

Attorney no killer , son says - He accuses police of using father as patsy in 1982 case

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PONTIAC -- Oakland County police are pinning a murder rap on a well-known Detroit lawyer because they couldn't properly solve the 1982 homicide, **says** the **son** of the man blamed in the death of a former city cop.

Thomas H. Randolph Jr. "is absolutely innocent. This is a case of the Oakland County police trying to close an old case," said Thomas Randolph III on Friday. "He's dedicated his life to helping people."

Police **say** the elder Randolph, 58, hired a Mississippi drifter to kill Sharron Louise Randolph in what appeared to be a robbery gone awry in January 1982.

Sanirell Shannon, 49, shot Sharron Louise Randolph after pistol-whipping her husband at the Harvard Row Shopping Center, police said. Randolph arranged the slaying to collect \$248,000 in insurance money on his wife, who had been laid off by Detroit police, authorities **say** .

Police charged Thomas H. Randolph Jr., after an informant gave information in December linking him and Shannon to the killing.

William Mitchell, Randolph's lawyer, was skeptical of the new evidence.

"If 18 years ago there was a thorough investigation that never resulted in charges, what has changed since then?" he said.

Randolph also sued the owners of the Southfield strip mall where his wife died, saying the parking lot should have been safer and better lit. The owners settled the case for \$72,500, court records show.

It would not be the first time Randolph forsook a family member.

The News reported Friday that Randolph's mentally ill brother in New York, Joseph L. Davis, sued to recover \$440,350 that he said Randolph took from him. The cash was part of a settlement Davis received after he fell out a window at a mental institution.

Davis signed control of the funds over to Randolph, who spent the money, Davis' lawyer said.

Randolph later duped his brother into forgiving the debt for \$100, the lawyer said.

At the time of her death in 1982, Sharron Louise Randolph was 26. She had been an officer for three years before being laid off. She later worked at U.S. District Court in Detroit to help make ends meet.

Still, her husband's credit cards were charged to their limits, prosecutors said Thursday.

Sharron Louise Randolph filed two domestic violence complaints against him in 1981 but never pursued them.

Her husband was a former teacher at Wayne Community College and once made a run for the Michigan Legislature.

He was a world-class sprinter while a student at Western Michigan University.

He is scheduled Friday for a preliminary exam on the murder charge.

Caption: Randolph Jr. is scheduled Friday for a preliminary exam on the murder charge.

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