



D41 “The Most Dangerous Game” - The Case of a Double Homicide

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This presentation is designed to highlight a unique homicide and the problems related to crime scene assessment, and the advantages of utilizing a “cold case” homicide unit. This presentation will impact the forensic community and/or humanity by highlighting the benefit of an accurate crime assessment, which can allow an investigation to focus on the most probable motives for an offense and limit the suspect pool, enhancing the probability of the successful identification of a suspect.

Crime scene assessment is one of the most important steps in homicide investigation. The ability to discern possible motives from interpretation of a crime scene is paramount to the successful identification of a “pool” of potential suspects. The quicker an investigation can focus on a single line of investigation, the more likely a single suspect can be identified.

The FBI's National Center for the Analysis of Violent Crime (NCAVC) is routinely consulted by federal, state, and local authorities in a variety of cases of bizarre and repetitive violent crimes, especially homicides. NCAVC assistance was requested by local authorities in regards to a case involving the shooting deaths of two hunters who were found in a wooded area of public lands. The victims were both shot in the back with the shotgun belonging to one of the victims. Both victims had been hunting and each was armed, one with a shotgun, the other with a muzzle-loading rifle.

The initial investigation focused on the drug connections of one of the victims, who was engaged in selling drugs. The investigation did not establish any direct connection between the victims. The police contacted a local law enforcement agency to conduct an assessment of the crime scene and provide a “profile.” Their opinion was that this crime was either a revenge killing or a thrill killing. The investigation floundered for 10 years.

The case was re-opened as a cold case, and the investigators reviewed the entire case. Based upon their review, they began to focus on other possible motivations. The cold case investigators contacted the FBI's NCAVC for a crime scene assessment and an opinion as to motive. NCAVC's assessment was that the motive for this crime was not robbery, revenge, or a drug killing but proprietary and was based upon the location where the killings took place.

The investigators had been suspicious of the man who owned the land adjacent to the public land where the victims were found. He was also the person who had found the shotgun used to kill both victims. He was overly protective of his property and had in the past threatened people on the public lands with a weapon. He was also a former law enforcement officer.

A thorough follow-up investigation revealed the subject was unaccounted for at the time this crime took place, and he had made several inconsistent statements regarding his whereabouts. The subject also misrepresented his activities during the time the crime scene was being conducted, and he had taken several acquaintances to the exact crime scene without having been at the scene. Investigators focused their efforts on an individual who provided the subject's alibi at the time of the murders.

After the convening of a Grand Jury, the subject was indicted and charged with the murders of both hunters. The trial resulted in a guilty verdict.

This case highlights the benefit of an accurate crime assessment, which can allow an investigation to focus on the most probable motives for an offense and limit the suspect pool, enhancing the probability of the successful identification of a suspect.

Crime Scene Assessment, Cold Case, Homicide