping Center at 11 Mile and Lahser during the shooting but said, when police interviewed him **in** 1982, that he didn't see what had happened.

This time, he provided clues that led police to believe that Randolph, 58, paid a Mississippi drifter to kill his wife.

"The story was quite different this time around," said Bouchard. When the witness was contacted **in** December, he told members of Oak Force that he saw the shooting. The informant, who lives **in** metro Detroit, also said he saw Sanirell Shannon, 49, threaten Randolph when he didn't get paid for the job and that he saw Randolph pay Shannon, Bouchard said.

The informant passed a polygraph test, Bouchard said.

"Randolph basically lured his wife out of the restaurant so Shannon could kill her," Oakland County Prosecutor David Gorcyca said.

"The whole thing was staged."

Armed with the testimony of the informant, new details from other witnesses and **arrest** warrants from the Oakland County Prosecutor's Office, members of Oak Force traveled to Randolph's law office on the 14000 block of West McNichols **in** Detroit shortly before noon Thursday and arrested him when he stepped out of his office to get his car serviced.

Gorcyca said Randolph stuck to his original story.

Randolph was charged with conspiracy to commit murder and first-degree murder. He's jailed without bond and faces a preliminary exam July 28 **in** front of 46th District Judge Stephen Cooper.

At the arraignment Randolph was represented by his son and law partner, Thomas H. Randolph III.

Police also nabbed Shannon on Thursday **in** Hattiesburg, Miss. He was charged with conspiracy to commit murder and first-degree murder. If Shannon does not fight extradition, he could be **in** Oakland County by the end of the week to face a preliminary exam.

Gorcyca said the pair met when Randolph taught at Wayne County Community College and Shannon was a student.

Randolph owed money on two credit cards and was sinking into debt at the time of the **killing** . His wife had filed two domestic violence complaints against him **in** months before the shooting.

Randolph collected the insurance money **in** four separate payments and spent lavishly on female friends, Gorcyca said. He earned his law degree from Wayne State **in** 1990 and joined the Michigan bar **in** May 1991. Family members, neighbors and an employee of his law office would not comment Thursday.

Police said it's not that unusual for them to work on a crime for several years, waiting for the right break.

"We want this to serve as a message that you might get away with it today, but we'll catch you tomorrow," Thomas said.

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Caption: Photo

Thomas Randolph Jr.

Sanirell Shannon

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