

MAN TO GO TO TRIAL IN WIFE'S SLAYING 19 YEARS AGO

Detroit Free Press (MI) - Tuesday, October 9, 2001

Author: L.L. BRASIER FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

Nineteen **years ago** , Thomas Randolph took his wife out for a Chinese dinner. It was her last meal.

A mugger, Randolph later told police, attacked the couple -- striking Randolph **in** the head and fatally shooting Sharron Randolph -- as they sat **in** the family car **in** the Harvard Row shopping center **in** Southfield.

But on Thursday, Oakland County prosecutors are expected **to** present jurors with an entirely different story when Randolph, a Detroit lawyer, goes on **trial** for murder. His jury was seated Monday **in** Oakland County Circuit Court.

Prosecutors plan **to** show that Randolph hired a Mississippi drifter, Sanirell Shannon, then 23, **to** kill his wife. Randolph, then a social worker and teacher, was badly **in** debt and had his eye on his **wife's** \$248,000 life insurance policy, authorities say.

At the time of the **slaying** , police were suspicious of Randolph but were unable **to** establish a case. But last **year** , investigators **got** two breaks.

During routine task-force investigations, police reinterviewed a witness who admitted he saw the shooting. He also said that some days later he saw Randolph argue with and then pay Shannon.

Also, Shannon's niece told police last **year** that her uncle bragged about the killing, and had come home the night of the shooting spattered with blood.

Using the new information, authorities charged Randolph and Shannon with first-degree murder. If convicted, each **man** faces a mandatory sentence of life **in** prison without parole.

Both **men** will stand **trial** at the same time, but their cases will be heard by separate juries. The selection of Shannon's jury is expected **to** be completed today.

Defense attorneys say the witnesses are lying, and that Randolph was telling the truth about the mugger.

Randolph's role as murder defendant is a head-spinning transformation that moved him from a comfortable home **in** Detroit's exclusive Palmer Woods **to** a cell at the Oakland County Jail.

Within months of the **slaying** , Randolph remarried. His wife, Marie Jackson Randolph, served on the Detroit School Board from 1984 **to** 1989, and then opened a string of day-care centers.

Randolph finished law school, passed the bar and built a successful practice. Together, they hosted lavish parties.

But the good times unraveled **in** 2000.

Marie Jackson Randolph was convicted of 63 counts of fraud and money laundering. Federal officials said she pocketed federal money earmarked for children **in** her day-care centers. She is now serving a 9- **year** federal sentence.

A few months later, Thomas Randolph was charged with murder.

Contact L.L. BRASIER at 248-858-2262 or brasier@freepress.com.

Memo: SHORTER VERSION RAN **IN** METRO FINAL EDITION, PAGE 2B

Edition: OAKLAND EDITION

Section: NWS

Page: 1B

Index Terms: THOMAS RANDOLPH ; SPOUSE ; HOMICIDE ; SHARRON RANDOLPH ; SHOOTING ; TRIAL

Record Number: 0110090465

Copyright (c) 2001 Detroit Free Press